Zenith Hunter

by Michael Seaholm

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1. Intro

The most difficult climb is often the most rewarding. This is certainly the case for the Zenith, a mysterious region situated high atop an arduous mountain path. It is said that untold riches await those who are able to overcome the rigors of the ascent. Many hunters have tried to reach this fabled summit, but very few have succeeded. As an aspiring hunter, do you have what it takes to make it to the top and discover the true nature of the Zenith?

2. Controls

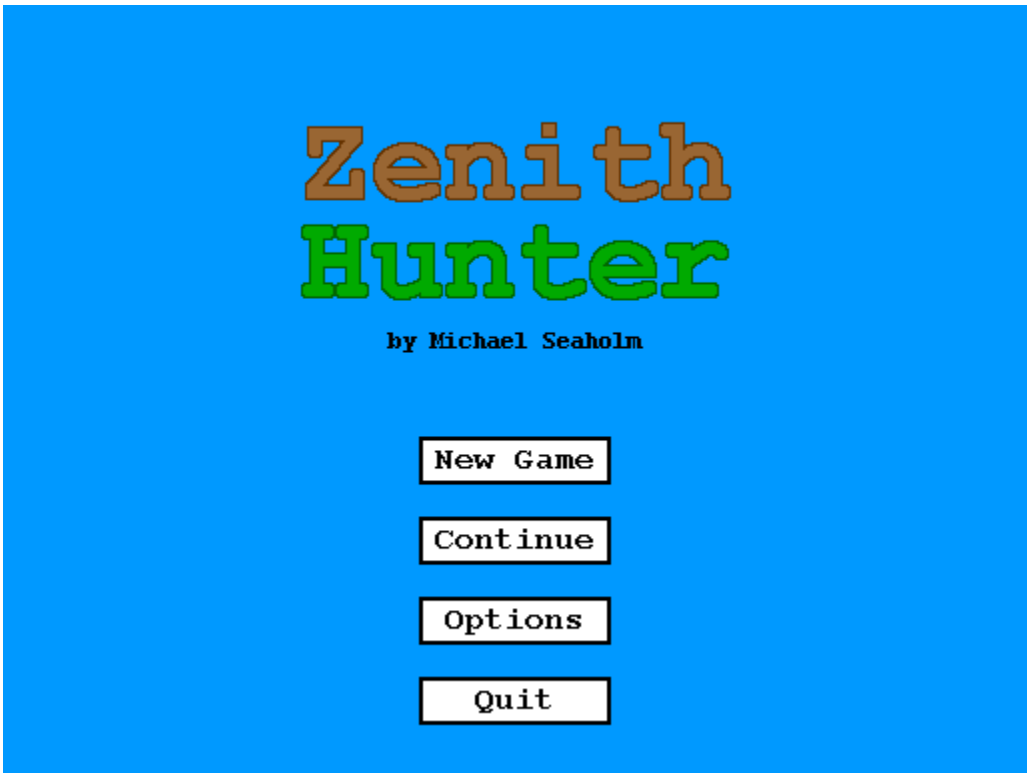
Zenith Hunter supports both gamepad and keyboard controls. For the best experience, it is highly recommended that you use a gamepad when playing. The following table shows the default controls for each input method - these can be changed at any time from the Options menu.

Action	Gamepad	Keyboard
Move around	Left/right on D-pad or analog stick	Left/right arrow keys
Jump	A	Up arrow key
Duck	Down on D-pad or analog stick	Down arrow key
Run	X	Left shift
Throw/Talk	X	Z
Pause	Start	Escape

3. Starting the Game

Double-click on the Zenith Hunter shortcut in the "Zenith Hunter" directory to start the game. You can also start the game by going into the "data" directory and double-clicking the Zenith Hunter .exe file. Note that certain antivirus programs will run the game temporarily in a sandbox while it scans it, which usually takes around 15 seconds. If this happens, wait until the scan finishes and the game should restart automatically.

After starting up, the title screen should appear:



Click on New Game to start a new game from the beginning. Zenith Hunter saves your progress at the start of each stage and supports up to three save files at a time. You can resume your game at a later point by using the Continue button. Save files are kept under the directory C:\Users\<Username>\AppData\Local\Zenith_Hunter and can be transferred if you wish to resume your game on another machine.

4. Options Menu

From the title screen, you can access the Options menu, as shown below:



Upon first starting up the game, it is a good idea to adjust the following options based on your preferences for optimal play:

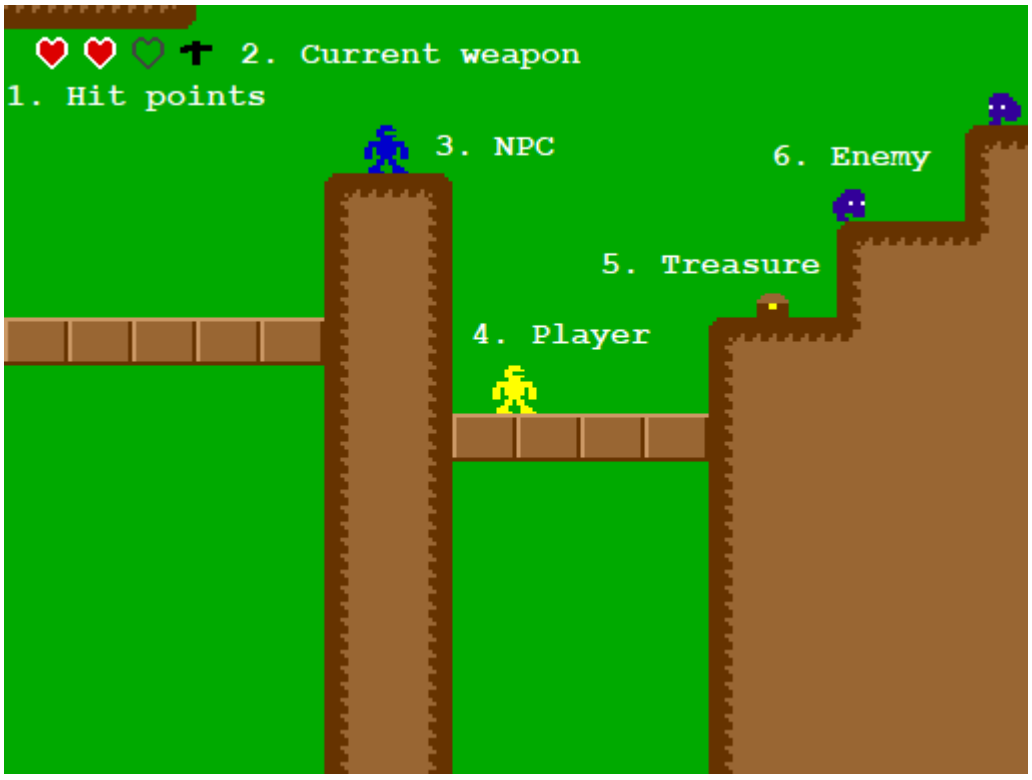
- Remapping Controls:
  - Hover your cursor over any field in the Keyboard or Gamepad column to see the current key or button mapped to that action.
  - Click on the field and then press the desired key/button when you see the prompt to set the action to that key/button.
  - Note that for gamepads, the analog stick cannot be remapped.
- Screen Options:
  - You can set the window size to small, medium, large, or extra large at any time by pressing F3.

- You can also switch between windowed and fullscreen modes at any time by pressing F4.
- Zenith Hunter uses a medium-sized window with Vsync enabled by default. Although window size and fullscreen mode can be toggled as desired, it is highly recommended that Vsync be kept enabled, as otherwise this will cause graphical issues during gameplay.

- Saving Settings:
  - Click on the Save All button to save any changes you have made to the control settings. Screen settings are saved automatically without requiring manual intervention.
  - Clear All will undo any changes to the control settings and set them back to their default values.
  - Reset All will set all controls and screen settings back to their default values and clear all saved settings.

5. Main Screen

The journey to the Zenith consists of six distinct areas comprised of four levels each. Navigating through each level, you will become very familiar with the general game screen, which generally looks like this:



1. Hit points: These indicate how many hits you can take before your character dies.

2. Current weapon: The weapon that is currently equipped to your character. You will lose your current weapon if you take damage.
3. NPC: One of many hunters who will help you on your way to the Zenith.
4. Player: That's you!
5. Treasure: Open these chests to find items, weapons, and other valuables.
6. Enemy: Will cause damage to your character. Watch out!

In addition, you can use the pause menu while playing to view your current treasures, return to the start menu, or quit the game:



6. Items and Weapons

The path to the Zenith is fraught with danger, but there are many tools that can help you along the way. Here is a small assortment of the items that you may find during your ascent.



Hammer: A basic but effective throwing weapon.



Dynamite: Blast many enemies at once!



Boomerang: Flies back in the direction of the thrower.



Golden Hammer: Grants temporary invincibility to the user.



Heart: Restores one hit point



Big Heart: Permanently awards an extra hit point



Gold Piece: Collect them all and something good might happen!

7. Enemies

Many strange beasts and obstacles pose problems for even the most experienced hunters. Here are just a few that you will encounter on your way to the Zenith.



Pokey: Pretty dumb but generally finds strength in numbers.



Ptero: Drops eggs on unsuspecting bystanders.



Biter: Swoops forward at high speeds to chomp its victims.



Rival Hunter: Tries to stop your progress from a distance.



Burst Flower: Shoots flaming pods in all directions.



Slippy: Slides around and bounces off of walls unpredictably.



Fishhead: Loves to jump out of the water.

8. Bosses

The last level of each area is guarded by a boss who blocks the path towards the Zenith. Defeating each boss will grant you a jewel which will help you to gain access to the Zenith.



You can view the jewels you have collected on the pause menu.

9. Tips

- Hold the run button to jump higher and farther than normal. This will help you access hard-to-reach areas.
- When you get a new weapon, experiment with it a bit first before trying to attack dangerous enemies. Each weapon has a different mechanic and may take some getting used to.
- If you get stuck on a boss, take a few turns observing their behavior without launching any attacks. This will give you a better understanding of their patterns and how to overcome them.
- You may encounter people who are in need of help during your travels. Some may give you a gift as thanks, but sometimes a good deed is its own reward.
- Treasure can be hard to find, but each of the six areas has one hidden away somewhere. Try looking for suspicious spots and clues to help guide your way.

10. Troubleshooting

If you run into any issues while playing Zenith Hunter, please contact the author at michaelseaholm@gmail.com with a description of the error and the steps used to reproduce it. Attaching a screenshot of the error and a copy of the save file would facilitate the troubleshooting process.

11. Credits

All sprites, backgrounds, tiles, and other graphics appearing in this game were created by the author, either as part of this game or taken from previous games by the author.

This game was created using a custom-modified version of the Hello Mario Engine created by Hello Fangaming. Please see the LICENSE.txt file provided with the game for more information.

All music and sound effects have been removed from this version of the game in order to meet Steam content guidelines for copyrighted materials. See https://fyndr.itch.io/zenith-hunter for more information.