

SUBSCRIBE

LOG IN

REGISTER

Obituaries

Events

Jobs

Real Estate

Cars

Classified

PG Store

Pittsburgh Post-Gazette
post-gazette.com



April 15, 2014 8:10 AM
40°
7-day Forecast

Search input field

Home

News

Local

Sports

Opinion

A & E

Life

Business

Video

Photo

ADVERTISEMENT

GE EXPERT STEVE LIGUORI DISCUSSES HOW A FREE EXCHANGE OF IDEAS LEADS TO BIGGER INNOVATIONS.

[Learn More](#)

ALL ACCESS SUBSCRIPTIONS

ACTIVATE YOUR ACCOUNT

NEW CUSTOMERS

Eagle webcam enthalls viewers while aiding research

April 14, 2014 8:52 PM



Bob Donaldson / Post-Gazette

Pixcontroller president and CEO Bill Powers is the moving force behind the live streaming images of the bald eagle nest in Pittsburgh's Hays neighborhood.

By David Templeton / Pittsburgh Post-Gazette

On a recent afternoon, Bill Powers perked up with excitement when his PixController Inc. webcam of the bald eagles' nest in Hays reached an impressive benchmark.

"Wow, it hit a million," he called out in his Murrysville office. "This is great for Pittsburgh. We have a viral page."

The PixController Inc. eagles' nest cam, broadcasting online since Dec. 20, and an osprey cam near Portland, Northampton County, are part of a pilot project involving the company and the Pennsylvania Game Commission in a public-private partnership. The goal is to use wildlife cams to advance research and education. But the popularity of the eagle cam has soared beyond expectations, capturing the public interest and imagination.

Weeks ago, after the mother eagle assaulted a raccoon trying to steal an egg, Mr. Powers sent video links to CBS, NBC, Fox and "Entertainment Tonight," among others, which provided worldwide publicity that's helped build the audience for the round-the-clock raptor soap opera. As of yesterday afternoon, there were more than 1,174,000 total views.

Other popular downloads show the eggs hatching (the last of the three eaglets hatched on April 2), nest attacks by a juvenile eagle and a red tail hawk and the eaglets being fed a squirrel, fish and

Share with others:

25 Like 7 Tweet 0 Share

Share

Print Email Read Later

Related Media:

- [Eagle shirts for sale](#)
- [Live: Watch Pittsburgh's bald eagles](#)

ADVERTISEMENT

Celtic Woman
the emerald tour

MAY 17 · 7:30PM
BENEDUM CENTER
CELTICWOMAN.COM

LATEST IN ENVIRONMENT

[Eagle webcam enthalls viewers while aiding research](#)
about 11 hours ago

[Eagle shirts for sale](#)
about 11 hours ago

[South Side becomes a storm water lab](#)
1 day ago

[U.N. panel issues stern report on global warming](#)
1 day ago

[Whitefish shortage startles as Passover approaches](#)
1 day ago

[W.Va. court to decide legality of suit over Dunkard Creek](#)
6 days ago

Three Quick Questions

Does the United States have a culture that is too obsessed with guns?

- Yes
- No
- I'm not sure

Post-Gazette Question

Powered by
Civicscience

ADVERTISEMENT

birds, especially a Harrison gull whose plucked feathers were everywhere in the nest, looking like snow.

The boon of the cam now has the state Game Commission considering installing webcams inside a bear den and a beaver lodge.

PixController, a small operation involving Mr. Powers and four employees, produces remote surveillance systems, motion-activated wildlife scouting cameras and wireless-triggered cellular and digital video recorder systems, with a more recent focus on wireless, remote security systems for industry, including shale gas wells.

The wildlife cams are done more out of passion than profit, said Mr. Powers, who also operates a series of screech-owl cams in Murrysville. He's received some donations for the eagle cam, but he has borne most of the \$5,000 cost.

In Hays, two solar panels recharge 400 pounds of batteries to power the eagle cam around the clock. A motion-activated security camera, trained on the equipment, already has led to five people being arrested for trespassing onto federally protected land around the eagles' nest. On April 7, the cam went blank for more than three hours. But a reboot system unique to Mr. Powers' equipment allowed him to get it back online. Without that system, the cam would have been done for the season.

No details will be censored in the broadcasts, even if the eagles were to capture and deliver a kitten or puppy to their three dare-we-say ravenous eaglets. Mr. Powers and Game Commission officials also warn that the odds are against survival of all three eaglets.

It is this kind of drama that draws 10,000 to 15,000 unique computer views to the link at any one time. No computer is ever counted twice. The link is available at www.post-gazette.com.

Mr. Powers also said the audience makeup is 70 percent female, likely due to interest in the mother eagle, the laying of eggs and raising of eaglets on a wild high-protein diet of fish, fowl and game. Another attraction is the male eagle's role in the monogamous relationship.

"It's better than a zoo," said Mr. Powers, who serves as president and CEO of PixController. "How many people have seen a bald eagle in their lifetime?"

Motion-activated

Getting the eagle cam in place took about six years.

Mr. Powers initially failed to get Game Commission approval to place a cam inside a bear's den because officials said it would unduly disturb the bear. But Mr. Powers was approached by a documentary filmmaker and Lynn Rogers, a wildlife biologist and founder of the North American Bear Center of the Wildlife Research Institute in Ely, Minn., to use a PixController webcam to produce streaming video of a hibernating black bear near the border of Minnesota and Canada in 2010. It followed the bear as it gave birth and then cared for its cub.

The three-year run of bear cams uncovered several surprises about hibernation. For example, bears are often awake during this period, especially during the birth when they are in obvious pain. They leave the den to gather bedding material and closely care for the newborn cub. It once was thought that bears gave birth while hibernating.

"From 2010 to now, we're finally starting to reveal the details of what bears actually do in their dens, which is the least observed half of a black bear's life," Mr. Rogers said. "It also is the greatest educational opportunity anyone has ever had with bears, with that kind of following of people watching every day."



ADVERTISEMENT



Mr. Powers, he said, was invaluable in setting up the first den cam, "and we're going to be forever thankful to him."

"This is the kind of thing wildlife agencies should be putting out for education. It makes people appreciate and get behind programs to help animals."

Rare images

Mr. Powers' camera technology allows its placement in remote and distant locations, key to the success to date in capturing video of rare endangered species. The eagle cam represents only the latest of a growing list of accomplishments in nature videography.

In years past, PixController cameras captured the first video of a Javan rhinoceros and her calf -- of which only 60 existed at the time -- and also successfully captured video of the even rarer Sumatran rhino in Borneo. Company cameras also produced video of the endangered Malayan tiger.

The videos of the endangered species were broadcast worldwide, with the World Wildlife Federation praising PixController technology for providing "an amazing leap forward" in its research and conservation efforts.

More recently, a PixController camera captured the first video of the Cross River gorillas in Cameroon, with only 250 in existence. The video shows 11 of the gorillas, including a male drumming his chest.

The popularity of the eagle cam parallels the popularity of the eagle with its majestic white head, noble demeanor and predatory nature.

A chat-line broadcast alongside the cam draws comments from experts that Wild Earth, the video webcam broadcasting company, set up to answer questions and provide information about eagles.

The eagle cam is attracting a growing number of classrooms because it serves as an ideal basis to focus student attention on science and biology.

"I've been referring to it as the best reality show anywhere," said Tom Fazi, information and education supervisor for the Game Commission's southwest region. "This has been huge for us. We know the excitement this has generated here and all over the world. It has gone crazy, and all the credit goes to Bill."

With numerous classrooms logging into the eagle cam daily, the Game Commission has produced a 20-minute documentary along with booklets to help teach students about eagles, Mr. Fazi said.

The pilot project has taken flight.

"We have had a good relationship with Bill for several years now," he said. "We've purchased his cameras and used them in law enforcement and research efforts in the past, and we really value his company and his expertise in this field. He makes some good stuff and we're very pleased he was the guy that got the camera up and running.

"The quality is incredible."

David Templeton: dtempleton@post-gazette.com or 412-263-1578.

[Get unlimited digital access - web, mobile, tablet, apps and more.](#)

Join the conversation:

[Commenting policy](#) | [How to report abuse](#)

Post a new comment
Login

Empty comment input box

Post

0 Comments

[Commenting policy](#) | [How to report abuse](#)

You May Like

Promoted Content by Taboola



Bald eagle has to fend off another attack



Low Carb Asian Tuna Lettuce Wraps
Ready, Set, Eat!



Video shows arrival of bald eagle's first egg



If You Ever Want to Retire Look at This Chart
Money Morning



14 Hottest Celebs With Ugliest Significant Others
Celeb Romance



Bald eagle pair in Hays welcomes second egg



Top 10 Cancer Causing Foods You Eat Every Day
NaturalON



Bald eagles lay egg in Hays nest

More From Post-Gazette

- **Bald eagle has to fend off another attack**
- **Video shows arrival of bald eagle's first egg**
- **Bald eagle pair in Hays welcomes second egg**
- **Bald eagles lay egg in Hays nest**
- **Bald eagle protects eggs from predatory raccoon**

From The Web

Promoted Content by Taboola

- **Kevin Hart In The Recording Studio, BYO Earplugs** (College Humor)
- **Low Carb Asian Tuna Lettuce Wraps** (Ready, Set, Eat!)
- **If You Ever Want to Retire Look at This Chart** (Money Morning)
- **14 Hottest Celebs With Ugliest Significant Others** (Celeb Romance)
- **Top 10 Cancer Causing Foods You Eat Every Day** (NaturalON)



Get the PG delivered to your home, plus unlimited digital access

Pittsburgh Post-Gazette



Get unlimited digital access – web, mobile, tablet, apps and more

post-gazette.COM



Get posters, books, DVDs, photos, sports items, gifts and more

PG STORE

Pittsburgh Post-Gazette

[HOME](#)


[Contact Us](#)

[PG Sites:](#)


[Social Media:](#)

[Print:](#)

NEWS
LOCAL
SPORTS
OPINION
A & E
LIFE
BUSINESS
VIDEO
PHOTO
CLASSIFIEDS
JOBS
CIRCULARS
CARS
REAL ESTATE
PG STORE
WEDDINGS

Site Map
Media Kit
34 Allies
About Us
 RSS Feeds
Corrections
Technical Help?
Products & Services
Terms of Use
Privacy Policy

Sports Blogs
PowerSource
Staff Blogs
Community Voices
Early Returns
Sportstown
Pittsburgh Mom
The Digs
Special Projects
PG Plate

Twitter:
News
Customer Care
Facebook
Pinterest
Google+
 feedback

Home Delivery
Rates
Back Copies
Newsstand
Electronic:
PGe
Press

Copyright ©1997—2014 PG Publishing Co., Inc. All Rights Reserved.