Case study

How loon nest cams can help a good cause

About the Project

The Loon Preservation Committee has a praiseworthy, important mission. For the last 44 years, they've worked to increase awareness about loons, the problems they face, and efforts to preserve them. Why? They believe that loons are an indicator of a healthy climate. "As we've learned about our loons and their challenges, we've discovered that loons are uniquely able to illuminate threats to other wildlife and to the aquatic environments on which we all depend," explains Bill Gassman of the Loon Preservation Committee. One of the instruments that has proven to be of great value in their mission to preserve, protect, and educate are two live cameras broadcasting 24/7 to YouTube. "Watching loons struggle to reproduce makes people more aware of the environment and nature and hopefully, more involved," explains Mr. Gassman.

List of Supplies

Video quality:	1080p
Audio:	no audio
Camera model:	AXIS P5635-E MKII
ACAP application:	CamStreamer App
	CamOverlay App
Streaming platform:	YouTube Live
Location:	USA

Technical Solution

The Loon Preservation Committee had been using Axis cameras for several years before discovering the CamStreamer App four years ago. "We used a different streaming service with the native Axis streaming protocol. However, that service did not support transcoding. As we were able to broadcast our stream with more bandwidth, many of our viewers were experiencing buffering and browser crashes," says Mr. Gassman. After trying the CamStreamer App, the team realized that the older Axis camera did not have enough power to drive the stream. That led them to purchasing two higher-end Axis cameras and two CamStreamer licenses. They chose AXIS P5635-E MKII PTZ cameras for their high-performance HDTV 1080p resolution and 30x optical zoom. A high-definition image and great details when zooming in were the winning features. Finally, the combination with the CamStreamer App turned out to be a winning tandem, as Mr. Gassman confirms: "We have not found a better PTZ camera that can broadcast to YouTube and did not want to invest in separate encoders. And our experience with the CamStreamer App has been excellent. It's easy to install and use. It works very well with YouTube. We've done a few short broadcasts on Facebook, and the CamStreamer App works well there, too." One of the cameras is on a wooden post in a pond, about 10 meters from the nesting site. An Ethernet cable runs along the bottom to the edge of the pond, where the internet connection is located. Infrared lights are used at night to provide images 24/7.

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Conclusion

The live streams run approximately from May to mid-July. The size of the audience of the broadcast depends on what's going on in the nest. "While the loons are looking for a nesting spot and mating, there is a small but loyal audience. When events occur, such as egg laying or hatching, our audience viewing rate can jump to 500 an hour," says Mr. Gassman. However, when we consider the broader picture, the loon cams have been a success. Last year, across the two cameras, there were over one and a half million views. At the moment, when eggs are laid and there's not much going on (the loon is just sitting on the nest), there are about 3,000 views per day. Traffic is mainly driven by scheduled chats with the team biologists, the Loon Preservation Committee Facebook feed, and press releases to the local print and broadcast media. "The benefit is a much broader audience for loons and increased memberships and donations for the Loon Preservation efforts. Also, we've learned that the loons don't always follow the published research. By watching them 24 hours, 7 days a week and having a crowd of people reporting incidents, we've discovered new things about loons that will help to protect them better in the future," concludes Mr. Gassman.

camstreamer.com/resources/case-study_animals_Loons