



**Tales from a
Sisters
Naturalist**
by Jim Anderson

**The eagles are
baaaaaak!**

In the entire US of A there is only one golden eagle nest being monitored by web cam at this time, and it's right here in Sisters Country. And thanks to the East Cascades Audubon Society (ECAS) — who is paying to have the images streamed around the world, land-owner Leslie Lawrence, who watches over the camera equipment, and Sisters Astronomy Club technician Jim Hammond, who keeps the equipment going, all you have to do is wiggle your mouse and go to: goldeneaglecam.com and the live image is there for you to see.

As the image comes into focus on your television, computer screen or cell phone you'll see a very regal, noble-looking adult female golden eagle very quietly — and in a queen's pose she so easily occupies — incubating one or two

eggs that, if all goes well, will hatch in about 35 to 40 days.

If you are watching when the eggs hatch you'll witness just how tender a mama golden eagle can be. As soon as she hears (feels?) the young eagle starting to crack the shell that begins the process of hatching, she carefully rises, steps to the side of the nest and watches the process very intently. And now you can do the same sitting in your home.

If it hadn't been for the dedication of Janet Zuelke and her sidekick Forrest Babcock, none of what we are enjoying today would have been possible.

In fact, Janet took personal ownership of that nest. From the time the female laid her first egg, Janet was on pins and needles, worrying about the welfare of the nestlings and parents.

One year the youngster was blown out of the nest in a powerful windstorm, and really, I worried about Janet's health and welfare. That dear woman was beside herself as she watched helplessly the attempts of the alarmed female eagle trying to coax the baby back into the nest by offering it food. I had the honor to be with Janet as she went through the pain and sorrow of that event.

She wanted me to go over there and place the baby

back into the nest, but that wasn't in the "rules." If the youngster had been blown out because of human causes I guess it would have been legal to butt in. But this was all in Mother Nature's bailiwick; we humans had nothing to do with it.

Over the years, the female kept coming back each spring and each time she made the nest bigger, stronger and safer for her little ones. And each time she came back, Janet and Forrest kept saying, "What if we had a camera..." Then one spring day the light came on. Forrest had the answer and the beginning of what we see today began to happen.

The first gazebo that is holding the camera system today was crude, shaky and far from weatherproof. But anyone who knew and worked with Forrest also knew he was good at solving optical and electronic mysteries and challenges. He was an optical engineer to begin with; applying his skills to challenges was right up his alley. What a thrill it was the first time Janet and



PHOTO BY SUE ANDERSON

Golden eagles Rocky, Petra, and young Adler in their nest downstream of Sisters on Whychus Creek.

Forrest called me to come out and see the first images of the eagle on the television in their living room.

From that day on, the images became more steady, better-focused and more reliable, and the crowning glory came when Forrest, all by himself, poured a concrete pedestal in his beautifully built gazebo to support the camera. From that day to this, the images streaming out of the optical and electronic equipment now housed in Janet and Forrest's beautiful old gazebo are rock-solid and are being viewed around the world.

Leslie Lawrence, the wonderful lady who purchased the place, took to the eagle cam like a duck to water.

Gary Miller jumped right in to keep the cam up and

running, and Leslie herself plunked down the money needed to keep the streaming going on. But it was Kevin Smith of East Cascades Audubon Society who took over all the financial needs, and Jim Hammond of the Sisters Astronomy Club who solved all the mechanical and optical issues, and is still mothering it today.

It's free to watch, but costly to keep going. Jim has to keep tuning it up as it's sitting right out there in weather of Sisters Country, even under the shelter of the original gazebo. It also costs money to pay the streaming costs, and the equipment isn't free either. If you'd like to help defray the costs, you can make a donation right on the golden eagle webpage, www.goldeneaglecam.com.



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