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Case Study

Project Location: RSPB Saltholme – Middlesbrough - UK

Client: Royal Society for the Protection of Birds (RSPB)

Date: February 09

Project Description

When looking for an innovative approach to interpreting the wildlife on the Saltholme reserve near Middlesbrough The RSPB came to Outersight. After a site visit and some in depth discussion with the RSPB team we designed a system that incorporated some advanced remote observation systems linked to some cutting edge live TV and internet streaming techniques but offered ease of use, reliability and future upgrade potential.

The system is based around a Newtek Tricaster which is a compact Live TV production system. This has professional vision mixing, titling and keying facilities as well as digital video and still image playback. It can also be used to record the programme output and stream live to the internet providing the ability for the reserve to 'webcast' it's own version of the BBC's 'Springwatch'. When not being used for live production the Tricaster is used as an edit suite to turn any captured footage from around the reserve into professionally produced DVD's for playback at Saltholme or even broadcast on TV.

Of the three cameras supplied the first is a roving camera and can be hand carried by a two man crew and set up in minutes. A digital microwave link allows the cameras to be setup almost anywhere on the reserve to beam back live images of any interesting wildlife that is around. A two way audio link allows the camera operator to give a commentary of what is being seen on the screens and for visitors to ask questions and even call the shots.

The second camera is a transportable camera designed for longer term deployment at a fixed location such as a nest

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site. This camera is equipped with a battery and solar panel to allow prolonged operation without intervention from the Wardens. As with the roving camera a digital microwave link allows total freedom of movement throughout the reserve. The third camera is located in the Family Hide and is linked to the main visitor centre via a fibre optic cable. This also has a two way audio link but also has a large LCD screen to allow for local viewing at the family hide. All the camera systems are designed to be easy to use and portable.

Within the visitor centre there are two 40" LCD screens where the live output from the Tricaster can be displayed. To add flexibility the network cabling within the centre was used for signal routing which allows for the screens and equipment rack to be moved to new locations if required in the future. As well as the live images from the Tricaster the screens can display programme material from the DVD Hard disk recorder or the nest box camera that has been installed near the Café.

Outersight's experience of a range of disciplines such as Broadcast TV production, audio visual technology and remote observation systems proved invaluable in designing this innovative system for the RSPB. The system has been designed to be easy to learn yet very powerful, providing a new tool set for the RSPB to use to engage with it's members and non members. The live streaming capability allows people of all ages and abilities from all over the world to see what the RSPB is achieving on the Saltholme Reserve.

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