

## Viewers can watch hibernating bear thanks to system developed by Murrysville company

by Linda Lyman

Her snow covered fur rises and falls as she breathes, deep in slumber under a hollowed out log deep in the Minnesota woods. Lily is probably ready to deliver cubs sometime in the next week or so, and if all goes well, Internet users should be able to watch via a web cam installed in her den.

That system was designed by Murrysville-based PixController, Inc. Bill Powers, president and CEO of PixController, said the Lily bear den web cam project was "a very exciting" one in which to be involved.

Last year Doug Hajicek, the producer of the History

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**Lily, a three-year-old bear, looks out of her den at North American Bear Center in Ely, Minnesota. A web cam system developed by PixController in Murrysville may soon record the birth of Lily's cubs.**

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Channel's Monster Quest series approached PixController, a company that specializes in motion-activated remote wildlife cameras, about installing a live web cam in an active bear den for the North American Bear Center in Ely, Minnesota. PixController had

provided cameras for previous Monster Quest shows.

Powers said nothing like this had been done before and if the camera captures Lily giving birth, it will be historic. Lily is a three-year-old bear who has been part of a long-term research project run by the Center.

The system took five weeks to design and test. Once ready, it was shipped to Ely. A small infrared camera that can see in the dark, and a sound microphone were installed on Jan. 8 and set up to stream the feed from Lily's den to [www.wildearth.tv](http://www.wildearth.tv). "Given the remote area of the den, just getting the power and Internet access to broadcast the feed was a difficult task," said Powers.

After the Today Show aired an interview with Hajicek about the feed, so many people



tuned in to watch Lily that the servers were overwhelmed and crashed. Hajicek called Powers, who immediately got a team working on the problem.

He said it took two hours of intense work before they were able to get the servers up and running. They also arranged for backup servers as they expect the number of viewers to increase even more once the cubs are born. So far, they have recorded as many as 5000 viewers tuned in at once, hoping to catch Lily giving birth.

Lily has been very active recently, rearranging her bedding and causing researchers to feel that she may have the cubs at any time. Black bears typically give birth in mid to late January.

Powers said his firm became involved in wildlife cams in 2004, when he designed a system to broadcast from his Mur-

rysville backyard. Along with a main camera, his system made use of remote, battery operated solar panel charged cameras installed in different locations in the woods.

That first system enabled viewers to watch deer, raccoons, turkeys and squirrels on a daily basis along with fox, coyotes, hawks and owls and other animals not often seen.

In 2009, South Africa-based Wild Earth TV contacted Powers, asking to broadcast his wildlife web cam through them. Wild Earth specializes in broadcasting from wild animal web cams all over the world.

While the original technology broadcast still pictures that were refreshed every ten seconds, PixController's newest technology, with pan, tilt and zoom features, broadcasts a live, streaming video feed that Powers said "gives you a feeling of being right there in the woods."

Along with the Lilycam, Powers said another of his systems, shipped recently to the World Wildlife Federation's Indonesian Tiger Research team, has already captured images of a rare female Sumatran tiger and her cubs as they investigated the camera trap.