

KQED

8 Calming Livecams of Kittens, Penguins, Jellyfish and More

March 19, 2020 - Sarah Hotchkiss

Now that most humans of the world are sequestered indoors, the desire to tap into signs of life outside our walls couldn't be greater. As the co-creator of FogCam explained to the New York Times last year about the appeal of his early-internet experiment, "It wasn't very exciting. But it didn't matter."

We currently need what FogCam has long offered: less excitement, more natural rhythms and images of things existing uninterrupted by a global pandemic.

Livecams are the answer.

Penguins Full of Personality

The set-up is simple: a group of African penguins wobble around at the San Diego Zoo. But the punchline gets me every single time. When they either enter or exit the water, it's pure comedy.

We only get to see one beachy section of a larger penguin domain, which the zoo tells me is full of faux granite boulders and resting areas that simulate the birds' native South African habitat. Classified as endangered, this flock is part of an effort to breed the species in captivity.

Also of note: the penguins companionably share their pool with leopard sharks! If I had to come up with any complaints about this livecam, it would be the lack of penguin sounds, which the cam doesn't pick up.

The Zen of Moon Jellies

Running low on the recreational cannabis you stockpiled to weather this shelter-in-place storm? The moon jelly livecam is a viable trippy replacement. Complete with a New Age synth soundtrack, the cam focuses tightly on the jellies' tank, eliminating all context from the brilliant blue void. Watch these translucent, otherworldly creatures pulsate and float with the current, showing off their delicate frilly edges in the very personification (jellification?) of calm.

Puppies and Kittens Galore

Honestly, this entire article could simply be a run-down of explore.org's livecams. But I would like to direct your attention to two extremely precious channels that will remind you of all that is good in this world, regardless of where you fall on the dog/cat-person divide.

The puppies of Warrior Canine Connection are trained as assistance dogs to help wounded veterans live more fully. From the age of about four weeks, they enter this playroom (sometimes simply a group nap room) to be socialized by staff, volunteers, U.S. military service members and their families.

And over at the Kitten Rescue Sanctuary in Los Angeles, tiny furballs navigate over-large cushions and tumble around as they wait to be placed into loving homes. It's going to be hard to restrain yourself from adopting the lot of 'em in short order.

FogCam, the Internet's Oldest Webcam

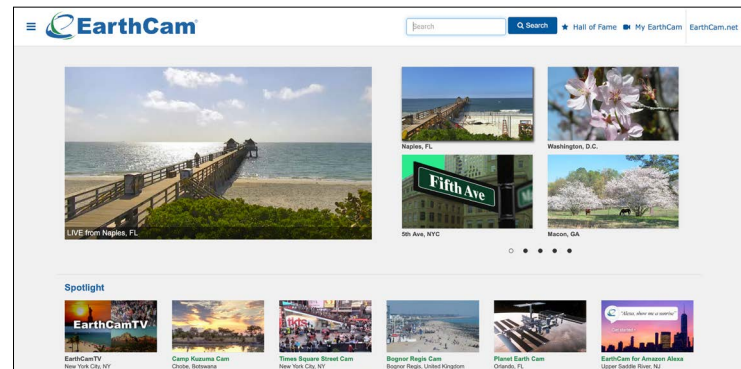
Did you know San Francisco is home to the internet's oldest operating livecam?

FogCam, created in 1994 by Jeff Schwartz and Dan Wong, two San Francisco State University grad students, has broadcast views of the SFSU campus for 26 years. In August 2019, when the duo announced they'd be turning the cam off for good, the people just wouldn't have it. Articles eulogized the cam's place in internet history. Journalists and viewers alike waxed rhapsodic about its pure intent, pre-Big Tech, to capture a slice of campus life.

The outpouring of emotion for the venerable livecam led to a promise from SFSU to maintain the operation. Schwartz and Wong bowed out. Unfortunately, at the time of publishing, FogCam hasn't updated since the wee hours of Feb. 21 (it's supposed to refresh every 20 seconds), but rest assured, I did get confirmation from an SFSU representative that they're working on a fix.

I imagine the present view, if actually live, would be fairly static. The cam now faces Holloway Avenue on the edge of campus, which is currently all but completely shut down.

Chattin' Bout Ospreys



Sometimes the best part of a livecam is the community that forms around it. The Golden Gate Audubon Society hosts a livecam of an osprey nest perched on a decommissioned WWII crane, offering breathtaking views of the Bay from the Richmond shoreline. The live chat that accompanies the cam is full of adoring screenshots and excited analysis of bird behavior. If you're looking for community around shared enthusiasm for these regal creatures, you've come to the right place.

An Empty Times Square

If you can handle it, watching [EarthCam's](#) live feed of Times Square, now eerily devoid of crowds, is a fascinating glimpse into the way the coronavirus has affected urban life. The site offers different vantage points of the usually bustling neighborhood, from overhead angles to street-level views. What surprised me (but shouldn't have) was the still-present onslaught of Times Square advertising, now flashing and blinking without an audience.

Swimming With Sea Otters

I know what you're here for. Let's be honest with ourselves, if we have to come back in the next life as animals, we want to be otters. With their facilities closed to the public, the Monterey Bay Aquarium is doing something a bit different this week.

They've placed four young rescued female otters in the exhibit, where, I quote, "They're practicing their diving and foraging skills before returning home!" The aquarium doesn't want wild sea otters to get too accustomed to humans before they release them, so this closure creates an opportunity for them to "act otter-ly like themselves."

Next week, resident otters will be back in action, guaranteeing that otter content, visible via livecam 7am–7pm Pacific time, never lags.