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Animal Nature: Young chicks, hot action due soon on Raptor Cam; rodent love songs; endangered species art contest open to kids, teens

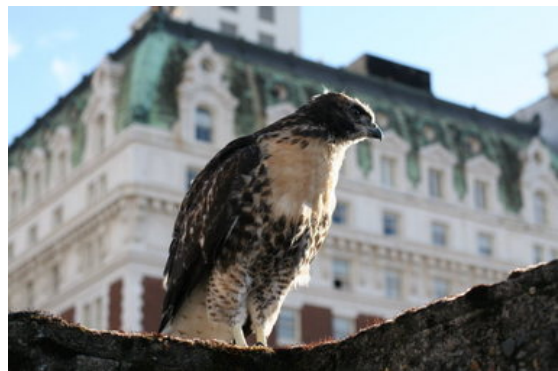
Published: Thursday, February 16, 2012, 9:15 AM

By Katy Muldoon, The Oregonian [Follow](#)



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+ View full size Bob Sallinger/Audubon Society of Portland A red-tailed hawk perches in downtown Portland.

The folks at **Audubon Society of Portland** should have beat "**Portlandia**" to the punch and coined the crafty "Put-a-bird-on-it" phrase five years ago, when **Raptor Cam** first went live. Collaborating with **KGW-TV**, the society has given online viewers fascinating, up-close views into the home life of a pair of red-tailed hawks that annually lay eggs and tend hungry chicks in a nest tucked into a fire escape on a downtown high-rise. This month, Raptor Cam is back, streaming live video from cameras trained on the still egg-free nest to the Web.

his annual raptor **blog**, where he notes, among other bits of bird history and trivia, that though red tails have fidelity to previous nest locations, they could change nest sites.

What? And render Raptor Cam as dead as a cancelled sitcom? Yes, sometimes real life can disappoint as deeply as TV can. Historically, Raptor Cam's avian stars remodel their nest beginning in January and lay up to four eggs 24 to 28 hours apart in early or mid March. Eleven chicks have hatched in the nest over the last five years, typically in mid April, when Raptor Cam viewership heats up. The young stay in the nest for about a month and a half, fledging in late May or early June. They stick close for several more weeks, sharpening their flying and hunting skills, before winging away into the real world. In other news from the animal kingdom ...

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MICE: Right this minute mice might be crooning inside your kitchen walls or belting out squeaky ballads from the bowels of your basement.

Scientists who used digital audio software to slow down and analyze vocalizations of wild house mice found that males emit song-like sounds, inaudible to human ears, when they encounter a female's scent, and that females are attracted to the songs.

Plus, female house mice can distinguish siblings from unrelated males by their songs – even when they haven't previously heard the brothers sing. That, researchers say, may help explain how females avoid inbreeding.

The researcher was conducted by scientists at **University of Veterinary Medicine, Vienna**, and was published recently in two journals, **Physiology & Behavior**, and **Journal of Ethology**.



LAMBS: Why yes, spring has sprung, at least on the lambing calendar. From Monday, Feb. 20, until Wednesday, March 14, **Oregon State University's Sheep Center** opens its barn so the public can watch the little ruminants being born and crying for their mothers' attention.

Hours: 9 a.m. to 2 p.m. Monday through Wednesday and weekends. The sheep center is closed for classes Thursdays and Fridays.

About 250 ewes are expected to give birth to somewhere in the neighborhood of 400 lambs.

Admission is free but visitors are encouraged to bring non-perishable food items for donations to the **Linn-Benton Food Share**. The OSU lamb barn is at 7565 N.W. Oak Creek Dr.,

Corvallis.

Small groups may go on self-guided tours. Groups of more than 12 should first arrange appointments by sending an e-mail to lambing.barn@oregonstate.edu.

A word of warning: Small children, pregnant women, the elderly and immunosuppressed individuals may be especially vulnerable to diseases that sheep can pass to humans. Many veterinarians and health care professionals advise such persons to avoid contact with pregnant sheep and their environment, according to OSU.

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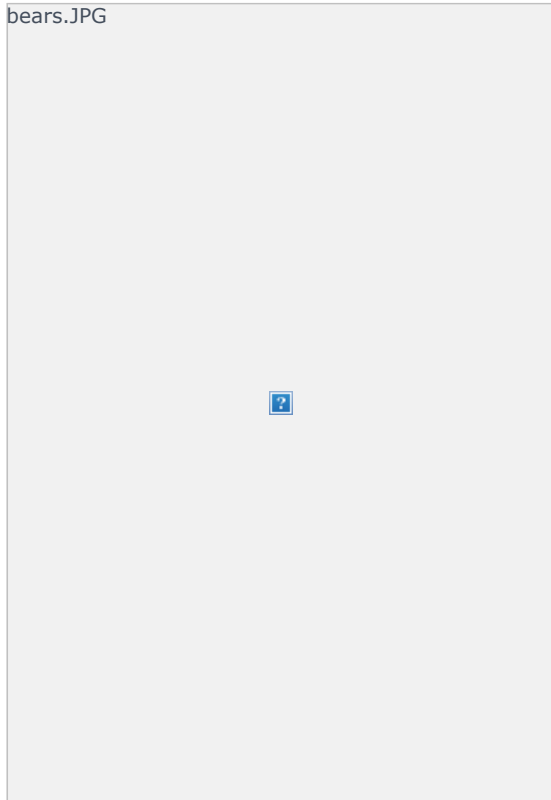
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+ **View full size** AP Photo/ Arctic Photo Safari, John Tidwell

As global warming causes sea ice to melt rapidly, animals such as this polar bear and her cub, photographed in Barrow, Alaska, face increasing threats.

ENDANGERED SPECIES: A whole herd of animal-centric organizations wants those who teach in elementary, middle and high schools to encourage students to enter the annual federal Endangered Species Day youth Art Contest.

The contests is designed to help young people learn about endangered species and support efforts to mend or save habitats and preserve and nurture struggling plants and animals.

Winners, judged by a panel of artists, photographers and conservationists, will be chosen in four categories: kindergarten to Grade 2; Grades 3-5; Grades 6-8; and Grades 9-12. Prizes range from plaques and art supplies to an art lesson via Skype from Robert Wyland, the noted marine-life artist.

The contests is organized by the **U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service**, the **Endangered Species Coalition**, the **Association of Zoos and Aquariums**, and the **Odgen Museum of Southern Art/ University of New Orleans**.

Find more information, including judging criteria [here](#).

- **Katy Muldoon;** www.twitter.com/katymuldoon

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