



## Big brother at the bird feeder

Ornithologists enlist Web surfers to track species via remote camera

**B**ird enthusiasts worldwide have helped scientists confirm the range expansion of the green jay as well as other sub-tropical species such as the white-tipped dove. The project, co-directed by Berkeley Professor and Director of Center for New Media Ken Goldberg, features a remote-viewing Web application with an interface developed by graduate student Bryce Lee. Anyone can log on to the website of the Collaborative Observatories for Natural Environments (CONE) and access a remote camera in the Welder Wildlife Refuge in Texas, set up by Texas A&M's Dezhen Song and his students, to take snapshots of birds and post them to an image gallery. Users have gathered evidence that green jays, great kiskadees, and white-tipped doves were frequenting a spot nearly 60 miles outside their normal range. Ornithologist John Rappole of the Smithsonian National Zoological Park, who enlisted Goldberg to help create the site, posits the shift may be due to global climate change.

The camera at Welder is the latest of four remote-camera projects used for bird research within CONE. Goldberg, whose projects integrate robotics, art, and computer science, made his first foray into ornithology when he posted a remote-control camera in craigslist founder Craig Newmark's backyard. Later, he helped the Cornell Lab of Ornithology establish remote cameras to search for the elusive ivory-billed woodpecker, which, until recently, was thought to be extinct.

Goldberg hopes to make the data from these projects available to other researchers, and the Welder Refuge's Selma Glasscock is helping to add an educational component that will engage the interest of elementary and high school students. The idea, Goldberg says, is to create community around the endeavor—"and the more the merrier."

—Anne Pinckard

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