

Axis network cameras show what's going on in the magical underwater world of Toba Aquarium.

Live cameras convey the aquarium's appeal.



Organization:
Toba Aquarium

Location:
Toba City, Mie
Prefecture, Japan

Application:
Live viewing of
aquarium creatures

Mission

Toba Aquarium is built in scenic Iseshima, in Mie Prefecture, Japan. This aquarium is a world leader in terms of its size and exhibition content. In twelve zones that recreate the natural environment, the denizens of the oceans and rivers are cared for and exhibited. The aquarium is designated by the Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology as a center for social welfare and education. The facility is also active in academic research. Toba Aquarium focuses on the nurturing and protection of rare marine species at risk of extinction. It has established records in the birth of black finless dolphins, the first second-generation sea otter born in Japan, and the world's only saltwater manatee born in captivity.

It is already well known as a favorite site for tourists and visitors to the Iseshima area. However, the aquarium's officials, wondering if there was a way to convey the attractions of the facility to more people, searched for an effective way to use the popularity of the Internet.

Solution

A publisher proposed a plan that would allow living creatures to be observed over the Internet. Consequently, "Coral Reef Diving", one of the tanks already popular at the aquarium, was opened to the public through the use of a camera for the display of live images. A large coral reef is recreated in a tank measuring 16mx15mx5.5m, with a capacity of 1,320 tons. It is the world's first trial aquarium with a viewing gallery covered in acrylic on the ceiling, front, left and right walls. Even without actually diving, it is possible to feel as though one is suspended in the coral reef.

Cameras installed on both sides and in the rear of the viewing gallery film the coral reef and the fishes swimming through it. This footage is then made public on the Toba Aquarium website. The sensation this provides is very close to viewing the real thing.

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Mr. Mizukoshi, Curator of the Toba Aquarium.

Result

Since going public, there has been an increase in the numbers of people accessing the website with the keyword "live camera". It is fairly difficult to estimate the results regarding actual guests. However, one merit of the footage is that it makes one feel as though he or she is really watching ocean diving, and it does so in a way that pictures and words can't achieve. "I believe one big advantage of a live camera that makes use of an IP network is that it can transmit the amusement and charm of living creatures in a timely manner," says Mr. Mizukoshi, Curator of the Toba Aquarium.

Smooth distribution of high-quality images, even at night

Images from the AXIS 221 Network Cameras can be viewed on the live camera page of the official website. The images from the Axis network cameras are crisp and sharp, as if the aquarium was right before one's very eyes. Additionally, the AXIS 221 functions both day and night; it can film in black and white after the aquarium closes, providing very clear images. The ability to see the fishes' movements at night is an interesting aspect of the camera's functionality.



"Of course, the sense of reality in a still image and a video image is completely different. I feel like live video has more of an appeal," Mr. Mizukoshi says.

Promotion of web usage

The facility has received favorable comments from visitors regarding the live camera. Nonetheless, Toba Aquarium continues to work on a variety of promotions using the website. On the official site, the Aquarium is working to convey the excitement of their facility by providing information about ongoing events and the care of creatures through various blogs, and also issuing an e-mail magazine. Moreover, on the mobile phone site they deliver standby images and the public viewing gallery in addition to a fee-based site that provides further content. "In the future we'd like to produce the appeal of the aquarium in a more 3-dimensional manner using the Internet," says Mr. Mizukoshi.

A broader perspective with the use of more live cameras

"I'm satisfied with the performance of our current cameras," Mr. Mizukoshi says. "Our goal is to attract people to the aquarium. However, another major theme of our work is to convey the charm and wonder of sea creatures to more people." The Aquarium is looking into the idea of installing additional network cameras. This would make it possible to view a variety of locations over the Internet. At first they were concerned that if they installed live cameras the number of actual visitors would decrease, but that fear has been shown to have no basis. It is thought that the live camera is the first step toward attracting more people to the aquarium. At a later date they check out the live camera again, and it becomes a positive cycle.

Another advantage of the live camera is the ability to view living creatures at night, which is an opportunity most people never have. In the future, the Aquarium hopes to use a variety of network cameras as ideas for new uses emerge.



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Toba Aquarium Home Page
www.aquarium.co.jp/
Toba Aquarium Live Camera
www.aquarium.co.jp/camera/