



days at
Dunrovin

February 1, 2019



**Ranch
Talk**



Welcome to Dunrovin Ranch



What's in a name?

When people first hear the name Dunrovin, they often think that it is a Scottish family name. That is not an unfair assumption. Dunrobin Castle in Scotland is, after all, one of the world's most famous "fairytale" castles. Dunrovin, however, is the combination of two words: done and roving. Dunrovin Ranch owner SuzAnne Miller's great-grandmother said those words when she returned to Montana after a long time away. She said "I never meant to leave Montana and I am back to stay. I am done roving." She had a "Dun Rovin" sign made for the cabin she built along Carpenter Creek in Montana's Belt Mountains.

SuzAnne played in that cabin as a child. When she, too, returned to Montana after years of living in Alaska, she felt exactly as her great-grandmother had felt. So she named her little ranch "Dunrovin."

Why did Dunrovin create the DaysAtDunrovin website?

DaysAtDunrovin got started when the Millers collaborated with the University of Montana to install a web camera above an osprey nest at the ranch. They thought of it as a scientific tool. But they soon learned that it was much more than that. It was a portal to a world they loved to share, an exciting "guest ranch" world focused on nature, wildlife, birds, ranch animals, and interesting characters of all kinds involved in numerous activities—from animal training to weddings, science experiments, art projects, music, and coping with winter's weather. It's all here. Dunrovin created the DaysAtDunrovin website to bring internet viewers right onto the ranch and make them a part of its world.

That original web camera over the osprey nest has been busy multiplying into four permanently installed web cameras, along with a couple more that move about the ranch as the action dictates.

In 2011, Northwest Energy moved the original ospreys' nest from one of their electrical poles to a new, higher pole they installed on the ranch and then assisted in putting up the first web camera.



Four Permanent Web Cameras Show All!



The Nest Cam remains in its original place, about five feet above the ospreys' enormous nest, which is set on a 47-foot-high pole at the west end of Dunrovin Ranch's horseback riding arena. It is equipped with an ambient microphone that captures all of the sounds and gives us intimate views of the complex struggles the ospreys endure to reproduce each year. Their lives are always interesting: at times joyful when chicks hatch and fledge, and sometimes raw and disturbing when things go wrong. It is the way of life.

Twice annually, Dunrovin hires a bucket truck to go up to the nest webcam for cleaning, maintenance, and changing out the winter bird feeders.

The Ranch Cam was the second permanent camera to be installed on a 35-foot-high repurposed flagpole at the east end of the barn and its corrals and stalls. It captures many ranch activities, such as feeding all the animals, horseback riding lessons, animal training, horseback rides that start there and head out for our trails along the rivers, and all the regular chores that make up life at a guest ranch. It does not have an ambient microphone. Rather, during scheduled and programmed broadcasts, individuals wear microphones so they can be heard as well as seen. Nearly all Dunrovin programs are broadcast over the Ranch Cam Channel.



The Bench Cam is situated on a bluff (or bench!) that looks over the riparian forest leading to the Bitterroot River. The edge between the fields and the forest is an important ecological zone that invites wildlife and birds to venture out of the forest to seek food. The bench camera focuses on a bird-feeding and bathing station that brings in many birds, as well as wildlife seeking to clean up the seeds that the birds messily scattered beneath the feeders. The exact position of the camera on the pole and the bird feeders may change as we gain experience with them.

The River Cam sits along the bank of the Bitterroot River next to a small group of cottonwood trees, which protect the webcam tower from being damaged during high winds and flooding waters. The trees also provide bank stability and ensure that the tower is well footed. The river is a world unto itself. Water is the source of all life, and the Bitterroot River is a wonderfully healthy, clean, clear, un-free-flowing river that nourishes the entire valley. The river camera provides us with untold hours of exciting viewing of wildlife, the osprey fishing, and many different human activities, such as fishing, floating, and our trial rides that cross the rivers twice.

