

Mufty's Musings – Magnificent Magpies

Dec 2022

It's -24C and ice lurks under the new fallen snow, causing emergency departments to gear up for broken wrists and hips. I prudently decide to stay indoors to do my wildlife photography. On the balcony of my seventh-floor apartment, I have a big clay pot that features flowers in summer, but in winter I use it for feeding magpies. "Mufty's Magpies" are exquisitely beautiful and incredibly smart. I've become greatly fond of these sharp-eyed birds and I assume they are fond of me too. I toss out a handful of peanuts each morning and they soar up from the river valley trees to check out my offerings.

They first perch on the balcony railing first and check out the lay of the land. I sit inside, camera in hand, with my finger on the shutter release, knowing my reflexes will be tested with their speed and agility. I've tried using my camera's burst mode setting in the past but I wind up with a lot of tail feathers and empty sky shots. If I'm patient and lucky, I can hand snap some fabulous shots of magpies with wings spread wide, circling the area. The morning sun lights them from the side, catching the reflection in their keen eyes, their spectacular colouring and the amazing beauty of their wings in flight. The mornings have been so bright recently that I can use ridiculously high shutter speeds of 1/8000 a second to capture their incredible acrobatics that we never see with the naked eye.

I shoot through the window glass so my images are not always tack sharp. But the definition of wildlife photography is "a genre of photography concerned with documenting various forms of wildlife in their natural habitat," so I think I'm doing just that. And I'm having a lot of Foto-Fun, while staying warm and safe.

