Through The Lens

A guide to digital photography for computer enthusiasts.
After the click of your camera, you're only half done!

Bring on the birds!
by Lynda Buske

Life is not an Alfred Hitchcock movie so don't be nervous about bird photography just because you don't have a birder type lens…you know the kind that is longer than a Subway special! Within the limits of your camera, there is probably lots you can do to capture a good bird photo. With my current gear, I use my bridge camera (Lumix FZ1000) that only has a 16 times zoom. Make sure to have as much light as possible, i.e., wide aperture ("A" set to low number). As well, consider a higher ISO setting. If you have the time and patience to sit in one locale, a tripod is ideal but keep in mind birds move quickly and frequently so you may prefer just hand-holding your camera.

Get whatever zoomed shot you can while making sure to focus on the bird and not the branch in front or behind because with a wide aperture, you will have a short depth of field. If your camera defaults to multiple point focus, change it to spot focus. Many bird photographers insist that the photo show at least one eye of the bird so keep that in mind. I try to get an angle where the surrounding area and background are attractive. I then crop in my PC photo editing software making sure the bird is not centred (rule of thirds) and has plenty of space in the direction it is looking. See waxwing below.

The before and after shots of the blue jay illustrate the limitations of my camera but also what I could do in post processing with Photoscape X. The jay was very skittish and disappeared the minute I stepped outside so I shot from behind a pane of glass. I was able to remove the glass effect with a dehazing tool. I then applied some overall contrast and sharpening on just the bird. I could not make a tight crop or I would lose too much resolution so instead I added a vignette to focus the eye on the bird even though it is not filling the frame. It's a handy trick for sure!