



## Magic Show

How I wish there were more than 24 hours in a day! I think I could easily use at least double that amount of time, if it were available to me! There just aren't enough hours in the day to fit in all the things I want to do ...

Part of the 'problem' I guess, is that the traditional printmaking work that provides my living, is so labour intensive that it alone pretty much fills up each day. Then when you set aside eight hours or so for sleep, and some time for basic things like meals, cleaning, and shopping, there just isn't anything left over. This explains why I don't really have anything like a hobby these days. When I was quite a bit younger, I indulged in any number of 'on the side' activities: I used to be a very serious stamp collector, I built a number of classic guitars, I created puzzles (in wood as well as crosswords), I used to spend a lot of time camping and hiking ... I could continue this list until it filled up this entire story, if I wished!

And I haven't changed - there are still plenty of things that I want to do, but I just can't manage to fit them in. I was reminded of one of these things just this afternoon, while I was in my workshop carving. There are four large windows in front of my bench, giving me a clear view of this stretch of the Kiyomi River; whenever anything moves out there, it of course catches my eye at once. Today I had a wonderfully long visit from the kingfisher that likes to come hunting here frequently. He usually comes and goes very quickly. If you have ever seen one of these beautiful birds zipping along the surface of a stream, you will know what I mean; all you can see is a bright blue line streaking across your field of vision. Unless you know what it is, it's impossible to see any detail.

Today though, he decided to park for a while on the embankment right outside my window. He sat on the bank very quietly, his head occasionally turning this way and that, as he searched for possible prey down in the water. I reached for my binoculars (alwadays present by my bench!) and focussed right on him. He was so close!

And then, he put on the most wonderful magic show that I have ever seen! Diving down off the embankment, he came to a stop in mid-air just above the surface of the water, and hovered there, looking down into the water. It was an incredible feat - his wings were a blur of motion, but his head and body were absolutely motionless, and he hung in mid-air as though he were clamped in place, the bright blue of his body in the sunshine completely filling the viewfinder of my binoculars.

I have no idea how long it lasted, perhaps around ten seconds or so, and then he dropped suddenly into the water with a huge splash. A moment later he shot back up in a spray of droplets, and whish ... the little blue jet was gone in a flash, zooming along up the river out of sight.

How I would love to be able to learn more about that little guy. I'd like to find out where he lives, study his yearly life cycle, visit the family that must be waiting for his return with the food, try to capture some video of his fishing acrobatics ... But no ... it just isn't possible ...

Are you laughing at me? Because of course you know that if I were a full-time kingfisher researcher, I suppose I would be saying to myself "Gee, I'd sure like to have enough time for a hobby ... maybe I could make some woodblock prints or something like that ..."

Yes, I know ... I'll never be satisfied. But I would still like 48 hours in a day!

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