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Ho-Hum for Hummers

My Summer Project of Photographing Hummingbirds

Introduction.

In late July and early August I started enjoying my morning coffee next to the hummingbird feeder. My place is on a mountain in South Central Pennsylvania and this was the second summer that I had a feeder. Like many others, I was soon captivated by the regimented habits of these very lively creatures. The regularity of them flying to the feeder, drinking nectar intensely, pulling back, hovering in the air before drinking again was amazing. Even when taking off, they tended to head sitting on a very same perch time after time. All this encouraged me to pull out my camera and try to take pictures - albeit I also saw the lightning speed of their moves rushing around. I could only hear the soft fluttering sound of their wings, without visually distinguishing any details. In this report I will share my delight and some photography information.

Materials and Methods.

My location was about 2000 feet above sea level in South Central Pennsylvania which was enough to keep temperatures around comfortable 60-75 degrees of Fahrenheit most days. Figure 1 shows my



Figure 1. Photography set up. Coffee mug is on the bottom level to avoid possible spills on equipment.

setting. My camera was Sony a6300 mirrorless camera with APS-C sensor, 24MP count and 1/4000 maximum shutter speed according to manufacturer's description. Unless specifically mentioned, I used Sony Fe 200-600mm f/5.6-6.3 G OSS lens mounted on my trusted Oben AT/ZT-3565 tripod equipped with a ballhead. Post processing was done on MacBook Pro using Apple Photos or on iPhone with Snapseed from Google. Hummingbird food was Pennington's Premium "Natural Springs Nectar" from Walmart.

Results.

To begin, I concentrated on the basic positions of feeding and hovering in place before/after the nectar intake by the birds (Figures 2 and 3). Most photographers on-line recommended crazy high ISOs with wide open apertures, or shooting using shutter speed priority. I was worried about blurriness with high ISOs which in general was not a

