
MAMMALS

GRAY SQUIRRELS AND MAGPIES

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I have spent about an hour a day, on average, in Wascana Park for the last three years. I have been told that there are Gray Squirrels in the park and they have been there for several years. I had not seen one till early this spring when my wife spotted one on the ground going from tree to tree, followed by a magpie. It appears that the magpie was as interested in the squirrel as I was.

Five weeks later we see a Gray Squirrel again. This time three mag-

pies are following the squirrel as he goes from tree to tree. Just a minute! The magpies are not following, they are chasing the squirrel and being very boisterous about it. Now this squirrel is not a country bumpkin just in town for the day. No siree! This guy has street sense. Even being harassed by the magpies, the squirrel stops about 20 feet from a road and lets several cars go by before he makes a dash across the road to thicker bushes. The magpies are right behind. The squirrel stops a



Gray Squirrel up a tree

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Magpie

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couple of feet from the ground. One magpie walks around the tree scolding. As we approach, the squirrel jumps to the ground and lopes to some bushes about ten feet away. The magpie hops along behind. The squirrel then goes up a tree and into a nest box that had been put out for a Northern Flicker. The clamor that the magpies have been making attracts two crows that come and perch nearby to see what is up. One magpie is more aggressive and keeps flying at the hole of the nest box. Two of the magpies leave, but not the aggressive one. Every time the squirrel pokes his head out of the

hole the magpie flies in and pecks at it. This goes on for about five minutes. The crows lose interest and leave. The squirrel does not show itself for several minutes. Perhaps he has curled up and gone to sleep. The magpie moves off a short distance. There is no activity at the nest box for several more minutes. We lose interest and leave.

Was the squirrel robbing a magpie nest or were the magpies just making sure that it stayed out of their nesting area? Whatever the reason, we haven't seen the squirrel for a couple of weeks.

