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Be surprised by your backyard™

Squirrels just want to have fun

by Caroline Flicker

Some people love squirrels. Some people hate them. And some people love to hate squirrels. This small, 10-inch, two-pound furry animal continues to challenge the ingenuity of mankind.

When I think back on my childhood, I still remember with amusement my mother's lifetime battle with squirrels. I grew up in the suburbs on a wooded acre with lots of wildlife. My mother was an avid bird feeder and we had a continuous parade of birds passing through our yard at any one time. Woodpeckers, cardinals, blue jays, goldfinches and many more species called our yard home. With a smorgasbord of seed to choose from, we always had guests flying in for dinner.

Then there were the squirrels. My mother certainly was not in the 'lover' category. For decades, she battled these creatures, coming up with new ideas on how to defeat them. I would watch in amusement as she greased the pole and watched the squirrels slide down. She declared victory, but it was short-lived as the squirrels figured out that continuous effort wiped the pole clean.

A window feeder may have been her greatest victory, lasting a good three days! But alas, when the squirrel determined he could not reach the feeder from the ground, he would run across the electric lines onto the roof, slide down the window to the feeder and hold on for dear life as he feasted on the seed.



My mother passed away over twenty years ago and I recalled her lifelong battle in her eulogy. Today, there are products engineered to keep squirrels away from bird feeders. Baffles keep them from climbing the pole. Feeders with mechanisms that close the ports under their weight limit squirrel access from the top. Caged feeders provide a barrier fence that cannot be penetrated. There are even feeders with electric motors that spin squirrels off.

Squirrels are nature's circus in your own backyard. They can leap enormous distances without hurting themselves. They can cross streets on electric wires without the slightest stumble. They can climb down trees—head first! One squirrel hangs upside down from my squirrel-resistant feeder with collapsing perches, holding on to three seed ports with its feet and sticking its nose in the open port. He can't stay long in this position, but he can at least claim a moral victory!

Whether you love them or hate them, squirrels are fun. An easy method of keeping squirrels away from your feeders is to give them their own, easy-access feeding station. Which brings up another memory; on those rare occasions when my mother won, she would always leave seed on the ground for the squirrels. "Squirrels need to eat too." Mom had a big heart.



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Friend ♦ ♦ ♦

You love your backyard birds however there is a soft spot in your heart for these furry acrobats as well. You don't mind them sharing the food but they may chase away your feathered friends. So why not give them their own space with feeder and food? They will repay the favor by entertaining you and your family with their endless antics and relentless enthusiasm. Come by the store and we will help you choose the best option for your yard.



Just for Squirrels

One way to separate your squirrels from your birds is to give them a meal all their own. Try our exclusive CritterWise—formulated specifically to appeal to their taste buds; it comes in a convenient cylinder shape that can be used in a number of specialty squirrel feeders. Also available as a loose seed blend.



A Table to Call Their Own

Here's a great way to give your squirrels a place to relax and have a meal without disturbing the rest of your backyard inhabitants. Pair it with some of their preferred food and you have a win-win situation.



Entertainment Weekly

Or daily. Or hourly. By the minute? Feed their bodies along with their adventurous spirit. Mr. Piggy's Pickle Jar (left) offers a more leisurely approach to lunch for the more laid-back squirrels in your yard. The Squirrel-Go-Round Medallion™ (at right) presents a more high-paced dining option for those of your squirrels with excess energy. Both feeders offer plenty of fun for you and your family.





♦ ♦ ♦ or Foe?

The differences between mankind and representatives of the squirrel family may never be resolved. However, if you'd like to give them "a run for their money," we can help! Keeping premium birdseed in your feeders exclusively for your backyard birds is not impossible. In fact, over the years, humans have come up with increasingly ingenious ways to prevail in the battle over seed. Here are some great options available at the Wild Bird Center.



Weight Issues

A triumph of engineering, the Yankee Whipper is the feeder for you. Part of the Droll Yankees family of squirrel-resistant feeders, the Whipper's feeding perches collapse under the weight of the average squirrel, denying them access to the seed again and again.

Let Them Fly!

The squirrels, that is, not the birds. Even if just for a few moments . . . And that is exactly how the Yankee Flipper keeps them away from your seed—the bottom of the feeder spins off any squirrel that manages to hang onto the perching ring. In addition to being squirrel-resistant, this feeder has great entertainment value!



Put a Fence Up

Or in this case, a metal cage. These caged feeders (from the Nuttery on the left, and ERVA on the right) employ a different approach when it comes to excluding squirrels. The mesh of the cage is simply too small for squirrels to squeeze through, yet far enough from the seed that they cannot reach it.





Exclusively FOR BACKYARD BIRDS

You don't mind the squirrels visiting (or residing permanently in) your backyard, you'd just prefer it if they kept their "hands" out of your birdseed! This feeder (left) may be just the thing to put an end to all the freeloading. How is this possible, you ask? The Squirrel Buster PLUS operates on the very simple principle of gravity. It's designed to use the squirrel's own weight to obstruct access to the seed. Openings in the bottom of the feeder align with the seed ports allowing birds to feed. When a squirrel hops onto the perching ring, it's weight forces the bottom of the feeder down, thus closing the ports. The Squirrel Buster PLUS is one of a number of squirrel-resistant feeders available at the Wild Bird Center. Try it and extend an exclusive dinner invitation to your favorite backyard birds.