

A SQUIRREL-PROOF FOOD

By Eleanor E. Dater

To EBBA banders: As many of you know, I'm "hung up" on the much maligned Blue Jay. Through him I have learned and unlearned a great deal about birds, people and other mammals, especially that rat with a fancy tail, the gray squirrel. It is in reference to him that I am imparting some recently acquired knowledge.

For years gray squirrels have been the bane of my existence. They eat all the sunflower seeds before the jays or any other birds get a chance at it. They don't hesitate to kill a small bird that is unfortunate enough to get caught in a trap with them. Many days I have had to close the traps because of the squirrels.

On July 8th I acquired two very young jays, whose tail feathers were still less than half an inch long. I started feeding them Little Cat Friskies, ocean fish flavor, soaked in enough water to make them soft and feel like tiny sponges. The jays preferred the friskies to any other food offered.

Three weeks later I released the birds. For four days I had to keep close watch on them and hand-feed them. They stayed in the bushes and trees close to the porch. Finally, I put their friskies in the regular feeder, a discarded length of roof gutter attached to the railing of the porch.

First thing I knew, all the jays on the street were helping themselves to the friskies. There was no other food of any kind in the feeder when I assigned it to the two jays.

Much to my surprise, when the squirrels came up to join the crowd they refused the fish pellets. Of course fish is not on the squirrels' list of desirable foods and apparently the odor was obnoxious to them. Birds don't have a sense of smell so they can relish the fish pellets. So I have hit on a food birds like and repels squirrels. By the four-pound bag the cost is less than 80 cents. There is no waste of any kind. Don't try any other flavor - it's the fish flavor that does the trick.

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