

LAURA ON LIFE

Now Showing: Matrix Squirrels

I bought a new bird feeder this spring. The old one had lost its perches, its top and its color. It looked like it had gone through the cotton cycle on a dryer at the Laundromat. I don't know how something that merely holds tiny seeds and is suspended 20 feet above the ground can manage to get so beat up.

Even if the wind gusts to 50 MPH, there is nothing around it to smash into. So why does it look as if it picked a fight and lost?

I filled the new one with fresh bird seed and hung it on a wide eave outside my bedroom window. Over the next few days I watched to see if the birds would find it.

Because they hadn't had much to eat all winter, the birds were able to hone in on my bird feeder with ease. I watched as they took turns, one after the other, sampling the buffet I set out for them.

I know the name of some birds, but the rest all look the same to me — kind of brownish. One bird, a brown one, was not sharing. If he was on the perch and another bird came close, he'd chase it away. He was being rather piggy about the whole thing.

Suddenly, the birds stopped coming to the feeder; even the piggy-



Laura Snyder

bird. I soon determined why.

A squirrel came down off my roof, climbed upside down on the wire, like Tom Cruise in Mission Impossible, and flipped off the lid of my bird feeder. He proceeded to help himself to the feast.

Now, I am not a discriminatory animal feeder. Ask anyone. Well, don't bother, I've never told anyone. The squirrel was as hungry as the birds, I knew. However, the squirrel didn't take turns like the birds did. He squatted on the feeder and dared the birds to move him. The birds didn't have the guts.

Finally, I decided he'd had enough and I went to my window to shoo him away. He scurried back up the wire to the roof, where I heard a scuffle. Suddenly, I saw a ball of gray

fur tumble off my roof, one little paw grabbing at a perch on the feeder. It broke off and the ball of fur cart-wheeled two stories to the ground. The Matrix came to mind as I watched him fall in slow-mo.

He got up, did the squirrel equivalent of dusting himself off, and wandered to the nearest tree like a drunken... uh, squirrel.

When I looked up, another squirrel had taken his Mission Impossible stance at the feeder. He was digging at the holes and trying to reach the bird seed.

That is, until my cat peeked over the edge of the roof and started swatting at him. The squirrel had nowhere to go but two stories straight down, so he hung onto the bottom of the feeder for dear life, while it was being batted

around by my cat.

Feeling sorry for the squirrel, I went outside and yelled at the cat. "Get off the roof, you deranged feline. How on earth did you get up there anyway?" Finally, I had to use my secret weapon: shaking the cat food box. That's the song of the Lorelei for cats. He came running and gave me a look of disgust when I put the box away without putting some in his bowl. What? I don't want a fat cat. They eat too much.

The relieved squirrel scampered back up the feeder to the roof, knocking a perch askew and dislocating the lid.

I looked at my brand new, dilapidated bird feeder and finally understood why the last one looked like it did. I'm getting a stainless steel one next time, with titanium

perches and a padlock on the lid. Anybody know where I can get one of those?

Laura Snyder is a nationally syndicated columnist, author & speaker. You can reach Laura at lsnyder@lauraonlife.com Or visit her website www.lauraonlife.com for more info.

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