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Hello everyone,

Spring is here and we are very excited about both the migratory birds that are here and those that will be passing through our regions soon. The most frequent complaint we get from our customers is related to squirrels. These little rodents are very agile and seem ready to try anything in order to reach the food we offer to the birds. Since squirrels seem to be a generalized problem for bird lovers, in this edition of our newsletter we refer to some solutions that may help keep them away from our bird feeders. We will also address different "solutions" that don't seem to work very well or that may actually injure squirrels or birds. Finally, you will find information on our annual Bird Fest and on several new exciting products.

Happy reading!

Alain Goulet
Owner and bird enthusiast



Come and visit us!

5120 rue de Bellechasse
Montréal QC
H1T 2A4

514-351-5496
1-855-OIS-EAUX
(1-855-647-3289)

Opening hours:

Sunday - Monday
Closed

Tuesday - Wednesday
9:30am to 6:00pm

Thursday - Friday
9:30am to 7:00pm

Saturday
9:30am to 5:00pm



Online store open 24-7

The Gray Jay as our National Bird!



The Gray Jay has been chosen by the Royal Canadian Geographic Society to be our National Bird. The final step rests with the federal government in making it official. If you would like to read more about the Gray Jay as our National Bird in Canadian Geographic, please come and visit us or contact us to reserve one and we will give your

own **free copy.**

Quantities are limited.

Calendar of events

**Springtime Bird
Walk and
Conference
on Mount Royal
Saturday and Sunday,
May 27 & 28, 2017
8:30AM**



Guided tour on Mount Royal to observe birds.

A conference will be given on Saturday, in English, by Joël Coutu entitled "Love with feathers".

A second conference, entitled "Où vont nos oiseaux?", will be given by Alain Goulet, in French, on Sunday.

Fêtes des oiseaux migrateurs - Danville

October 7-9th, 2017



**position
available**

We at Nature Expert are looking to expand our team! We are team-oriented, value a strong work ethic, and are committed to providing excellent customer service to all our clients, from the beginner to the professional ornithologist.

If this is of interest to you, we want to hear from you!

Please contact us for more information.

Bird Fest



Saturday June 3rd, 2017.

9:30am to 5:00pm

at Nature Expert, 5120 rue de Bellechasse, Montreal H1T 2A4

The following people and organizations will be on site:

- Gery van der Kelen, wildlife artist / painter
- Robert Alvo, author of Being a Bird in North America
- Serge Beaudette and Jean-Philippe Gagnon, birding experts and guides
- Live birds of prey
- Adventure Canada
- Regroupement Québécois
- Swarovski Optik
- Vortex Canada

Festival Victo et ses oies

Octobre 21 and 22nd, 2017



Come and visit us at the Danville and Victoriaville birding festivals. Meet talented artists and enjoy the thousands of Snow Geese and other migratory birds making a stop-over on their way south.

Binocular Exchange Program



Binocular Exchange Canada is a project that aims to engage more people in outdoor activities and to find a use for older, but working birding equipment.

At Nature Expert, we will accept any equipment that would help a birder in an outdoor observation situation: binoculars; spotting scopes; backpacks; field guides (from anywhere in the world); cameras; tripods; ornithology textbooks; etc.

- Bird Protection Quebec
- Le Nichoir (bird rehabilitation centre)
- Thai food truck –Tuktuk from Une nuit à Bangkok restaurant
- Several other bird-related activities

Prizes will be drawn and sales will be available on a wide variety of in-store products during Bird Fest.

Squirrels at the feeders



When squirrels gain access to bird feeders they gorge on sunflower seeds, suet and all other food that we offer to the birds. And sometimes they not only empty the feeders in the blink of an eye, but they also end up damaging them by chewing plastic and even metal parts, or making feeders fall onto the ground. Their presence around the bird feeders may also frighten the birds that normally come to feed. Squirrels – often astute, agile and persevering – manage to climb and run around almost anywhere. Here at the store, we hear stories about squirrels that climb poles, walk along clothes lines and manage to outsmart feeders and their owners. Below, we present some solutions

Upon reception of the donation we will estimate the value of the equipment and Earthvalues will issue a charitable tax receipt, if desired.

Earthvalues Institute is the organization under which the project is run.

www.earthvalues.org

Earthvalues



that can help us prevent squirrels from gaining access to the seeds that are intended for the birds. We would be happy to hear what solutions you have found! Send us a message by email or on Facebook.

THE MOST EFFECTIVE SOLUTIONS

Here are the solutions that have proven to be most effective to keep squirrels away from bird feeders. They could be squirrel-proof feeders or accessories.



Weight-based squirrel-proof feeders



Droll Yankees "Tipper"



Squirrel Buster +



D. Yankees "Whipper"

All the Squirrel Buster feeders operate on the same principle, which consists of a part on the feeder that moves downwards with the squirrel's weight and closes access to the food. Squirrels usually give up when they understand that they can't eat there. This mechanism is effective even against red squirrels, which tend to weigh less than the grey squirrels. Since most of the birds that come to the feeders weigh less than squirrels, birds can eat peacefully without having to worry

about visiting rodents. The Squirrel Buster company (Brome Bird Care) makes sunflower, hulled peanut and thistle feeders.

Droll Yankees has developed bird feeders that work with a similar principle. The moving perches prevent squirrels from holding on. In a recent La Presse article, Pierre Gingras talks about squirrel-proof feeders and mentions Droll Yankees' «Whipper» as a very effective model he has tried at home.

Nevertheless, one of the most significant downsides of these feeders is that one can't put a seed tray underneath as its weight would close the feeding holes, and it would also serve as a landing place for squirrels.

Caged feeders



The previous feeders work on the premise that most birds that we feed are lighter than squirrels. Caged feeders work on the assumption that most birds we feed - such as the goldfinch and the chickadee - are smaller in size than squirrels, especially the gray ones. By enclosing the feeders with a 1 5/8" x 1 5/8" metal grid, the small birds will be able to feed themselves, but the squirrels won't; however; red squirrels and chipmunks – which are easier to find in the countryside than in cities – may be able to get through the cage. The grid also helps with keeping the bigger birds such as pigeons and grackles away from the feeders. Unfortunately, it also prevents certain species like blue jays from accessing the food.



If you already have a bird feeder that you want to protect from squirrels, you can put it in a cage, as long as the feeder is less than 15 inches tall. This cage also comes with a 1 5/8" x 1 5/8" metal grid and allows the installation of a seed tray underneath.



Suet Palace

There is a cage that offers suet only to smaller birds. The Suet Palace – as it is called – has 1 1/2" x 1 1/2" grid that prevents squirrels and bigger birds from eating. It can hold up to two suet cakes.

Squirrel-proof accessories



Droll Yankees Mod. SQBK

A dome can be an effective solution to protect seeds that are offered in hanging feeders. However, the dome's diameter has to be at least 14". There are several squirrel-proof models. Some of them are conical and some are round. Some domes come with hooks or adjustable chains

that allow for installing the feeders easily. Other models have an opening that allows you to slide the feeder's hanger through in such a way that the dome sits right on top of the feeder. For a dome to be effective, one must ensure that the seeds cannot be accessed from the sides or the bottom of the feeder. For instance, if the feeder is hanging from a tree with lower branches, the dome won't prevent squirrels from jumping onto the feeder. Squirrels can also climb a pole to access a feeder from the bottom.



Baffle Erva Mod. SB1N



Baffle Erva Mod. SB8



Baffle Erva Mod. SB7 4X4

Squirrel baffles are accessories that come in cylindrical, conical or disc-like shapes and attach around a pole to prevent squirrels from climbing up to feeders that are suspended or that sit at the end of the pole. In order to be effective, squirrel baffles have to be installed at least 4 or 5 feet from the ground and 3 feet from trees or any objects that could serve as a platform for the squirrel to jump onto the baffle and then go up the pole to the feeder. Squirrel baffles are usually installed around a pole whose diameter is from $\frac{1}{2}$ " to $1\frac{5}{8}$ ". There are also round baffles that can be installed around 4x4" square wooden poles. Another option is a polycarbonate baffle that fits 1" poles and comes with a seed tray to catch the seeds that fall from the feeders. This reduces food for squirrels to eat on the ground beneath the feeders. Let's keep in mind that in many cases, the seeds that fall onto the ground are the ones that first attract the squirrels to the feeders.



Squirrel Slinky

Squirrel Slinky® is a new squirrel baffle that is installed around a pole and prevents squirrels from climbing, thanks to a spring-based mechanism that makes the device move downwards with the squirrel's weight. According to Droll Yankees – the company that makes it – the greatest advantage of this squirrel baffle is that it's more discrete than other models.

Seeds



Squirrels are well known for devouring peanut and sunflower seeds from bird feeders. In general, squirrels are less attracted by seeds such as thistle (niger) and safflower seeds. Species such as the goldfinch, the chickadee and the finch like thistle seeds. The cardinal, the goldfinch and the chickadee like safflower seeds. However, from time to time we hear from our customers about squirrels that chew on bird feeders containing these two seeds. Their voracity can always surprise us!

If you happen to have any tricks that you have found effective to keep squirrels away from bird feeders, we would appreciate you sharing them with us, either by e-mail or in person the next time you come to visit our store!

SOLUTIONS THAT DON'T REALLY WORK ...

Cayenne powder



Some people mix Cayenne powder with the seeds they put in feeders. Although its taste apparently doesn't bother birds, it does bother squirrels because it burns their mouths. However, Cayenne powder doesn't seem to be a very humane solution against squirrels, especially if it gets into their eyes. This can be extremely painful and may lead a squirrel to scratch its eyes causing damage, even to the point of bleeding or scratching their eyes out. If cayenne powder is used, birds may also come into contact with it in the same manner through eating seeds. Therefore, we suggest avoiding it altogether. Some companies have squirrel-proof seeds on the market which contain cayenne. These seeds are, of course, not recommended.

"Critter Ridder"



Critter Ridder is a product that comes in powder and liquid. According to its manufacturer, this product does not contain harmful chemical compounds, but is supposed to be a natural deterrent against most animals, including squirrels. According to its manufacturer, it contains black pepper oil, piperine and capsaicin. When sprinkled on lawns or other surfaces that animals often visit, *Critter Ridder* is supposed to deter them from coming back: however, there aren't too many positive on-line comments about the product's efficacy. Alain himself used it to keep squirrels away from his garden, but observed no positive results, as squirrels didn't seem to be bothered by the *Critter Ridder* powder. In their book entitled *Le grand livre pour attirer les oiseaux chez soi* (*The Big Book on How to Attract Birds to Our Feeders*), Suzanne Brûlotte et Gilles Lacroix report limited effectiveness of most red pepper or citrus-based deterrents.

La rue des jardins or Herb-of-Grace (*Ruta graveolens*)



Along the lines of natural deterrents, Alain also tried planting la rue des jardins in his garden as a means of keeping squirrels off his premises as suggested by some of his clients. La rue, or Herb-of-Grace as it's also known, is a toxic and medicinal plant with a bitter taste that is supposed to repel squirrels due to its strong smell. Unfortunately, Alain's trial wasn't a success as the squirrels kept coming to his garden. Pierre Gingras, a journalist of La Presse, also tried this plant and he shares his experience in the following article (French): <http://www.lapresse.ca/maison/cour-et-jardin/201209/11/01-4572956-lectureuil-dans-la-rue.php>

Please take note that Rue is a toxic plant that may cause a skin rash in individuals who are sensitive to it. Therefore, it's not an ideal plant that most people would prefer in their vicinity.

Vaseline

In order to prevent squirrels from climbing, some folks put Vaseline or similar products on the surface of poles where bird feeders are installed. This works relatively well, as long as it is re-applied frequently. Nevertheless, the most persevering squirrels may keep trying to climb until they rub-off all the Vaseline with their legs. In winter time, Vaseline tends to harden with freezing temperatures. When it is especially cold, Vaseline can become an ineffective solution.

Hunting and Relocation

Quebec's Wildlife Conservation Act protects squirrels. Therefore, it is absolutely forbidden to hunt or kill them. Instead, we need to keep trying different humane tricks and practices that discourage them from coming to our feeders. One could think that catching and relocating squirrels that visit our premises on a frequent basis could solve the problem, but this is in fact a cruel practice as upon release, squirrels find themselves in an unknown territory and unable to adapt quickly enough to find food to survive. This is especially problematic in the fall after they have spent time and energy storing away food for the

winter. Furthermore, they won't be welcomed by other squirrels in the new environment. For these reasons, relocation isn't a feasible or effective solution. Finally, displacing squirrels doesn't solve the root cause of the problem because as long as food remains accessible in our bird feeders, other squirrels will move in from neighbouring territories in their quest for food and shelter.



You are now armed with several alternatives for how to defeat, or at least live with, those pesky squirrels without harming them. Please join us in our discussion and share your squirrel strategies on our [facebook page](#). We look forward to hearing from you!

New Products and Suggestions

Swarovski 1.7X Magnification Extender



Swarovski ME 1.7X Magnification Extender

This magnifier fits between the ocular and objective modules of the new BTX as well as the ATX-STX series.

When used with the BTX objective, it increases the original 30X magnification to 50X when used with a 65mm or a 85mm objective and it will increase the original 35X magnification to 60X when used with a 95mm objective.

With the ATX/STX 65mm and 85mm objective, the original 25-60X magnification will be increased to 42-100X.

When used with the ATX/STX ocular and the 95mm objective, the magnification will be 50-120X.

Swarovski BTX Eyepiece Module



The Swarovski BTX combines the visual power of both eyes with a revolutionary viewing experience. Crucial subtleties can be seen with the crystal-clear optics, with every detail now fully on show. A forehead rest and angled view guarantee comfortable viewing for hours on end. The benefits of binoculars and spotting scopes are combined in the BTX eyepiece module. It presents vivid, true-to-life images and offers the comfort required for long-term observation. The BTX eyepiece module is compatible with all objective lenses in the SWAROVSKI OPTIK ATX/STX range.

Uses the visual power of both eyes to make the image appear more natural and vivid.

The BTX features an adjustable forehead rest, an angled ocular system and the fact that both eyes can be used for viewing with maximum comfort over long periods

The BTX Modular uses the 95 mm, 85 mm and 65 mm ATX/STX objectives of the current SWAROVSKI OPTIK ATX/STX Modular system.

The 95mm objective will be a fixed 35X. The 85mm objective, a fixed 30X. The 65mm objective, a fixed 30X.

Features SWAROVISION Technology – Field Flatteners and High Definition Lenses: Gives perfect edge to edge clarity, eliminates several kinds of distortion, brings out the highest color contrasts and offers increased eye relief.

The interpupillary distance is adjustable, just like on a binocular. In the case of the BTX the eyepieces operate simultaneously so they remain centered – no need to move away from the forehead rest while adjusting.

The black housing which incorporates the forehead rest, can be removed for cleaning

Nectar Feeder Dots



These tiny nectar feeders can be placed anywhere to attract hummingbirds. They can be used in conjunction with other regular hummingbird feeders. Once hummingbirds are used to them, you can hold the dots in your hand and hummingbirds will literally come and feed from your hands. If you would like to feed hummingbirds while holding a nectar dot in your hand, here are a few tips:

- Leave your nectar dot near another feeder for a while until the birds are used to it
- Come near that regular feeder and hold the nectar dot in your hand.
- You can wear sunglasses to hide the movement of your eyes.

Dots are available in 2 colours: red with a yellow flower and yellow with a red flower. Let us know how they work for you! We love receiving your photos and hearing your stories.

Heart-shaped Perch



This perch is perfect for hummingbirds to perch on in order to scan their territory or to wait their turn on a nectar feeder. This accessory is made of durable metal and wood. It also has a red heart-shaped bead that shines in the sun.

Grape jelly for Orioles



This jelly is made of a grape and blackberry mixture and will attract orioles and other fruit-eating birds. This jelly is all natural and contains no preservatives or corn sweetener.

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5120 rue de Bellechasse
Montréal QC
H1T 2A4

Tel: 514-351-5496
Tel: 1-855-OIS-EAUX
(Tel: 1-855-647-3289)
Fax: 1-800-588-6134