

A DURABLE BIRD & SQUIRREL FEEDER

The number of 'squirrel-proof' bird feeders on the market evidences that many are averse to squirrels raiding their feeders. Possibly it is less the taking of food which generates annoyance, but the damage done to the bird feeder. The mesh is torn, the nuts fall out, and the mice, pheasants and badgers mop up the spillage.

Over a year ago, fed up with repeatedly 'patching-up' the peanut feeder, but content that the squirrels enjoyed a few, I sought a solution and tried an experiment. It has worked beautifully, a 100% success. Squirrels and birds dine side by side but the feeder has suffered no damage whatsoever. It just takes the squirrel longer to get a meal, and spillage is minimal.

The thinking behind this invention is as follows:-

All the squirrel wants is a peanut. He wants it in his hands (squirrel paws resemble hands and are used similarly). He gains no pleasure from tearing the mesh asunder, that's just an unfortunate necessity to access food. On top of that, it is doubtful if he can destroy mesh when only presented with a small area.

It has been so successful that I'm repeating the exercise. In case anyone is interested this is how it's done:-

Buy a fat-ball feeder comprising a metal tube with large perforations and capable of having a tray bolted to the bottom. The cast base is not flat but 'humped' in the middle to eject rainwater and detritus. Insert within the fat-ball tube the mesh from a squirrel-ruined peanut feeder. Because of the 'humped' base the mesh does not extend right to the bottom. Peanuts may be 'winkled-out' onto the tray for squirrel consumption. Meanwhile, birds can peck at peanuts within the feeder through the large perforations backed by mesh.

The idea came to me when browsing feeders in a local store. However, when I went there to repeat the exercise the desired goods were no longer stocked. It took a lot of searching to find that which I sought. To save readers the effort, I bought an '**All Seasons Energy Ball Feeder**' and an '**All Seasons Feeder Tray**' from hungrybirdwildlife on eBay. Do not be over concerned if the mesh from the scrap feeder is in pretty parlous state because you may very well need to reduce the length to 23 cms and chop it along its length to reduce the diameter. Fitting it can be a bit of a fiddle because it will try and catch up on hole edges as you work it down.

Total cost, including VAT and delivery came to just under £20. Not cheap, but then I won't need to replace it in six months time.

Mike Towler.



A scrap peanut feeder



takes on a new life



Add peanuts and a few fall out onto the tray. Squirrels will extract more through the lowest holes as the mesh is held up by the shaped base.