

From his window on the world, Kin Court resident Bill Oates watches the hundreds of birds that flock to his 16 bird feeders, outside in his back yard. Not only does Oates feed the birds, he also has dozens of squirrels and chipmunks that beat a path to his door for the treats he sets out.

Photo by Ted Brown

## The bird man of Georgetown

Some may consider tending to bird feeders something of a winter activity, but for Georgetown's Bill Oates, it's a year-round passion.

From his sliding glass doors at his apartment on Hyde Park Drive, his 16 bird feeders are a welcome sight to hundreds of purple grackles, crows, chickadees, blue jays and cardinals—not to mention dozens of squirrels, chipmunks and, in the nocturnal hours, possums, skunks and raccoons.

"I've been feeding birds all my life," says Oates, "But never as involved as I am here."

Oates, who buys two big bags of bird seed every week, has earned the honour of being the best customer at the Creature Comfort pet supplies store in Georgetown.

Oates claims the squirrels and chipmunks are the easiest to approach.

"They don't even move when I go out to fill the feeders," said Oates, "They just sit there and stuff their little cheeks full of peanuts, then head off to store them somewhere."

Oates chuckles when he tells how the squirrels have even approached the window and

tapped on the glass when the seed containers have become empty.

His nocturnal visitors can be a bit unique. Oates has fed skunks and possums from his hand, but he admits raccoons are a bit annoying, since they can be destructive.

Not only does he feed them, but Oates also photographs the many varieties of birds and squirrels that visit his outdoor cafeteria. He has a collection of almost two thousand photos he has taken through the glass of his windows over the years.

Of course, not all share Oates' passion for his birds.

"Not all my neighbours are pleased with me feeding them," says Oates, "Some have even suggested I'm responsible for bringing in the West Nile virus here by attracting so many different birds to my feeders."

But Oates isn't deterred. And for those people who walk past his back yard which faces the hospital on Princess Anne Drive, the numerous flocks of birds that fly in and out of the yard are a testimony of his labour of love.

—By Ted Brown, staff writer


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