



pesky squirrel. Pieces of galvanized pipe on the legs of the Gardners' big platform feeders work well to deter a new squirrel, until it realizes all it has to do is run up the cherry tree and jump across.

"They're opportunists," explains Mr. Gardner. "And what happens is that you start getting a lot of squirrels and they clean out all the feed and the birds aren't getting anything."

While some of the many gadgets on the market, all claiming to be squirrel-proof may be effective, the Gardners advocate simply hanging the feeders or suet bags on clothes lines or the commonly used small curved steel poles.

"These tips for squirrel-proofing will reduce the number of squirrels getting into the feeder, down to something you can live with ... two is one thing, 15 is another," says Mr. Gardner, who admits the same lack of hospitality for doves and pigeons.

Snow buntings, however are another matter. At one point, the couple was hosting 90 to 100 snow buntings a winter, although those numbers have dropped substantially in recent winters. They figure a growth in trees and shrubbery is making their lot less attractive to this wide-open ground feeder, which nests in the northern arctic tundra and flies south for the winter to enjoy snow squalls in Parry Sound and its environs.

"Like when it's snowing, they're out there bathing in the snow, just having a ball,"

cover all circumstances, and Mr. Gardner suggests learning the common feeding behaviour of the birds that commonly winter here.

At the Gardners' home, June is the primary feeder, dutifully setting out the birdseed before daylight, everyday all winter, ensuring breakfast is ready for the birds who begin arriving half an hour after daylight – some a little earlier, some a little later – depending on the species. On days of unusually heavy banqueting activity, June will repeat the feeding later in the afternoon.

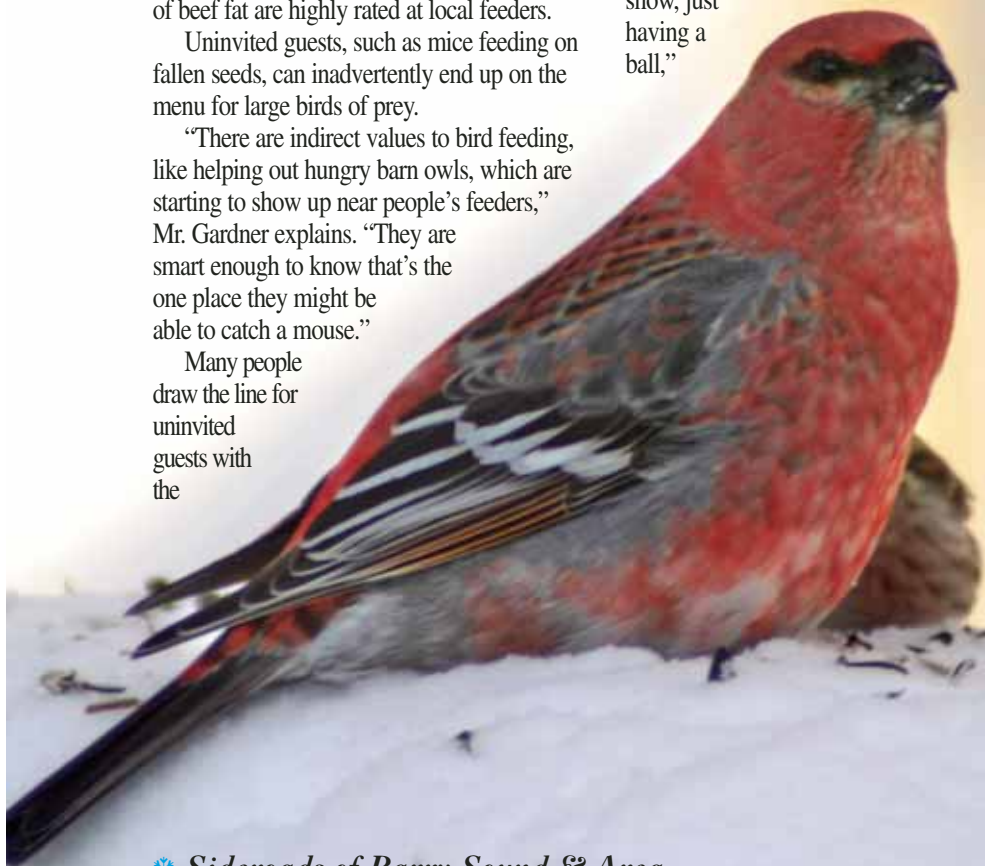
In an average season, the Gardners go through eight bags of black oil sunflower seed, a half dozen 35 lb. bags of mixed seed, and a bag or two of cracked corn, depending on how many snow buntings and mourning doves are around.

Suet balls are a hit, especially June's homemade bird cake, made with peanut butter, corn meal and beef suet, melted together and formed into a bar. The cakes can be frozen and used as needed. Suet can be offered and hunks of beef fat are highly rated at local feeders.

Uninvited guests, such as mice feeding on fallen seeds, can inadvertently end up on the menu for large birds of prey.

"There are indirect values to bird feeding, like helping out hungry barn owls, which are starting to show up near people's feeders," Mr. Gardner explains. "They are smart enough to know that's the one place they might be able to catch a mouse."

Many people draw the line for uninvited guests with the



❖ Sideroads of Parry Sound & Area

comments Mr. Gardner. "I've never seen a bird in my life that enjoys bad weather as much as them. They revel in it. It's just like home in the arctic, where they nest."

There's no mistaking his obvious favour for the species glorified in Anne Murray's *Snow Bird*. He's not even too upset about having to re-roof his house after the snow buntings rotted the shingles.

"Sometimes the birds you're attempting to assist, don't realize who their friends are!" he suggests.

The woodpeckers wiped out the coaxial cable on his television antenna, pecking holes in it to the point where it had to be replaced. Yet, he continues to describe all of the birds visiting his yard as his favourites. In total, they've identified approximately 165 species on their property, over the four seasons.

He's only spotted his absolute ultimate favourite, the Canada jay or gray jay, commonly called a Whiskey Jack, once.

"Unfortunately, in 15 years here, we have seen one fly by. That's the only one we've seen."

In fact, since beginning retirement 13 years ago, there have been five or six occasions when he's seen something for the first or second time in his life.

"And the thing is, I'm not a big traveller - you don't have to go very far," he explains. "But you have to keep your eyes open. You couldn't live enough lifetimes to learn about the natural world. That's what's so great about it. No one knows it all." ❖

Orrville's Restaurant
 Satellite TV, LLBO
 Fine Home Cooking
 Wings, Burgers, Pizza
 "Daily Specials"

Full Breakfast Everyday

Orrville's Roadhouse is
**OPEN YEAR ROUND
 7 DAYS A WEEK**

Conveniently located on Hwy 518
 (1/2 km from the Sequin Trail)

1239 Hwy 518
Orrville
732-2655

Sounders Cleaning Products Inc.

"Member of the Chamber of Commerce"
 25 Bowes Street Parry Sound
 Toll Free 1-866-216-2232 • Fax: 1-705-774-9195
 sounders@bellnet.ca • www.sounders.ca

Locally Owned

- White Line All Purpose/Fine Glass Cleaner
- Rose Line All Purpose Wash

The Fastest Growing Environmental Line!
Give Us a Call!

We Also Carry Products That Are:

- Biodegradable
- DIN Health Canada Approved
- Environmental Choice/Eco-Logo Approved
- Canadian Food Inspection Agency Approved

Sounder's professional and industrial products are used in hospitals, motels, hotels, commercial, industry, residential, institutions and restaurants.

(705) 774-9018

Sounder's Cleaning Products offers competitive pricing and quality products!
Open 9am - 4 pm