

Well, the following week he came on the air and said that he was being forced to air a correction. The company who makes Squirrel-Away had asked him to apologize and to explain that Squirrel-Away is a product that you mix in with birdseed. The claim is that it is healthy for birds to eat it and that they like it, but that

while squirrels do not like it at all, it is harmless. So the squirrels leave the birdseed alone. Well, this piqued my curiosity. How do you find a food that tastes good to birds and not to squirrels? Well, he went on that the main ingredient is capsicum. That tells the story right there. What is capsicum? It is technically an irritant. It is the stuff that makes hot peppers hot. Why is it that birds will eat seed that is laced with capsicum but squirrels will not? Because it is spicy. Hey, I might hit some of that birdseed myself. Squirrels on the other hand tend to have a rather bland diet. They pick up acorns and seeds, but rarely anything so spicy as a pizza someone has thrown out, and almost never do they get a good jalapeno. So they have not cultivated a taste for hot food, including Sizzling Cajun Birdseed. So there is no mystery why squirrels stay away from spicy spiked seed.

I guess the real question is why do birds not mind Birdseed Diablo. The answer is either that birds cannot detect that seeds are spicy or they don't care. Or perhaps they do care, but if you are a bird, do you associate a monumental case of heartburn with those seeds you are eating? And if I remember right, even when bird's digestion is working properly it gives every outward sign of being screwed up. (Please don't ask me to explain. If you can't figure out what I mean, just assume it was over your head. Oops, sorry that was a poor choice of words. What I mean is just let it pass. No, maybe that isn't so good either. Well, you get the idea.) Anyway, if a bird was suffering ill-effects from hot food, who could tell? Does a bird wake up its mate in the middle of the night saying, "I can't believe I ate the whole thing?" Does a bird think, "Owww, my stomach is upset. For the next few days I think I'll just eat worms." It is hard to tell the real effects of diet on birds and we often get the wrong idea. Take canary seed. (Well, not internally.) For a long time you could get canary seed that would make the little birds sing. Little old ladies would buy

it for their canaries because they figured it was making their little birds so happy that they just couldn't help giving voice to their joy. Well, that was not quite what was happening. First of all, birds sing to mark their territory and warn enemies away. And it is no secret that the ingredient of canary seed that makes the little birdies sing is hemp seed, a hallucinogen that is a controlled substance for humans but was not so well controlled for canaries. The well-meaning owner gives her little canary singing seed and the bird just seems to sing so merrily. But in reality Tweetie-pie is bombed right out of Tweetie-pie's little miniature skull and seeing all sorts of monsters outside his cage that only Tweetie-pie can see. [-mrl]

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The world is populated in the main by people who should not exist.

--George Bernard Shaw