



Bird watching fights stress, helps ecology

By Joan Boram
special writer

BIRD WATCHING IS an almost perfect hobby. It's not only therapeutic — what could be more stress-relieving than watching a cluster of chickadees staking out a thistle feeder? — but it's ecologically sound, so you get to feel virtuous, too.

Best of all, you can enjoy it from your kitchen window, alone or with a best friend, over a cup of coffee. All you have to do is convince the birds that your back yard is the place to be. "Sales of wild bird feed are up 50 percent over five years ago," said Bill Fysh, manager of Westland Dog Food. "More people have caught on to the fact that bird watching is fun, relaxing and relatively inexpensive."

BIRD WATCHING is this country's second most popular passive sport, after gardening. That means

you have competition, so you may have to come up with more than a few stale bread crusts. After all, you don't feed the dog on table scraps, do you?

A few feeders, stocked with a variety of foods, will attract a variety of birds.

Commercial mixes may have seeds, such as wheat and milo, that birds don't much care for, so it's really more economical to buy bulk foods, such as sunflower seeds and millet, and mix your own.

"MORE PEOPLE are passing up the mixed feeds, and buying black oil sunflower seeds," said Marj Ferguson, partner (with her father and sister) in Wild Birds Unlimited in Farmington Hills.

"If they do buy a mix, they go for one high in sunflower seeds. Almost every bird favors oilers. Even chickadees like to carry them to a tree and crack them."

Tiny birds, such as chickadees and



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