

Backyard feeders may be harmful to birds

By Ryan Sabalow, Sacramento Bee

Joy is the word that comes to mind as Margot Bach describes how it feels to look out her sliding-glass door and watch the songbirds fluttering into her yard to eat the seed she puts out for them.

“I love to see them around,” said Bach, 69. She had just finished filling the cylindrical feeder on the small concrete patio that pretty much fills the backyard of her Pocket-area home. A variety of songbirds twittered in the nearby trees.

“I love the sound they bring. I love the nests that they build.”

Yet Bach’s seeming act of kindness – a ritual shared by the estimated 50 million Americans who feed birds around their homes – has become something of a controversial practice in California in recent weeks. Last month, state wildlife officials said that feeding birds is “highly discouraged” following a disease outbreak that killed an estimated 1,000 songbirds statewide.

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