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Birdman of PPPL

by Patti Weiser

PPPPL's Dave Cylinder has something he hopes will eventually just fly away.

He is the caretaker of a month-old mockingbird found at the Lab. "He had fallen out of his nest as a baby bird and could barely stand. He was so young he didn't have feathers yet," recalled Cylinder, a lifelong bird fan.

After a month of nurturing the mockingbird at home and feeding him by hand, Cylinder recently began bringing the bird to the Lab and releasing him outside each day.

Until the bird becomes completely independent and can survive on his own, Cylinder will continue to give him a diet of dry dog food soaked in water and to tote him home at night and on the weekends.

Cylinder admits he has always been fond of birds. At home, he and his wife, Lorrie Garena, have two pekin robins, as well as a starling he rescued from the PPPL Courtyard several years ago.

"We have a starling at home that we got the same way as the mockingbird. When he was a few days old he fell out of his nest and broke his leg. We got his leg fixed and he's been at our house for 12 years," said Cylinder. "Sometimes he flies around the house and follows us from room to room."

Cylinder's plan is to release the mockingbird back into the wild once he is ready to be on his own. "He's so



Dave Cylinder feeds the mockingbird he rescued at PPPL.

reliant on me now. He can eat grasshoppers and live food, but he can't eat out of a dish. I hand feed him," he said. And when Cylinder does not show up at the regular feeding hours, the bird scolds him upon his late arrival.

PPPL'ers may be acquainted with the mockingbird, whose favorite place is in the pines or at the picnic bench near the lower parking lot. Occasionally he swoops down in anticipation of a meal when people are in the area. Cylinder hopes the bird will be able to survive on his own.

"Eventually I'm hoping he doesn't come back," he said of his new feathered friend. ●