

# Purple Martin CHATTER

Winter 2022

Preserving and Restoring the Purple Martin Population in Wisconsin

Volume 10 Issue 1



Sunrise on Lake Winnebago

Photo courtesy Gail Bolden

## Upcoming Events

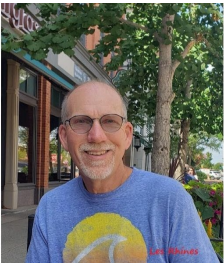
**12 April**

**Purple Martin presentation** by Greg Zimmermann @ 7:00 p.m.  
*Plymouth Bird and Nature Club (1500 Douglas Dr., Plymouth, WI 53073)*

**25 June**

**MartinFest** @ Marsh Haven Nature Center (W10145 State Rd 49, Waupun, WI 53963)





*“The 2022 martin season marks the 10th anniversary of the Wisconsin Purple Martin Association...”*

## Happy New Year

*President Les Rhines*

I wish all of you a healthy, happy, and prosperous new year, and oh yeah, lots of Purple Martins too! As you are reading this, Purple Martins have already been making their spring migration, and although it will be some time before we see them here in Wisconsin, just knowing that our season has begun and is before us, is something for all of us to look forward to.

Speaking of looking forward, that's exactly we at WPMA have been doing.

The 2022 martin season marks the 10th anniversary of the Wisconsin Purple Martin Association and along with that you will see articles about WPMA throughout the year beginning with this issue. In the first feature article we will take a historic look back at the origins of WPMA (formally the Eastern Wisconsin Purple Martin Association), led by founder, Tom Rank.

By now you may have noticed that the format for *Purple Martin Chatter* looks a little different from earlier editions, well ok, it looks a lot different. This *new* professionally looking publication is the creation of Gail Bolden. Gail, herself being a martin landlord, participated in our fall Board of Directors zoom meeting and during the meeting she offered her services as a graphic designer. Long story short, it didn't take long before the Board had designs to select from and the chosen result is what you're seeing/reading today. In addition, Gail has graciously volunteered to take on the role of editor of *Purple Martin Chatter*. Gail, I believe I

can speak for the entire Board, and say thank you for your willingness to help us to provide our members with this resource; I personally am excited to see this and am anxious to find out how our readers like the format.

Other things to look for in this issue: Vice President Greg Zimmermann and Board member Larry Lienau provide us with some sage advice about preparations to do during the winter months while we're waiting for spring.

Board Member Dick Nikolai provides us with a report that details the Purple Martin nesting data for calendar year 2021. Dick also pens a piece remembering a friend and valued martin landlord.

A new feature titled, *Meet the Landlords* makes its debut in this issue. You may recall that in earlier newsletters we have been asking readers to tell us their story. Well, in this issue, Peter and Nancy Hutchinson do just that; in their letter they describe their Purple Martin journey, providing insights about their successes and failures as they grow their Oconto County colony. I'm hoping that after you read Peter and Nancy's story some of you other landlords might be encouraged to share your story with the rest of us and help make this a regular feature in the newsletter. Look for submission instructions in the masthead, located on the back cover of the newsletter.

Lastly, I would like to take this time to personally say thank you to everyone, especially our Board of Directors, mentors, volunteers and friends, and anyone else that has helped the WPMA in our effort to fulfill our mission, your cooperation is greatly appreciated.



## Winter Fun

*Vice President Greg Zimmermann*

I hope all of you had a safe and Merry Christmas. Now it's time to look forward to 2022. This winter season can be long and cold, but there are always many activities at hand. Wisconsin has some of the best cross country ski and snowmobile trails, along with plenty of downhill ski areas for the snow adventurer. Don't forget hiking; it's always a thrill walking the many trails Wisconsin has to offer.

While on those trails you can witness an abundance of wildlife. My favorite is looking for different species of birds. It's an easy way to spot your favorites as they stand out in the snow.

If winter activities aren't your thing, there's always ways to pass the time like rebuilding or adding on to your martin houses. This time of year is a great time to read the many Purple Martin catalogs that may come your way. I'm always going through my Troyer's catalog and wouldn't you know it, I decided to rebuild an older North Star house. I purchased twelve new tunnel entrances and decided to sell it to a couple I knew in the community. They're excited to get their new house from me and can't wait to put it up in the spring. I'm going to mentor them this summer, and I'm hoping they get birds on their first try. The new landlords are Jim and Brenda Heinen. They're familiar with martins since their parents had them when they were kids. They have an excellent location, and when spring arrives we will get the house up and hope for a successful season.



North Star House

*Photo courtesy Greg Zimmermann*

I have one more detail to prepare for this season, and that is being a guest speaker on Purple Martins at the Plymouth Bird and Nature Club. President Gena Lueck would like me to do a presentation on Purple Martins. The time is slated for Tuesday, April 12 at 7:00 p.m. We have a public site at that location, so it will be a great place to have this seminar. Mark your calendars. The address is 1500 Douglas Drive, Plymouth, WI 53073. Hope to see you there!

## MartinFest 2022

This year's festival will be held at Marsh Haven Nature Center in Waupun, and it is scheduled for June 25, 2022 from 9:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m. Meet other Purple Martin landlords and enthusiasts. Look for more information in April's *Purple Martin Chatter*.

## Martin House Maintenance

*Board Member Larry Lienau*

Maintenance of your martin housing is an important part of being a martin landlord. Actually, now is a good time to start working on them. If there isn't a lot of snow on the ground, check out your bird house pole.

Using an ice pick or something sharp, poke around the base of the pole (wood of course). If it feels soft and the pick easily goes into the wood, you know rot is starting. Then, replace the pole when the weather is decent to do so. You don't want it blowing over in a windstorm.

Next, turn your attention to the house. Using the same method with an ice pick, check any discoloration or bubbling paint for rot. If you catch rot early enough, you can cut out the affected area and replace it with new wood, waterproof glue and wood screws.

If you notice orange discoloration around the screws, remove and replace with a deck screw, coated screw or stainless-steel screw. If this is neglected, the deteriorating screws will fall off or affect the surrounding wood causing rot. Most rot can be found where porches are screwed on to a T-14 or door panel on whatever kind of housing you have.

After repairs are made, paint. Doing it now, the paint smell should be gone by the time you raise your house in spring. If you leave your houses up over winter, cover them up and don't leave old nesting materials in the compartments. Leaving nesting materials inside will certainly speed up the rotting process. Yearly maintenance will keep your housing in good condition for many years.

## Treasurer's Report

*Treasurer Debbie Zimmermann*

\$462.18 in checking

\$2047.47 in savings

We have 10 members paid for 2022.

Wishing everyone a Happy and safe martin-filled New Year!

## Nikolai Selected for WSO Noel J. Cutright Award

WPMA Board Member Dick Nikolai was recently awarded the Wisconsin Society for Ornithology Noel J. Cutright Conservation Award for his Purple Martin conservation work.

Bill Mueller, former director of the Western Great Lakes Bird and Bat Observatory, as well as WPMA President, Les Rhines, nominated Dick for this prestigious award, and it was no surprise to us at WPMA when Dick was selected.

As some of you may not be aware, Dick, a retired Wisconsin DNR Biologist, is also a Master Bird Bander, having banded over 20,000 Purple Martins across Wisconsin. His research and grant-writing efforts has secured funds to purchase and attach geo-locators to Purple Martins to study their migration paths. Dick is considered Wisconsin's Purple Martin expert, and his educational outreach programs are well attended by veteran martin landlords and those interested in becoming one.

"The Wisconsin Purple Martin Association was founded by Tom Rank, who shared Dick's passion and love for the species. It was through Tom's leadership and Dick's drive that we grew from a local following into a statewide organization. The interesting thing is that we are beginning to see the impacts of WPMA outside of our state, and that is a large part to the work that Dick has done for Purple Martins," says WPMA President, Les Rhines.

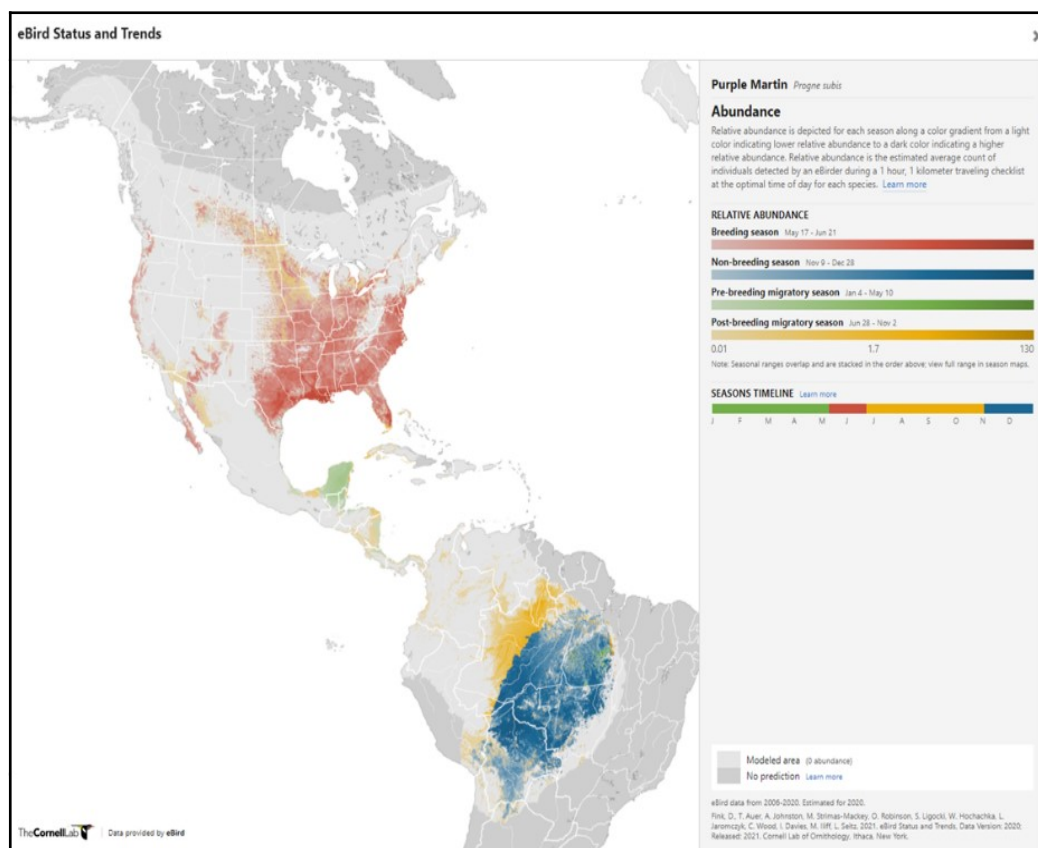
Congratulations, Dick on a well-deserved award! Your passion and commitment to the Purple Martin does not go unnoticed, and we at the WPMA are grateful for your invaluable dedication to our mission of preserving and restoring Wisconsin's Purple Martin population.

# Wisconsin Purple Martin (*Progne subis*) Statistics—2021

Dick Nikolai

Each month many new items come to light about birds across the world in our electronic age. One of those entities for collecting data came about in the early part of the century call *eBird* from the Cornell Laboratory of Ornithology. This electronic base is updated often and was used for the Wisconsin Breeding Bird Atlas II of which the Wisconsin Purple Martin Association participated. Recently, a composite report (2006 to 2020) was made for Purple Martins (*Progne subis*) showing trends on a map across all seasons and across several continents. People doing *citizen science* have reported seeing birds like Purple Martins on *eBird*, have contributed to unique data showing distribution along with abundance. Observations from this Neotropical migrant has shown in our region of the Great Lakes, the absence of reports in northeastern Minnesota, northern Wisconsin, in southwestern Wisconsin, Upper Michigan peninsula and north half of Lower Michigan (See **Figure 1**).

Combining this with Wisconsin scout reports in both 2020 and in 2021 sent to the PMCA represent a broad spectrum of area that shares similar values of colony sites reported during the Wisconsin Breeding Bird Atlas II from 2015-2019 where approximately 150+ colonies were reported. These colony scout reports show the greatest concentrations of Purple Martins in the southeast quarter of Wisconsin with some concentrations in the west central portion of the state (See **Figure 2**). Using this data assists new landlords to know where they have the greatest chance of attracting Purple Martins and encountering landlord mentors to assist them. Note colony sites are static. They come and go due to weather, colony landlord and sometimes their adopted caretaker. They demand a lot of time and energy in order to maintain them along with consistency from their caretakers to provide assistance. This report is to give all an idea of how well we are doing in Wisconsin looking backwards along with a guide on Purple Martin abundance from our efforts. It is the sum of all our efforts that creates a positive or negative perspective of keeping Purple Martins a viable species breeding within Wisconsin. For those of you who gave me your reports or information I applaud you for doing it for it does take time and energy. Hopefully it gives you a chance to reflect on the time you spent watching and caring for your colony. Without those efforts my suspicion is Purple Martins would be even scarcer than they are currently. Now to make sense out of your effort along with mine (*continued page 6*).

**Figure 1**

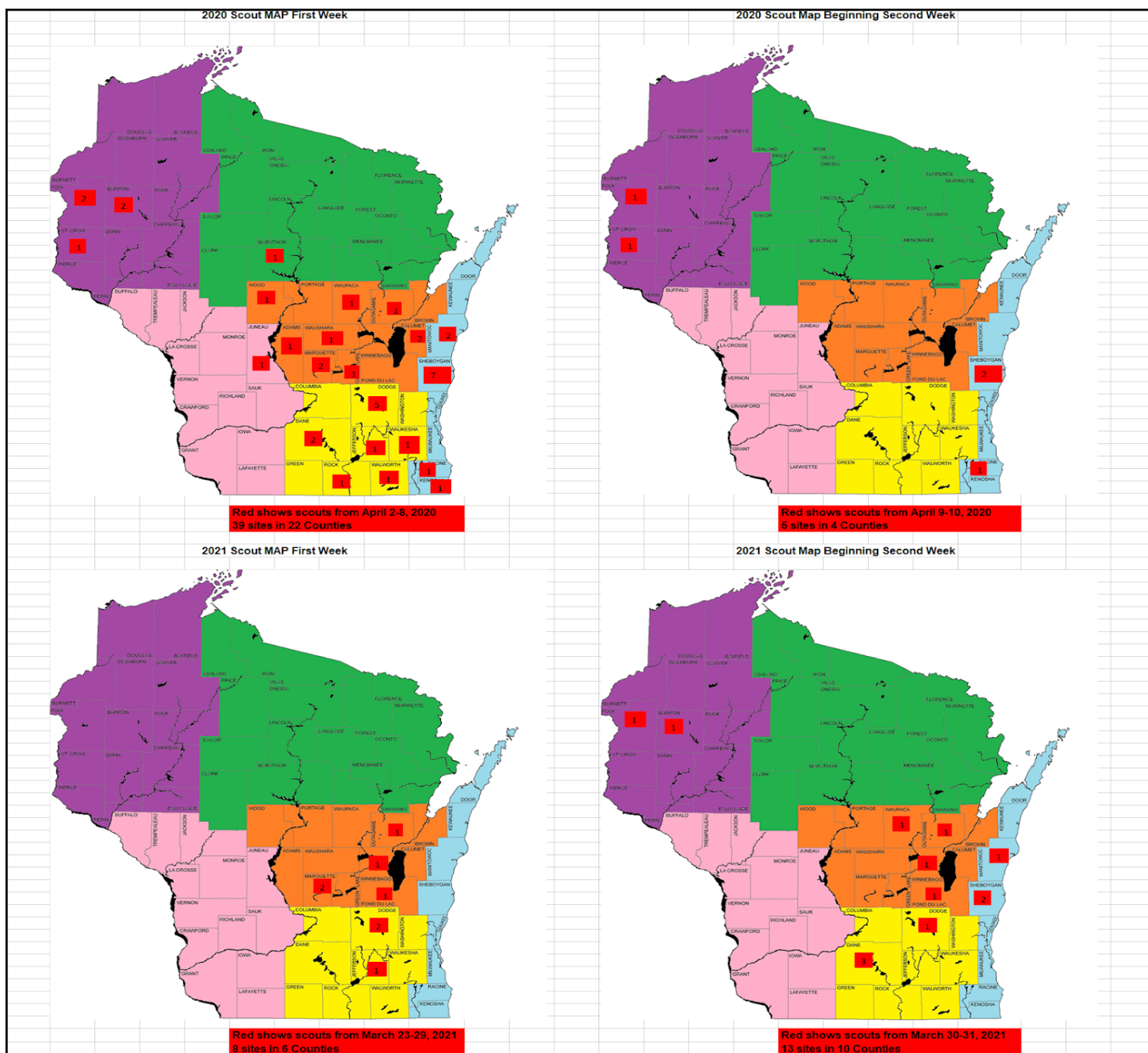
Map reporting *eBird* details of abundance from the Cornell Laboratory of Ornithology showing range of Purple Martins in both North and South America from 2006-2020. This gives the approximate timelines of where Purple Martins exist on both continents along with their densities by showing the darkness of coloration. Note the absence of reports in northeastern Minnesota, northern Wisconsin, southeastern Wisconsin, Upper Michigan peninsula and the north half of Lower Michigan. <https://ebird.org>

What a season we have been through during 2021. The ups and downs were many as well as the surprises we experienced in this nesting season. Areas of Wisconsin experienced drought, monsoon rains, warm weather in February and March, only to recede to have periods of cool temperatures in April, May June and July. In between we experienced temperatures in the 90's with temperatures falling to the 50's within 24 hours while purple martin young were in the pink stage of life. Toss in sprinkles along with cloudy weather to create an absence of insects and we see accounts of starvation and losses mounting.

Spring Scout Reporting for Purple Martins to the Purple Martin Conservation Association (PMCA) was up for the 2021 breeding season with 95 sites being reported compared to the 2020 breeding season of 86 sites. The first scout in 2021 in Wisconsin appeared on March 23 in Fort Atkinson in Jefferson County with the final report coming on May 13 in Winnebago County. In 2020, the first scouts came on April 2 near Cumberland in Polk County, Montello in Marquette County and Kingston in Green Lake County with the last scout on May 24 in Vernon County. *(continued page 7)*

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**Figure 3**

Comparison of years 2020 & 2021 of Wisconsin landlords reporting Purple Martins arriving at their colonies through the PMCA's website for the first week of flight reporting and then the next two days for each year.

(continued page 9)



The intriguing item is how early Purple Martins arrived within northwestern Wisconsin on March 30 and 31 in 2021 and April 2, 5 and 7 in 2020. In **Figure 3**, we see the first nine days of when martins arrived in two sets of maps in a side-by-side comparison for each of 2020 and 2021. What this does for the martins is create a failure of the environment to have adequate invertebrate resources for the birds that do arrive. Warm temperatures plain and simple do not last for the whole month of April in the far north or even most of Wisconsin.

Many landlords within a week of receiving their scouts ended up in situations of colder weather causing them to feed their martins to tide them over until warmer situations occurred. If they did not feed them, those Purple Martins probably starved or had complications of Hypothermia which caused their death. In our colonies near High Cliff State Park (HCSP), our Purple Martins arrived on April 8<sup>th</sup> with weather turning for the worse a week later. For the next month plus, we managed feeding sessions of 22 days that covered us into May past into the time period when second year martins normally arrive. This caused some flashbacks to 2014 and 2017, where we lost many adults and young far into the breeding season.

Last year a study came out indicating that artificial lighting over ten days at night exceeding the impacts of a full moon causing purple martins to migrate at least eight days earlier. Was this a foretold item for us to be aware of how our season was to become or our need to be proactive throughout Wisconsin? Those early migrants in the north, were they impacted by artificial light or was it just the warmer weather? If all of us remember February 2021, the southern portion of the United States from Texas to the Carolinas experienced troublesome snowstorms. Those storms had many landlords experience martins in critical life and death situations. One of the martins we banded in the Sherwood area died as a result of bad weather near Hammond, Louisiana in 2021. Remember these birds are continental travelers going all the way to Alberta, Canada. Some of those that stopped in March and early April could have easily been someone else's martins going northward! From our records on early Purple Martin scouts captured at HCSP most have bands, but some years there are ones without any bands in April. These are the birds that are on their way north or to some other local colony or one of those we missed while banding during the nesting season. Once banded, these possible recaptures in the nesting season are never seen indicating the scenarios mentioned above.

**Figure 4** shows all the places within Wisconsin's 34.7 million acres that individuals sent in reports for their 2021 Purple Martin breeding season. This encompasses 16 out of 72 counties in Wisconsin, with 34 sites mostly clustered. Many thanks go out to these individuals again for taking their time to create a summary of their efforts. Why my encouragement for doing data reports is that it gives a sense of satisfaction of looking back at all the time and effort each one has done. It gives us a glimpse of how well we did together with Purple Martins as our invited guest in Wisconsin.

In 2020, there were 19 sites reported across 11 counties comprising of one report for the **NW**, no reports for the **SW**, three reports for the **NE**, four reports for the **LM**, nine report for the **C** and two for the **S** Zones. In contrast for 2021 (**Figure 4**), we still had a single report for the **NW**, five reports for the **NE**, six reports for **LM**, 14 reports for the **C** and eight reports for the **S** Zones. Overall increase of reporting was up 78.9% from the previous nesting season. In comparing reporting for scouts for 2021 (**Figure 2**), the highest number was 31 sites for the **C**, followed by the **LM** with 21 sites, the **S** with 18 sites, followed by the **NW** with 14 sites, followed by the **NE** with seven sites and the **SW** with four sites reporting. Concentrations of reports are reflective of where Purple Martins have occurred, the word being passed on either by education or through mentors reaching out to me, and my persistence of contacts with known landlords.

These are my (Dick Nikolai's) official notes from my data files for the 2021 Purple Martin season reflecting on what was happening: *2021 Winter (Oct 2020 to Feb 2021) has been warmer than normal throughout the period with little snowfall. It was a windy stretch with it ending in a calm series of a week at the end. Martins entered the US slightly*

early with many birds being up to Arkansas by Feb. First half of Feb 2021 has been colder than normal with an abundance of snow. On Feb 15, cold and snow has hit the Gulf States with wind chills at zero or below with single digit temps. The remaining portion of the month was bitter cold. March started cold but moderated throughout the entire month ending up with above normal temperatures for over 20 days with many above 60. April continued the mild weather through the 11th. Martins came on the 8th with two martins present. Temperatures were in the upper 70's early in the month and have slowly gone down through the month. On April 14th light snow, started to feed martins on the evening of April 13 when 16 were present. April 14 some snow is on the ground with temps near 32F. The last two weeks of April had below normal temperatures and at least six days martins needed to be fed. On the first of May it went from near freezing to temperatures near 80 degrees. Martins started to build nests but went back to cold weather. Not all ASY's are present and SY martins have not been seen because of the cold weather. Lake flies came out for a few days from May 1-3. Going back from May 11 we have had 18 out of the past 23 days being below normal with snowflakes and many days of cloudy weather. May continues to be cooler than normal through May 29. Lake flies really emerged around May 19 for a week. Several days of frost in the region and even snowflakes falling one morning. Many times, martins being fed. Then weather changed where it has been warmer than normal (Many days in the 90's) and very little precipitation through June 12. From June 13 to 18 some rain has fallen with temps up and down with mostly down but on the 18th hot. Beginning June 19, 4 inches of rain fell and cool weather set in for about five days. More rain has fallen along with martins dying for quite a few young were in the pink "stage". Fed eggs for three days with weather moderating with more insects flying around June 30 to July 6 with three days being in the 90's. Tue June 29 another inch of rain fell during a storm of 1/2 hour. July 6 was hot in the 90's and in late afternoon the air cooled down to the 60's and upper 50's. Rainy on July 7 with temps in the 50's to early 60's. Normal temps have occurred from July 8-14. Some deaths of young are still occurring along with missing adults. Strong showers occurring late July 14 to early morn July 15 with unknown results. Many monarchs are being caught at the park office by Purple Martins (10-15) and at the wooden gourds or gourd rack (20+) during July 6-13. Tail end of the season there was some renesting or late nesting due to loss of one of the pairs, original pair decided to lay another set of eggs or pair delayed nesting. The up and down weather continued through July and August where precipitation and thunderstorms were a factor. Several nests at the end had their nests wet and cold with loss of nestlings or loss of one of the parents. Two storms were back-to-back on August 10 & 11. Another storm at the end of July knocked down a T-14 with five young within five+ days of fledging. This was a renest or delayed nesting. New housing placed in emergency conditions and young salvaged with fledging. Lots of midges were present but few martins were present at the end.

My request to landlords was also to send in weather or local situations so we have other people making comments. Memories are sometimes difficult to have great recall so that is why I wrote comments as the season went onward. See (Figure 5), for the amount of rainfall from the National Weather Service at La Crosse for the period from June 1 to August 31, 2021 highlighted in colors throughout Wisconsin.

**Here are a few comments from people who sent in their data. These are bits and pieces of their comments that I thought were important. I interjected a few comments for my thoughts and reasons why something may have occurred on the Gail Bolden and Susan Alden notes.**

Peter & Nancy Hutchinson from Pound comments: Fifteen non-breeding martins for the season. Memorial weekend cold. Fed mealworms and crickets. End of June it was cold and rainy with no insects. April was mostly cold with martins being fed. Early May was more cooler weather until May 10. Used wood glue to coat the ceilings of cavities to deter wasps. It is slick.

(continued page 11)

Gail Bolden comments from Fond du Lac: *On September 14, 2021, 18 Purple Martins came in and resided at a neighbor's colony site for about six days and nights. (Dick Nikolai's comments for these martins staying: Sept 14, 15 & 16 were rainy, cool and rotten for weather here in Appleton. Assumed the same in the Fond du Lac area. On the 17<sup>th</sup> was some rain with the 18<sup>th</sup> being pleasant and cool. These martins likely migrated to the area from a great distance (late hatches possibly too) and stayed to recoup their expenditure of body fat before heading out on their migration given the dates. Often the large lakes like Lake Winnebago, including the Great Lakes are key routes martins follow both in the fall and spring.*

Jim Amrhein from McFarland: *This was a bit difficult to ascertain as there were several nest start-ups, failures, and apparent restarts and cavity swapping. This year I noted a very high number of unhatched eggs-42. Usually, I only see a half dozen. Not sure what was going on as we didn't have long stretches of unusual weather. Memorial Day weekend was unusually cold, but not prolonged. Whatever happened appeared to happen in June, which is when I noticed the re-nesting occurring. Some mite problems.*

Susan Alden from Lena: *Although I've had martin houses for about 15 years, I never had a house that had a winch pole until this year. (Welcome to the easier accommodations of maintaining a martin colony).*

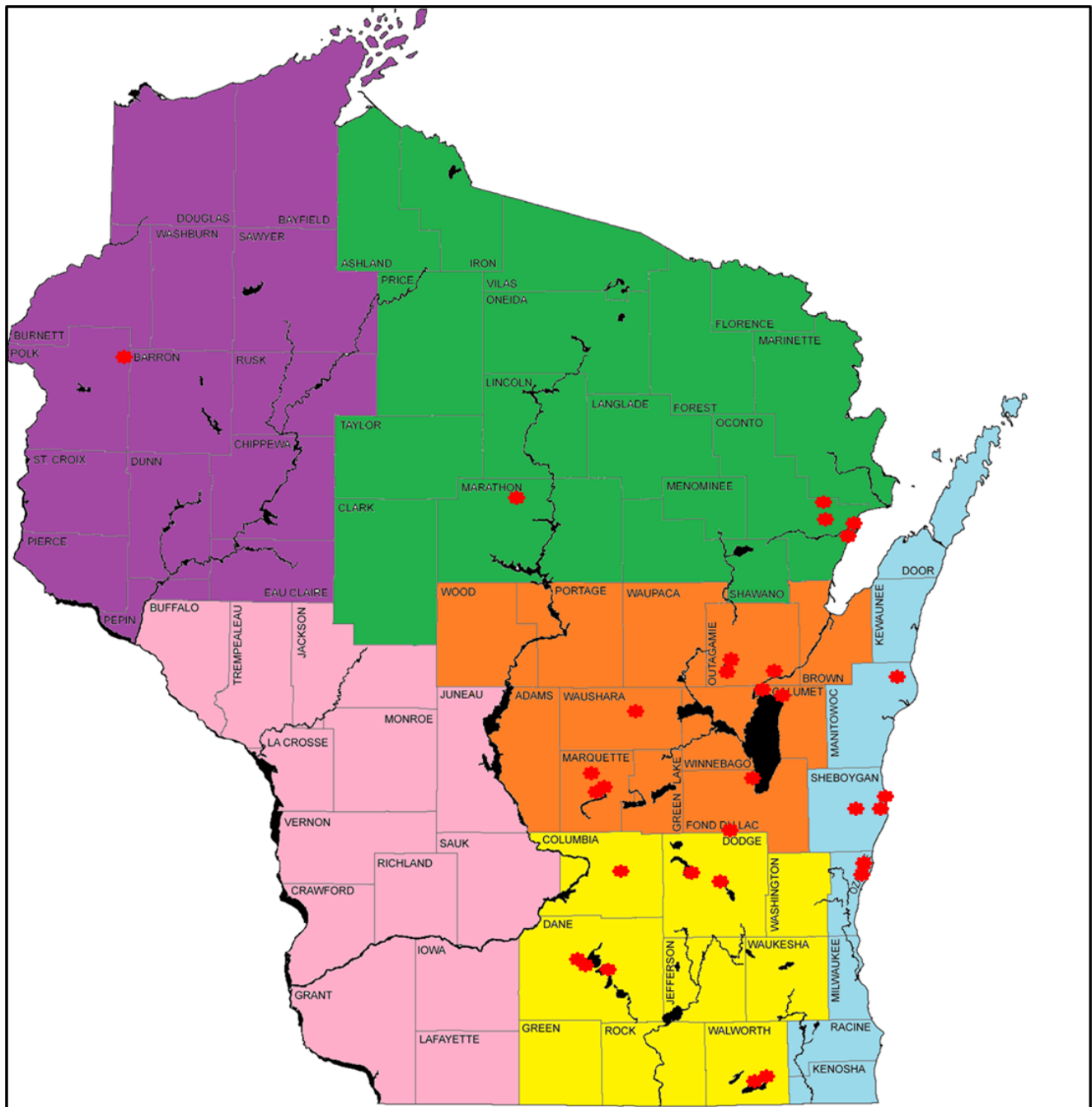
Barry Wallace from Cumberland comments: *All in all it was a pretty good season here. My first martin arrived March 31, earliest ever here. A female showed up a week later. I fed those two along with seven other birds that straggled in daily for about three weeks. I was forced to feed off and on during nesting season this year. We had a cool windy stretch in July that resulted in quite a few failed nests. I was feeding dozens of eggs a day with platform feeders I have up and I think it prevented a large die off of nestlings. Most of my failed nests were second year pairs. I don't think they know the feeding routine like the older birds do.*

Given the prior landlord comments, hopefully this may have triggered your memory in your particular area. Understand the effects of the heat, windy conditions exceeding 20 mph, cloudy days, rainy stints of weather and cooler weather right after those warm spells that possibly affected your colony and the food they eat.

Remember the age of those young. Were they in the pink stage (under 13 days of age) or in the demanding stage (18-24 days)? Were there greater number of eggs being added (unhatched)?

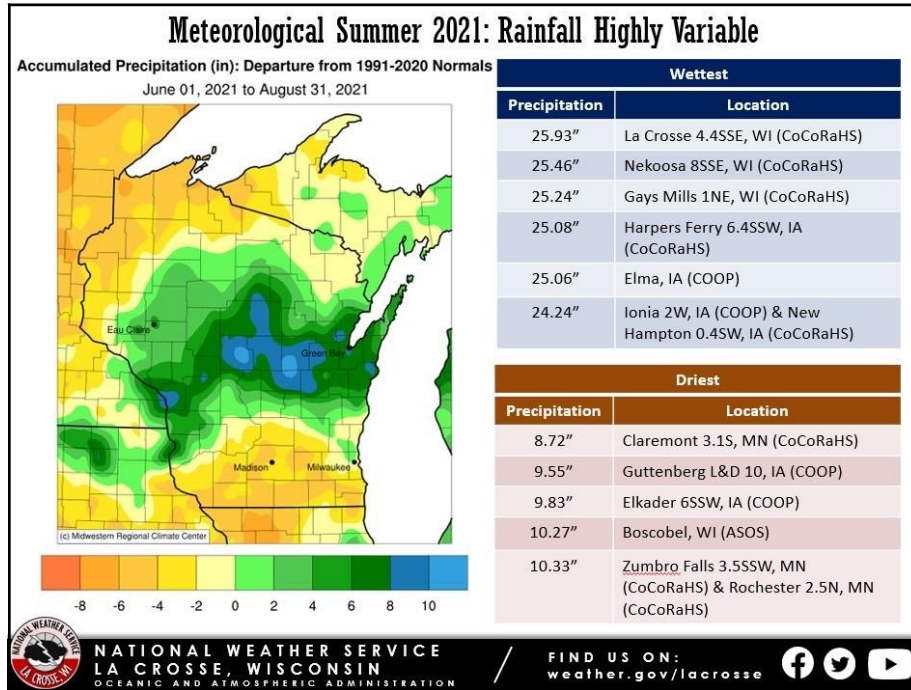
Note that the greatest amount of precipitation occurred in the center part of the state extending from Eau Claire to Oconto down to Sheboygan to La Crosse (see **Figure 6**). A dotted line is drawn through the central portion of Wisconsin to note the area with the greatest impact of heavy rainfall from six to ten inches more for the summer period. For us in Appleton, the average is slightly over 31 inches for the entire year with summer 2021 being six to eight inches greater than the average for the summer period shown by the dark green on the map.





**Figure 4**

Map of Wisconsin showing reported Purple Martin housing colonies in 2021 with data. Red dots show municipal locations of the individuals sending reports, of which the one in Calumet County represents four locations at or near HCSP near Sherwood. Total colony reports for 2021 were more than 2020 and entailed 34 separate areas in 16 counties.



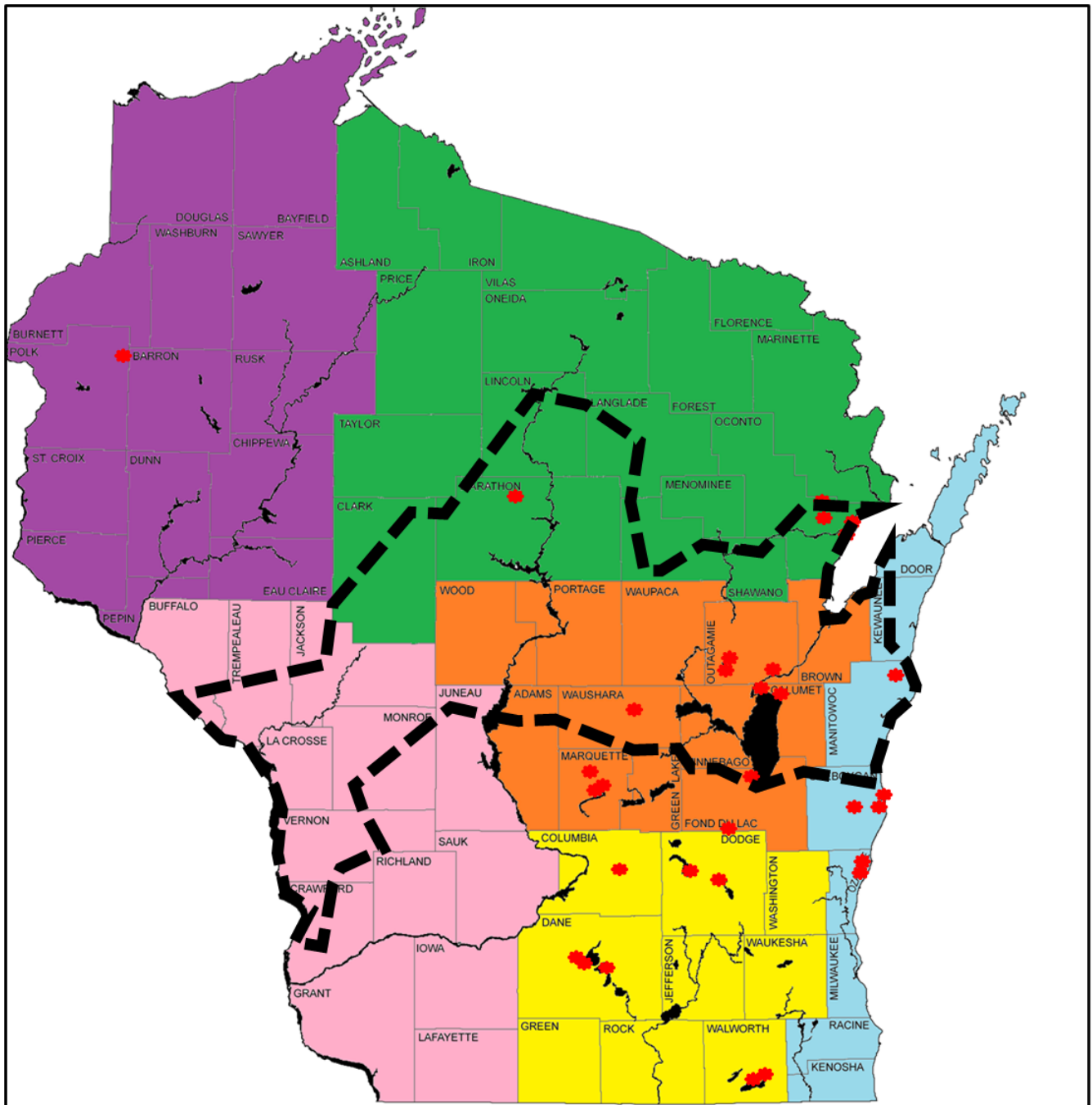
**Figure 5**

Map shows Wisconsin rainfall during the months of June, July, and August. In 2021. Rainfall amounts can be highly variable throughout the state shown by the colors. In southwest Wisconsin, La Crosse had 25.93 inches of rain while Boscobel had 10.27 inches of rain. Nekoosa in central Wisconsin had 25.46 inches.

When viewing (**Figure 5 & 6**), keep in mind the impacts of high winds, cloudy skies, cool days, hot heat index days, steamy weather along with combinations of these, especially high winds. How many of you needed fans or the air conditioner on? This creates impacts upon insects, food resources and flight for the adult's expending energy for the young by trying to keep them cool or warm besides themselves. That is why there were problems for eggs hatching when eggs were cooled rapidly or exposure to a high heat index problems depending on where in the housing the nest occurred or the type of housing whether made of wood, metal, plastic, natural gourds, and their size of any of the cavities or exposure to sun and wind. Raising Purple Martin young were the same for the type of environmental conditions with housing, except clutch or brood size impacts were not mentioned along with food resources. For the adults, exposure elements were the same as described above plus exhaustion and depletion of any reserves they may have left from migration, defending their cavity territories, predation impacts, laying eggs, hunting opportunities and invertebrates.

Purple Martins have feathers for insulation. They pant when hot or cool themselves in lakes, ponds and streams. When cold they brood their young or eggs and stay in their cavities where it is much warmer than those times out in the weather and wind. Most of the area within the dotted line had fewer eggs hatch, fewer young survived to fledging and fewer young produced to flight from eggs. The periphery areas additionally had similar impacts. On the opposite end where it was drier, you may have had limitations of forage food resources and heat exhaustion of the adults. Look at (**Table 1**) showing the red highlighted data on young fledged per nest which is under 3.50. Many sites in the area were affected by the high amount of rainfall pointed out in (**Figure 5**). The exception was in Polk County with 3.40 young fledged.

Note the comments relayed by Barry Wallace of his problems earlier. Both Barry and our colony at High Cliff State Park (HCSP) have over a hundred pairs. Large colonies have their own dynamics which attract predators, especially avian during diurnal and nocturnal times. Having greater numbers of young in the cavities and more adults mean more voices sounding loud and louder over a longer time period that makes it easier for raptors to find. We fledged at out colonies near HCSP 2.22 young, in temperature changes from highs in the 90's to lows in the 50's in 24 hours on several occasions with many adverse parameters mentioned. We were fortunate to have losses only of a third of our young. The weather certainly impacted the hatching from eggs from HCSP, where 70.58% of them hatched. From those that hatched 63.49% fledged and from eggs 44.81% fledged. Compare that with those three sites in Marquette County where hatching ranged from 87% to 90% with close to average conditions yielding between 4.17 and 4.86 fledglings per nest.



**Figure 6**

Heavy rainfall during the months of June, July and August are shown within a dotted line in the middle of Wisconsin along with reported colony sites. This area was recreated from **Figure 5** showing the darker green and blue areas from 6-10 inches more than the average rainfall during the summer months.



Statewide Wisconsin Reports for 2021															
Place of housing	County	1st martin	Pairs	Nests	Nests with eggs	eggs laid	Eggs/nest	Hatched	Hatched/nest	% Hatch	Fledge	Fledged/nest	% Fledged	Fledged from eggs	Last fledgling
Sherwood	Calumet	4/8/2021	118	118	105	520	4.95	367	3.11	70.58%	233	2.22	63.49%	44.81%	8/11/2021
Hortonville	Outagamie	3/30/2021	52	52	52	273	5.25	247	4.75	90.48%	204	3.92	82.59%	74.73%	8/14/2021
Menasha	Winnebago	4/20/2021	18	18	18	96	5.33	74	4.11	77.08%	69	3.83	93.24%	71.88%	7/24/2021
Montello	Marquette	3/28/2021	53	53	53	289	5.45	262	4.94	90.66%	251	4.74	95.80%	86.85%	8/9/2021
Harrisville	Marquette	3/28/2021	14	14	14	78	5.57	69	4.93	88.46%	68	4.86	98.55%	87.18%	7/18/2021
Montello	Marquette	3/29/2021	24	24	24	116	4.83	101	4.21	87.07%	100	4.17	99.01%	86.21%	8/4/2021
Appleton	Outagamie	4/22/2021	7	7	7	34	4.86	25	3.57	73.53%	23	3.29	92.00%	67.65%	7/30/2021
Hortonville	Outagamie	5/13/2021	4	2	2	9	4.50	6	3.00	66.67%	6	3.00	100.00%	66.67%	8/20/2021
Fond du Lac	Fond du Lac	3/30/2021	19	19	19	93	4.89	59	3.11	63.44%	52	2.74	88.14%	55.91%	8/17/2021
Wild Rose	Waushara	4/28/2021	23	23	23	134	5.83	111	4.83	82.84%	82	3.57	73.87%	61.19%	Unknown
Oconto	Oconto	5/9/2021	24	24	15	67	4.47	43	1.79	64.18%	39	1.63	90.70%	58.21%	8/8/2021
Oconto	Oconto	5/16/2021	22	22	22	118	5.36	86	3.91	72.88%	66	3.00	76.74%	55.93%	8/22/2021
Lena	Oconto	4/27/2021	12	12	12	56	4.67	53	4.42	94.64%	52	4.33	98.11%	92.86%	8/8/2021
Pound	Oconto	4/1/2021	46	46	46	228	4.96	204	4.43	89.47%	184	4.00	90.20%	80.70%	8/21/2021
Edgar	Marathon	4/8/2021	27	27	27	101	3.74	82	3.04	81.19%	78	2.89	95.12%	77.23%	Unknown
Beaver Dam	Dodge	3/30/2021	38	38	38	197	5.18	146	3.84	74.11%	110	2.89	75.34%	55.84%	8/4/2021
Waupun	Dodge & Fond du Lac line	Unknown	43	43	42	231	5.50	155	3.69	67.10%	121	2.88	78.06%	52.38%	Unknown
(3) Juneau	Dodge	4/25/2021	7	7	7	27	3.86	24	3.43	88.89%	21	3.00	87.50%	77.78%	8/7/2021
McFarland	Dane	4/11/2021	26	26	26	148	5.69	106	4.08	71.62%	106	4.08	100.00%	71.62%	7/23/2021
Middleton	Dane	4/12/2021	36	36	36	174	4.83	153	4.25	87.93%	151	4.19	98.69%	86.78%	8/2/2021
(2) Rio	Columbia	5/20/2021	1	1	1	4	4.00	4	4.00	100.00%	4	4.00	100.00%	100.00%	8/31/2021
(3) Lake Geneva	Walworth	Unknown	59	59	59	310	5.25	241	4.08	77.74%	219	3.71	90.87%	70.65%	Unknown
(4) Lake Geneva	Walworth	Unknown	11	11	11	57	5.18	43	3.91	75.44%	40	3.64	93.02%	70.18%	Unknown
Middleton	Dane	4/7/2021	11	11	11	54	4.91	46	4.18	85.19%	42	3.82	91.30%	77.78%	7/27/2021
(1) Cumberland	Polk	3/30/2021	115	115	115	513	4.46	474	4.12	92.40%	391	3.40	82.49%	76.22%	8/15/2021
(7) Plymouth	Sheboygan	5/2/2021	5	5	3	18	6.00	12	2.40	66.67%	11	2.20	91.67%	61.11%	7/28/2021
(5) Sheboygan	Sheboygan	No martins		0		0	0.00	0			0				No Martins
(6) Mishicot	Manitowoc	3/30/2021	143	143	143	727	5.08	600	4.20	82.53%	550	3.85	91.67%	75.65%	Unknown
Port Washington	Ozaukee	Unknown	12	12	12	58	4.83	52	4.33	89.66%	48	4.00	92.31%	82.76%	Unknown
Port Washington	Ozaukee	Unknown	12	12	12	63	5.25	54	4.50	85.71%	54	4.50	100.00%	85.71%	Unknown
Sheboygan Falls	Sheboygan	5/11/2021	14	14	14	53	3.79	44	3.14	83.02%	40	2.86	90.91%	75.47%	7/29/2021
(1) Estimates due to monitoring last on July 4. Had some young mortality due to cool & windy stretch in July. (2) Had a pair in 2020 which did not return in 2021. New pair in 2021. (3) Estimate for all except Hatch & % fledged from eggs. (4) Estimate for all except Hatch. (5) Nb Martins came in 2021 & martins were present in 2020. (6) Estimated production for 2021 (7) First time martin landlord. (8) First time martin landlord. (Total of 34 sites in 16 Counties)		1st Martin 3-28-2021	996	994	969	4846	5.00	3943	3.97	81.37%	3415	3.44	86.61%	70.47%	Last Fledge 8/31/2021
(1) Estimates due to monitoring last on July 4. Had some young mortality due to cool & windy stretch in July. (2) Had a pair in 2020 which did not return in 2021. New pair in 2021. (3) Estimate for all except Hatch & % fledged from eggs. (4) Estimate for all except Hatch. (5) Nb Martins came in 2021 & martins were present in 2020. (6) Estimated production for 2021 (7) First time martin landlord. (8) First time martin landlord and removal of Sherwood colonies. (Total of 30 sites)		1st Martin 3-28-2021	878	876	864	4326	5.01	3576	4.08	82.66%	3182	3.63	88.98%	73.56%	Last Fledge 8/31/2021

Table 1

Includes all six regions of Wisconsin for Purple Martins. For the state as a whole, 3.44 young were fledged per cavity from 969 pairs that laid 4846 eggs. Martins arrived on March 28, 2021 with the last known fledgling taking place around August 31. Over 70% of the young fledged from eggs considering the impacts of the weather.


When we compare all the reported colonies in Wisconsin (**Table 1**), our hatching rate was 81.37%, with 86.61% fledging from those that hatched and 70.47% fledging from eggs. The Wisconsin average fledging was 3.44 young per cavity from the average of 5.00 eggs per nests of 4846 eggs for 969 pairs laying eggs. Hatching rate for the state was 3.97 per cavity with a little over one egg lost per cavity. Statewide we still fledged 3415 young from 34 sites from 16 counties, which is an increase of almost 79% more reported sites over 2020. Production from the zones (See **Table 2**) ranged from a high in the Lake Michigan Zone of 3.78 young fledged per cavity to a low of 3.20 young fledged per cavity in the Northeast Forest. Eggs laid per nest ranged from a high of 5.18 eggs per cavity in the Southern Prairie & Savanna Zone to a low of 4.35 eggs per cavity in the Northeast Forest Zone. The Central Agricultural, Wetland & Forest Zone had the most sites of 13.

Each year is never the same, but with our effort for managing colonies, hopefully we will attain at the minimum 4.00 young per cavity. This maintains our current population estimate of 30,000 Purple Martins across Wisconsin according to Partners in Flight.

Regional (Northeast Forest) Wisconsin Reports for 2021															
Place of housing	County	1st martin	Pairs	Nests	Nests with eggs	eggs laid	Eggs/ nest	Hatched	Hatched/ nest	% Hatch	Fledge	Fledged/ nest	% Fledged	Fledged from eggs	Last fledging
Oconto	Oconto	5/9/2021	24	24	15	67	4.47	43	1.79	64.19%	39	1.63	90.70%	58.21%	8/8/2021
Oconto	Oconto	5/16/2021	22	22	22	118	5.36	86	3.91	72.89%	66	3.00	76.74%	55.39%	8/22/2021
Pound	Oconto	4/1/2021	46	46	46	228	4.96	204	4.43	89.47%	184	4.00	90.20%	80.70%	8/21/2021
Edgar	Marathon	4/8/2021	27	27	27	101	3.74	82	3.04	81.19%	78	2.89	95.12%	77.23%	Unknown
Lena	Oconto	4/27/2021	12	12	12	56	4.67	53	4.42	94.64%	52	4.33	98.11%	92.86%	8/8/2021
Total of 5 sites all active.		1st Martin 4-19-2020	131	131	122	570	4.35	468	3.57	82.11%	419	3.20	89.53%	73.51%	Last Redge 8/14/2020
Regional (Northwestern Barrens & Forest) Wisconsin Reports for 2021															
Place of housing	County	1st martin	Pairs	Nests	Nests with eggs	eggs laid	Eggs/ nest	Hatched	Hatched/ nest	% Hatch	Fledge	Fledged/ nest	% Fledged	Fledged from eggs	Last fledging
Cumberland	Polk	3/30/2021	115	115	115	513	4.46	474	4.12	92.40%	391	3.40	82.49%	76.22%	8/15/2021
(1) Estimate due to monitoring last on July 4. Had some young mortality due to cool & windy stretch in July. To list of 1 site submitted & active.		1st Martin 4-2-2020	115	115	115	513	4.46	474	4.12	92.40%	391	3.40	82.49%	76.22%	Last Redge 8/12/2020
Regional (Southwest Driftless Zone) Wisconsin Reports for 2021															
Place of housing	County	1st martin	Pairs	Nests	Nests with eggs	eggs laid	Eggs/ nest	Hatched	Hatched/ nest	% Hatch	Fledge	Fledged/ nest	% Fledged	Fledged from eggs	Last fledging
Total of 0 sites submitted		1st Martin	0	0	0	0	#DIV/0!	0	#DIV/0!	#DIV/0!	0	#DIV/0!	#DIV/0!	#DIV/0!	Last Redge
Regional (Central Agricultural, Wetland & Forest Zone) Wisconsin Reports for 2021															
Place of housing	County	1st martin	Pairs	Nests	Nests with eggs	eggs laid	Eggs/ nest	Hatched	Hatched/ nest	% Hatch	Fledge	Fledged/ nest	% Fledged	Fledged from eggs	Last fledging
Shervood	Calumet	4/8/2021	118	118	105	520	4.35	367	3.50	70.59%	233	2.22	63.49%	44.81%	8/11/2021
Hortonville	Outagamie	3/30/2021	52	52	52	273	5.25	247	4.75	90.48%	204	3.92	82.59%	74.73%	8/14/2021
Appleton	Outagamie	4/22/2021	7	7	7	34	4.86	25	3.57	73.53%	23	3.29	92.00%	67.69%	7/30/2021
Menasha	Winnebago	4/20/2021	18	18	18	96	5.33	74	4.11	77.08%	69	3.83	93.24%	71.89%	7/24/2021
Montello	Marquette	3/28/2021	53	53	53	289	5.45	262	4.94	90.69%	251	4.74	95.80%	86.89%	8/9/2021
Hortonville	Outagamie	5/13/2021	4	2	2	9	4.50	6	3.00	66.67%	6	3.00	100.00%	66.67%	8/20/2021
Fond du Lac	Fond du Lac	3/30/2021	19	19	19	93	4.89	59	3.11	63.44%	52	2.74	88.14%	55.91%	8/17/2021
Harrisville	Marquette	3/28/2021	14	14	14	78	5.57	69	4.93	88.46%	68	4.86	98.56%	87.18%	7/18/2021
Montello	Marquette	3/29/2021	24	24	24	116	4.83	101	4.21	87.07%	100	4.17	99.01%	86.21%	8/4/2021
Wild Rose	Waushara	4/28/2021	23	23	23	134	5.83	111	4.83	82.84%	82	3.57	73.87%	61.19%	Unknown
Total of all 13 sites submitted & all active.		1st Martin 3/28/2021	332	330	317	1642	4.98	1321	4.00	80.45%	1088	3.30	82.36%	66.26%	Last Redge 8/20/2021
Regional (Southern Prairie & Savanna Zone) Wisconsin Reports for 2021															
Place of housing	County	1st martin	Pairs	Nests	Nests with eggs	eggs laid	Eggs/ nest	Hatched	Hatched/ nest	% Hatch	Fledge	Fledged/ nest	% Fledged	Fledged from eggs	Last fledging
Middleton	Dane	4/7/2021	11	11	11	54	4.91	46	4.18	85.19%	42	3.82	91.30%	77.78%	7/27/2021
Beaver Dam	Dodge	3/30/2021	38	38	38	197	5.18	146	3.84	74.11%	110	2.89	75.34%	55.84%	8/4/2021
(1) Bedmate due to mauling last on July 4. Had some young mortality due to cool & windy stretch in July. Total of 1 site submitted & active.		1st Martin 4-2-2020	38	38	38	197	5.18	146	3.84	74.11%	110	2.89	75.34%	55.84%	8/4/2021
Waupun	Fond du Lac	Unknown	43	43	42	231	5.50	155	3.69	67.10%	121	2.88	78.06%	52.38%	Unknown
McFarland	Dane	4/11/2021	26	26	26	148	5.69	106	4.08	71.62%	106	4.08	100.00%	71.62%	7/23/2021
Middleton	Dane	4/12/2021	36	36	36	174	4.83	153	4.25	87.93%	151	4.19	98.69%	86.79%	8/2/2021
(2) Rio	Columbia	5/20/2021	1	1	1	4	4.00	4	4.00	100.00%	4	4.00	100.00%	100.00%	8/31/2021
(3) Lake Geneva	Walworth	Unknown	59	59	59	310	5.25	241	4.08	77.74%	219	3.71	90.87%	70.69%	Unknown
(4) Lake Geneva	Walworth	Unknown	11	11	11	57	5.18	43	3.91	75.44%	40	3.64	93.02%	70.18%	Unknown
(5) Juneau	Dodge	4/25/2021	7	7	7	27	3.86	24	3.43	88.89%	21	3.00	87.50%	77.78%	8/7/2021
(6) No martins banded in 2020, which did not return in 2021. New pair in 2021. (7) Estimates for all except hatch & % fledged from eggs. (8) Estimate for all except hatch. (9) First-time martin banded. Total of 6 sites submitted & all active.		1st Martin 3/30/2021	232	232	231	1202	5.18	918	3.96	76.37%	814	3.51	88.67%	67.72%	Last Redge 8/31/2021
Regional (Lake Michigan Zone) Wisconsin Reports for 2021															
Place of housing	County	1st martin	Pairs	Nests	Nests with eggs	eggs laid	Eggs/ nest	Hatched	Hatched/ nest	% Hatch	Fledge	Fledged/ nest	% Fledged	Fledged from eggs	Last fledging
Sheboygan Falls	Sheboygan	5/11/2021	14	14	14	53	3.79	44	3.14	83.02%	40	2.86	90.91%	75.47%	7/29/2021
Port Washington	Ozaukee	Unknown	12	12	12	58	4.83	52	4.33	89.66%	48	4.00	92.31%	82.76%	Unknown
Port Washington	Ozaukee	Unknown	12	12	12	63	5.25	54	4.50	85.71%	54	4.50	100.00%	85.71%	Unknown
(7) Plymouth	Sheboygan	5/22/2021	5	5	3	18	3.60	12	2.40	66.67%	11	2.20	91.67%	61.11%	7/28/2021
(8) Sheboygan	Sheboygan	No Martins	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	No Martins	Unknown
(9) Mishicot	Manitowish	3/30/2021	143	143	143	727	5.08	600	4.20	82.53%	560	3.95	91.67%	75.69%	Unknown
(10) No martins banded in 2021 & martins were present in 2020. (11) Estimated production for 2021. (12) First-time martin banded. Total of 5 sites submitted with active.		1st Martin 3-30-2021	186	186	184	919	4.94	782	4.10	82.92%	703	3.78	92.26%	76.50%	Last Redge 7/29/2021

**Table 2**

Includes all data received from the six regions for Purple Martins in Wisconsin. Unfortunately, the Southwest Driftless Zone had no nesting reports. This data represents 34 sites from 16 counties, which is an increase of almost 79% more sites over 2020. Production ranged from a high in Lake Michigan Zone of 3.78 young fledged to a low of 3.20 young fledged in the Southern Prairie & Savanna Zone to a low of 4.35 eggs per cavity in the Northeast Forest Zone. The Central Agricultural, Wetland & Forest Zone had the most sites of 13.

Purple Martins Banded 1960-2021										
 Bird Banding Lab	Wisconsin	Year	Birds Banded by Year	Birds Recovered By Year	Return Rate	Year	Birds Banded by Year	Birds Recovered By Year		
		1960	45	0		1995	212	0		
		1961	47	0		1996	306	1		
		1962	94	1		1997	450	0		
		1963	38	0		1998	401	0		
		1964	143	0		1999	469	0		
		1965	133	0		2000	445	1		
		1966	137	0		2001	458	2		
		1967	84	1		2002	229	0		
		1968	20	0		2003	266	0		
		1969	82	2		2004	163	0		
		1970	106	0		2005	263	1		
		1971	114	2		2006	360	0		
		1972	179	0		2007	444	1		
		1973	346	0		2008	353	3		
		1974	403	5		2009	289	2		
		1975	274	0		2010	540	0		
		1976	492	1		2011	460	1		
		1977	311	3		2012	519	1		
		1978	94	0		2013	509	1		
		1979	134	3		2014	714	1		
		1980	292	0		2015	636	1		
		1981	211	1		2016	1,310	0		
		1982	199	4		2017	1,838	2		
		1983	130	1		2018	2,150	5		
		1984	223	1		2019	1,917	8		
		1985	272	0		2020	1,393	8		
		1986	355	0		2021	1,452	3		
		1987	190	0		*2022		0		
		1988	154	1						
		1989	105	1						
		1990	94	0						
		1991	89	0						
		1992	127	2						
		1993	78	1						
		1994	136	1						
		1995	212	0						
	Wisconsin				Return rate by public	Wisconsin				Return rate by public
	Total 1960-1995		6,143	31	0.505%	Total 1996-present	18,546	42		0.226%
					* After Jan 1	Total 1960-present	24,689	73		0.296%

**Table 3**

Summary of the Bird Banding Labs Reports from 1960 to January 10, 2022 for Wisconsin.

PM Statewide Banding	Year	New	Recaptures	Totals	WI Recoveries by the public
Dick Nikolai/Bob Ring	2016	1227	153	1380	0
Dick Nikolai/Bob Ring	2017	2109	141	2250	2
Dick Nikolai/Bob Ring	2018	2086	131	2217	5
Dick Nikolai/Bob Ring	2019	1814	134	1948	8
Dick Nikolai/Bob Ring	2020	1416	143	1559	8
Dick Nikolai/Bob Ring	2021	1316	90	1406	3
	2022		0		0
As of January 10, 2022	Total	9968	792	10760	26
	Average per Yr	1661	113	1793	3.71
Recapture Rate %					7.361%

**Table 4**

Summary of Banded &amp; Recaptured Purple Martins by Dick Nikolai &amp; Bob Ring from 2016 to January 10,



Finally take note of the recovery of Purple Martins through the general public or through observers such as yourself (**Table 3**) or by banders, which includes recaptures by myself or Bob Ring (**Table 4**). Recovery rate for us is 792/9968 which is **7.361%** comparing that to **0.296%** from the general public rate during the same time period. What amazed me was the recovery rate from 1960 to 1995 which was 31 recoveries in 36 years for a rate of 0.505% versus the rate from 1996 to the present which was 0.226%. The last few years we have had more recoveries in Wisconsin due to our efforts on educating the public to report banded Purple Martins. Our appreciation for all of you reporting data for this summary. Banding recapture rates are almost 25 times greater than for the public. Be vigilant when a band is seen on live adults or an adult that has succumbed to the elements, by reporting the band to the Bird Banding Lab (See below). Use your binoculars, spotting scopes, your camera or phone with camera as useful tools.

## Report Bird Bands

<https://www.usgs.gov/labs/bird-banding-laboratory>

Please note that reports for 2022 can be submitted any time after the nesting season until December 31 at [prairiechicken@att.net](mailto:prairiechicken@att.net). Let us see if we can fill in the gaps for areas on our map like in the Southwest Driftless Zone or in the many counties that were absent. For those of you that did, continue on sending them. Thanks!

**Items needed:** 1) *Time of arrival*, 2) *Last young fledged*, 3) *Eggs laid*, 4) *Young hatched*, 5) *Young fledged*, 6) *Your location if not reported before*, and 7) *Martins were there in 2021 but gone in 2022*.

Let's make this 2022 Purple Martin season rewarding for all by filling in the many gaps throughout Wisconsin, being mentors for our neighbors, family, friends or people in need of education and sharing time with our feathered families to make their time in Wisconsin successful. Have a successful season! Enjoy those friendly conferences on the antennas and the great antics they share with us.



Photo courtesy Dick Nikolai

## New Public Purple Martin Housing for Oshkosh

Dick Nikolai

When Purple Martin housing needed to be taken down rapidly along the Fox River near Menominee Park, expectations for its replacement site were expected to arrive shortly. Over half a decade ago, the area by the Oshkosh Treatment Plant was to be renovated so anything on the property needed to disappear.

Housing was stored and given to the University of Wisconsin-Oshkosh (UW-O) at their maintenance facility. Weeks went by quickly, then months and before long, many years passed. In the spring of 2018, a local birder, educator and writer, Anita Carpenter and I had concerned discussions of the inactivity of replacement while we carried on our activities of Bird City Oshkosh at Menominee Park and Zoo. Both of us indicated in the fall that we would look over possible sites on the campus of UW-O to pick out viable locations for placement.

When meeting on October 17, 2018 with Lisa Mick (Supervisor of Maintenance Facilities) and some professors, several suitable sites were found. Our spirits were picked up as I indicated on how to renovate the received housing to make compartments larger of these aluminum houses along with using poles for vertical lowering by cable and winch.

Unfortunately, some changes occurred at UW-O making renovation of housing placed on the back burner. Covid hit us in the spring of 2020 and notably no plans were in the offering for placement. Because of a lack of activity, I proceeded to look at options of what I could do with housing stored in my basement, along with housing I still had up on my property in Appleton.

During the fall, I made several changes to my yard and by taking down the first of two Purple Martin houses and digging out the base, placing it in a spot for easy access. The house was torn apart, cleaned and parts ordered for updating the housing to make larger compartments for UW-O.

In September, the Friends of Collins Wildlife Area approached me for assistance on getting housing for them. Agreed to offer them a retrofit housing from my yard which is the second housing. The second house was taken off the pole in fall with the base left in the ground. In both cases the housing would have larger rooms, an added floor, offer perching, vertically

lowered housing and would need to be placed in April or May in 2021. Housing was worked on during the winter and early spring 2021. Some parts were hard to find due to shortages like the cable to lower and raise the housing. The Collins house was placed in early June with a pair of martins staying the whole summer building a nest but laying no eggs.

Arrangements for the completed housing at UW-O was scheduled for April that turned to May and each month afterward. Schedule conflicts appeared to be eating the year away at UW-O. Finally, a date on October 19 was agreed upon. Dug out the second base weighing several hundred pounds from my yard about a month prior placing it in a spot easy to move to my driveway.

On October 18 moved the base to the driveway for pickup early in the morning by Lisa Mick and one of her maintenance crew. Needed to use several fulcrum maneuvers to get it to a point we could use a pole for placement on a pickup tailgate rolling it into the back of the vehicle. Several maintenance people met us at UW-O and placement was commenced as shown. Meanwhile Anita Carpenter was informed of the operation meeting us while the digging was taking place. Anita was excited as a bear was with some honey taking in all the parameters of this event. In early afternoon the housing was secure with its elements of vertically lowering with a cable and winch. Once erected the winch was given a padlock. Coming to greet us at the end was a migrating monarch butterfly winging southward, a Bald Eagle soared overhead spiraling high amongst the clouds and of course a handful of Ring-billed gulls looking for handouts from the two visitors along the Fox River.

What was so enjoyable about the project is the people who you get to see and work with on these endeavors. All of them from Lisa Mick, Zachary Vossekuil, Antonio Arellano and Anita Carpenter were all positive people enjoying the day and our surroundings about us. Anita is the crown jewel of all, for her smile is contagious, her mannerism puts one at ease, and her forthright attitude brings the brightness along with the warmth of the day. Without her push forward attitude the housing at UW-O may not have seen its roots set into cement along the Fox River. Anita Carpenter has written many articles for the *Wisconsin Natural Resources* magazine since 1989, covering many aspects of our environment we take for granted as we walk in urban and rural environments. Anita takes notice of everyday items and that is really what placement of a Purple Martin house was that day. To most people it was being mundane of another object



being stuck in the ground. Anita's giddiness was foretelling of when Purple Martins would be coming back to set up dominance of the housing being provided. It was the hearing of the martins' chortle song when they are flying to the housing. It was smelling the millions of lake flies or midges being present with martins engorging themselves. It was sight of young martins peeping their heads out of the holes. It was the feel of spring with its freshness and the spirit of wind with the aerobatics of martins flying. Anita knows what she has missed on her long walks along the Fox River.

Anita has been part of UW-O's placement of habitat within its campus along with Lisa Mick. Less lawn means saving money so maintenance monies can be used for more useful projects like repairs to buildings. Habitat blocks winds, absorbs snow away from parking areas, provides insulation from the cold or

heat and even gives visual opportunities for people to relieve stress. Wildlife and plants go hand in hand with opportunities for class, projects for professors, observations for birders and to take strolls. Anita's other sideline is making gorgeous quilts of birds and surroundings. Who knows what the housing offers for Anita showing possibly Purple Martins ecology wrapped in a quilt? One thing for sure is the infectious character she brings along the way and the enjoyment of our environment. For those of you who want to read articles about her, look for this past Spring 2021 *Wisconsin Natural Resources* magazine or the monthly *Badger Birder* from the Wisconsin Society for Ornithology.



Zachary Vossekuil and Antonio Arellano from UW-Oshkosh assisted in digging a hole to place the concreted base. Both assisted me in placing the pole with housing.



Job satisfaction is when smiles speed up the process. Anita Carpenter on October 19, 2021 being the conduit to assist in placement of new Purple Martin housing on UW-O's campus in 2021.



Housing location is Pearl Avenue & Highway 44; note Anita's transportation.

Photos courtesy Dick Nikolai



## Farewell to a Beaver Dam Purple Martin Landlord

*Dick Nikolai*

One of the many things people are intrigued about is wildlife and the people who know information about them or are professionals that deal with them. That always starts a great conversation leading generally towards deer. In this case, it was one of those with a doctor whose father had a passion for Purple Martins. These conferences about health led to discussions of his father's passion and my bringing along articles relating to it for his father. Nothing like bringing into the fold for our organization a chance to mentor several people. Purple Martins seem to bring out the best in everyone because of their ties with mankind for housing, and their relationship with monitoring to perpetuate this amazing species, which travels in migration thousands of miles to Wisconsin. Most of all, it seems to bond families through caring for Purple Martins by seeing their own life struggles in this species which gives as much back as it receives.

This beginning led to a great respect for Chuck Meyer (Beaver Dam) by his inquiring mind through text inquiries. Although I use text messaging, I prefer to call and that is what bonded me with Chuck along the way. Those calls seemed to stimulate our conversations especially in the past few years referring to expansion of his colony. Chuck was a soft-spoken man who listened intently and methodically. Then always trying to fill in the gaps of his knowledge by asking the hard questions to keep his colony going forward. Chuck was the mentor for Dodge County and the surrounding area.

Chuck's mentorship was superb. He gave great details and many times asked me on how he needed to resolve or guide someone along. He loved when his grandchildren came, for he wanted to show them how life was for these feathered friends of his. This sharing had seemed to be part of his former profession, which he did not share until this past year to me. That did not surprise me, for many times when seeing him I was swamped with people.

One of Chuck's mentees, Mary Ward, described her memories as being strong of his joy of working with Purple Martins for they were vibrant as he tried to be in his care for them. A little over a year ago, Chuck assisted Mary in placing housing on her property.

Those new houses attracted purple martins in 2021 through his proper placement and continued with special memories for this mentee throughout the year. As part of his life, Chuck worked with his dogs who were his great partners on a daily basis. They were brought with him going to facilities and shut-ins to bring smiles for therapy and enjoyment of having a warm, friendly, loving canines wanting to be petted and nurtured.



Ward Colony

Photo Courtesy Mary Ward

Chuck Meyer (brown jacket) and Cade Schreiber placing a pole for a T-14 on October 31, 2020 for a new colony site at Ward's home. A success story of receiving seven pairs of Purple Martins in 2021 that Chuck felt very proud.

He always enjoyed talking over the phone for he was interested in how I was looking at the population rather than the individual colony. Things during the summer did not go well at Chuck's colony for he was losing some young due to the heat and wanted ways to assist them. The photo of a mister greatly aided his colony in preventing further loses of those young and cooled down the adults under stress. Chuck kept his martins as cool as possible with sprinklers and combinations of shading his housing so more of his young martins would be able to survive. Then the unthinkable happened when Chuck became hospitalized. Later he needed rehabilitation at a facility (*continued page 22*)

(*Fairwell continued*) near Appleton during the middle of the summer and conversations of taking care of those martins were transferred to his loving family members who have been mentored.

Knowing he was nearby, I made trips to see him three to four times a month. We always talked about Purple Martins, which sparked great conversations for always an hour. Chuck was satisfied of his son taking care of his martins along with his partners the three dogs. Time quickly passed and Chuck's health deteriorated further in the fall to early winter. One of the times spent with him, Chuck's family brought him many mementoes to keep in his facility of his life. One of these was a plaque of his service to the armed forces, bringing new life to me of his professional dedication.

Chuck Meyer was a hero in many aspects in my eyes from the plaque. The reference as being a hero was relating to his service for us in the United States Air Force. Chuck had flown over 76 successful missions over North Vietnam with a total of combat missions being 276. His specialty was flying a F-4 as a fighter pilot, was commander, a squadron operations officer, a director of Operations, Air Operations Officer and a Flight Training Instructor for F-4 and T-38 planes. Chuck had numerous decorations: Legion of Merit, Meritorious Service Medal (two oak leaf clusters), air Medal (twelve oak leaf clusters), Air Force Commendation Medal, Air Force Outstanding Unit Award (one oak leaf cluster), National Defense Service Medal, Vietnam Service Medal (two bronze service stars), Air Force Small Arms Expert Marksmanship Ribbon, Republic of Vietnam Gallantry Cross with palm and Republic of Vietnam Campaign Medal.

It is no wonder why Chuck loved Purple Martins. These birds duplicated his love of flight showing him many acrobatic features in their displays while managing his colony and taking care of his feathered friends, who traveled many miles to be with him during the spring and summer. Chuck was a perfectionist in his care of Purple Martins for he often called or texted his situations he felt he lacked information. What did not deteriorate was his passion for our Purple Martins.

Chuck's family and neighbors became the surrogate landlords due to his passion being passed on to them during his many years of showing them the care they needed along with the monitoring. On December 11, 2021, Chuck went on his migration from this life to fly forward with those Purple Martins winging to their

wintering grounds and will be migrating back in some way to us here in Wisconsin. What he did, as all of us should be doing, is finding our passion with Purple Martins but training and securing the next generation so our passion still takes flight in the mentees or our family's next generation. Here's to many *Cher, Chortle, Croak & Dawnsongs* songs to all, reminding us that one of our friends is back home.



Meyer Property Photo courtesy Chuck Meyer

Note Chuck's modified summer atomizer as he was advised to use to assist his Purple Martins during the high temps inn the 90s on June 8, 2021.



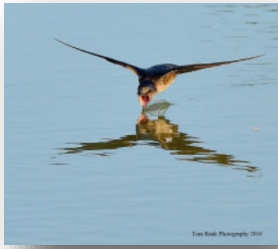


Photo courtesy Tom Rank

## Remembering Tom Rank

*Les Rhines*

The first time I met Tom was in 2010; my wife and I were living in Sheboygan, near Lake Michigan. I had found out about Tom from the Purple Martin Conservation Association website. Now before I go further, I need to provide a little background that supports our meeting. Prior to us moving to Sheboygan my wife and I owned a property in Cleveland where I had developed a successful colony, and I believe my success was attributed to the things that I learned from reading the posts on the PMCA forum. So, in 2006 we moved to Sheboygan, I thought I knew just how to establish a new colony. I was determined to replicate the success that I had in Cleveland, but I struggled. I had visitors checking out my site, but they never stayed; so again, I went back to the PMCA forum and it was there that I came across a few posts from a fellow named Tom Rank, and from what I read it sounded like he knew what he was talking about. I also found that Tom was listed as a mentor for the PMCA, unfortunately it took me a year or so before I decided to give Tom a call.

It was mid-May when Tom arrived at our Sheboygan home to make the site evaluation and it didn't take him long to make the assessment and deliver the bad news. As we know, Purple Martins require an open area in at least 3 directions. Unfortunately for us, we only had a flyway in one direction and opening the flyway in other directions was not an option, as trees owned by neighbors could not be removed. Tom's recommendation was to move the martin house to the front yard, which I did. Unfortunately, that did not work either and we never did establish a colony there, but that's a story for another day.

It was during that site evaluation that Tom shared with me that he had been mentoring other prospective landlords in the Sheboygan area and he mentioned to me that he was thinking about forming a group of people that were passionate about Purple Martins, citing

as its purpose: to help educate people on how to attract and manage Purple Martin by sharing best practices.

In early 2012, the Eastern Wisconsin Purple Martin Association was formed with Tom as President, Greg Zimmermann as Vice President, Joe Francis as Treasurer, Nicki Schumacher as Secretary, and with Ike Kumrow and myself as Board members. The newly formed EWPMA held their first public meeting on February 16, 2012, at the Plymouth Inter-Generational Center located in Plymouth WI. The meeting had been advertised in the local papers, and we did not know what to expect, but we were all surprised when 36 people turned out, and the number of attendees grew in the following months, which clearly confirmed Tom's perception that people were interested in hosting and helping Purple Martins.

The rest is as they say history. Here we are at the beginning of the 10<sup>th</sup> year, and we are still focused on helping perspective landlords attract and keep purple martins, thanks Tom for what you started.

The photo of Tom that accompanies this article is taken from Tom and his wife Candy's colony. I had taken this picture of Tom as he was showing me around his colony; it was easy to see how proud he was of his colony and how dedicated he was to share the things that he had learned with others.



Tom Rank at his colony

Photo courtesy Les Rhines

*Editor's note: Tom's ASYF photo will headline our memorial columns dedicated to him throughout 2022.*



Hutchinson PM Colony

Photo courtesy Peter/Nancy Hutchinson

## Meet the Landlords

### Peter and Nancy Hutchinson

We would like to introduce ourselves and provide you with a little information about us and our Purple Martin Colony. We would also love to hear *your* story and find out a little about our fellow Wisconsin Purple Martin Association members.

We are Peter & Nancy Hutchinson and live about 45 mi. from Green Bay in Pound, Oconto County. My husband Peter and I are both retired and I have him to thank for getting me interested in establishing a colony. We have had a martin house up for about 10 years and played the dawn song attempting to attract them to our yard, without success. Finally in 2018, we attracted a few birds which stayed and nested, what a thrill! This was an unmanaged colony so we could only guestimate at the number of pairs and young. In 2019, we upgraded and enlarged the compartments and also added another box which Peter crafted himself out of cedar. We managed this colony with regular nest checks. We had 3 pair nest and fledged 13 young. In 2020, our colony grew to 14 pair and 12 pair successfully fledged 58 young. Last season 2021, the numbers exploded with 46 pair and 44 successfully fledged 184 young. This was a lot of work as we attempted to do a nest check every 5 days. Our last fledge was a late one on August 21<sup>st</sup>.

Thanks to Peter's love of woodworking we now have 6 cedar houses with a total of 69 compartments. We named our colony the *Purple Martin Frozen Tundra Lodge*. Each box

has it's own name as well; Valhalla, Packer Lodge, Outhouse (it got its name because I picked out a paint color that looked like it belonged in a bathroom), T-14, Locker Room, and Green Barn.

With the large increase in birds this past summer, the colony attracted more predators than previous years. Primarily, Cooper's Hawk and owls were an issue, we lost a few birds to them, unfortunately. We keep the starlings and house sparrows under control by trapping and shooting. With so many nesting pairs with young to feed, I became concerned that our martin numbers were over the carrying capacity of our area. I kept telling Pete we need more bugs, we need more dragonflies. We have a pond near our colony and years ago added minnows to it. Well, we did a bad thing because minnows eat the dragonfly nymphs. We haven't figured out a good strategy for completely eliminating the minnows but have been able to get some with a net. We also added pickerel weed and lily pads to increase the structure in the pond for the dragonfly nymphs. But martins don't just eat dragonflies, a lot of their diet consists of other species of flying insects and how do you increase those numbers, I wondered.

Pete and I believe that we have found an answer to that question. We recently read a book called *Natures Best Hope (A New Approach to Conservation That Starts in Your Yard)* by Douglas W Tallamy. The following is an excerpt from the book description: *Nature's Best Hope shows how homeowners everywhere can turn their yards into conservation corridors that provide wildlife habitats. Because this approach relies on the initiatives of private individuals, it is immune from the whims of government policy.*

*Even more important, it's practical, effective, and easy—you will walk away with specific suggestions you can incorporate into your own yard.*

This book is a goldmine of information and his idea truly resonates with us. He is suggesting everyone that owns a piece of land no matter how large or small use a portion of it for native plantings. His idea is that we can actually turn around the degradation of habitat, and loss of diversity of insect and bird species, if we collectively as individuals do our part. He has named these privately owned bits *The Homegrown National Park*.

It's not enough to give Purple Martins nesting compartments, they need to be able to have enough insects to raise their young, and this applies to bluebirds and most of our migrants and resident birds. The small changes that we make in our yards can have a large impact. This book gives us the tools we need to make this happen.

This spring we will be converting some of our mowed lawn to wildflower meadow and planting white oak, butternut, black cherry, and hickory trees. It is a long-term goal to make (*continued page 25*)



(*Meet the Landlords continued*) our land enticing to the insects which our birds need to raise their young.

If anyone has any questions for us, we will be happy to answer them. You can reach us at [wklondike@centurylink.net](mailto:wklondike@centurylink.net). All inquiries welcome!

Wishing you all a very successful 2022 Purple Martin season!

## 2022 Member Dues

If you haven't done so, please remit your annual membership dues for 2022. Annual membership is \$10.00 and runs 1 January-31 December. Please make checks payable to

*WPMA Treasurer, N6018 Hwy 32, Sheboygan Falls, WI 53085.*

*Thank you for your support!*

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PM tips or stories? We welcome submissions! Photos must be your own for publication. Direct articles in Word format and jpeg photographs to editor.

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## Purple Martins

If we were such and so, the same as these,  
maybe we too would be slingers and sliders,  
tumbling half over in the water mirrors,  
tumbling half over the horse heads of the sun  
tumbling our purple numbers.

Twirl on, you and your satin blue.  
Be water birds, be air birds.  
Be these purple tumblers you are.

Dip and get away,  
From loops into slip knots,  
Write your own ciphers and figure eights.  
It is your wooden island here in Lincoln Park.  
Everybody knows this belongs to you.

Five fat geese  
Eat grass on a sod bank  
And never count your slinging ciphers,  
your sliding figure eights.

A man on a green paint iron bench,  
Slouches his feet and sniffs in a book,  
And looks at your and your loops and slip-knots,  
And looks at you and your sheaths of satin blue,  
And slouches again and sniffs in the book,  
And mumbles: It is an idle and a doctrinaire exploit.  
Go on tumbling half over in the water mirrors.  
Go on tumbling half over the horse heads of the sun.  
Be water birds, be air birds.  
Be those purple tumblers you are.

— Carl Sandburg