

Purple Martin Chatter

A Publication of the Wisconsin Purple Martin Association

Volume 4, Issue 2

April 2015

A Message from Tom Rank, President, WPMA:

Where are my purple martins? That is a term I hear quite often early in the season from landlords who are anxiously awaiting the return of **their purple martins**. I use the term "their purple martins" with a sense of respect and pride. It just goes to show how deep their passion and love for purple martins really is. Normally, being a possessive person is an unbecoming trait. But when it comes to hosting martins, it's probably okay to be just a bit selfish. Hopefully that will relate into being a protective, responsible, and caring landlord.

At this time of the year we normally have an increase in requests for mentors via the WPMA's statewide mentor initiative. This program is designed to help those who are seeking assistance or advice. We believe this service can play a significant role in helping to increase the purple martin population in the state of Wisconsin. We would also like to encourage anyone who is willing to share their knowledge and passion of purple martins with others that might need assistance to consider volunteering for our "statewide mentor program"... you really can make a difference! You can learn more about this program at <http://www.wisconsinpurplemartins.org/statewide-mentor-initiative.html>

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Don't forget to check our website periodically for updates, pictures, videos, and other helpful Purple Martin information. If you'd like to see something on our website, or if there is something you think would help other martin enthusiasts, please e-mail Tom or Nicki.

The website is:

www.wisconsinpurplemartins.org

Mission Statement of the Wisconsin Purple Martin Association (WPMA):

To restore and preserve the Purple Martin population throughout Wisconsin with an educational emphasis on attracting, managing, and maintaining Purple Martin colonies for current and future generations.

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The WPMA Newsletter will now be published on a bi-monthly schedule, so for that reason I'd like to jump ahead into the month of May. Each year at this time I like to insert the following excerpts from the [May 2013](#) edition of the "Purple Martin Chatter" newsletter. It sums up just how important the month of May is for those of you who are attempting to attract purple martins to your site, especially for the SY's.

Whether you're new to this hobby or someone who has been trying to attract purple martins to your site for years, the month of May offers you the best opportunity of the year to start a colony.

Most new colonies are started by SY's (second year) martins. These SY martins are birds that were fledged last year, spent one winter in South America, and are now returning north for their first breeding season. It's important to note that most SY's will not return to their natal nest sites; they will either start new colonies or help to repopulate existing ones.

You can accelerate your chances to attract Purple Martins by using as many attraction techniques as possible. Purple Martins feel more secure being around other martins so you want to create the illusion that you have an active site. So crank up the Dawn song, roll out the welcome mat, and keep looking up!

Share your knowledge and passion for purple martins with others...their future depends on us

Happy Birding!

Tom Rank

Be sure to check the return of the ASYs and SYs in Wisconsin (and nationwide) at:

<http://www.purplemartin.org/scoutreport/scout.php?Y=2015&S=WI>

We are also on Twitter! Purple Martins @WisPMA

Out and About in Wisconsin This Season

Our group members will be busy presenting at various workshops throughout Wisconsin this season. The following is a list of activities we have planned for the season so far:

Saturday, May 2nd: Bird Banding demonstration in Oshkosh for Bird Fest with Richard Nikolai

Saturday, May 9th: Bird Banding demonstration in Marinette for Bird Fest 2015 with Richard Nikolai

Saturday, May 9th: Kohler Andrae State Park Nature Center presentation at 7:00 p.m.

Saturday, June 13th: Purple Martin presentation by Richard Nikolai at High Cliff State Park

Saturday, June 20th: We will be at the 2015 Treasures of Oz Eco-Tour at the Forest Beach Migratory Preserve in Belgium.

Saturday, June 27st: Our group will have a table set up at the Oconto Bird City Nature Festival at Copper Culture State Park in Oconto from 11:00 a.m.-6:00 p.m.

Saturday, July 11th: Martinfest---location TBD

Please contact any board member if you'd like us to present at or attend a workshop.

Attention all landlords and potential landlords: Please consider becoming a mentor through our statewide mentor program. With our support, you can evaluate and give advice to other prospective landlords who need assistance in starting a colony or being more successful with a current colony. The WPMA and its mentors conduct free site evaluations. Please consider doing this to help out the WI martin population.

Wisconsin Purple Martin Association Public Colony Sites within Wisconsin:

- Plymouth Intergenerational Center, Plymouth
- Harrington Beach State Park, Belgium
- Pike Lake State Park, Hartford
- Ellwood H. May Environmental Park, Sheboygan
- Sheboygan Broughton Marsh Park, Sheboygan County

There are also many more private colony sites, which we are keeping confidential out of respect for the owners. Please check the PMCA's website for updates as to where they are and when their birds arrive.



The above picture was taken by Tom Rank from his colony on April 19th.

NOTE: After this newsletter, you will need to go directly to our website to download future newsletters, as we will not be e-mailing them out. It will also be published bi-monthly, so please check our website periodically for recent newsletters, as well as current information regarding WI purple martins.

We are constantly adding new information to our website, so please let one of our board members know what would be helpful to have on the website if there is something you'd like to see.

Purple Martin Insights for Wisconsin

Written by Richard Nikolai, originally published for the Door County Chronicles

As we wing towards spring one of our earliest migrating birds to Wisconsin, the purple martin is looking forward to a housing start by you the landlord. Purple martins are the only species of migrants that are solely dependent upon man for its summer residence and success of its impending invasion coming in early to mid-April. This is driven by the innate behavior of its returning to a trustworthy site determined by you and its success in bringing off a successful brood. These early purple-birds are the elders of the colonies (4-8 year olds) created and harbored by faithful landlords. They seek the prime cavities in size (360 cubic inches or greater), openness (over 40 feet from the nearest trees), heights above 12 feet, avoid alien competitors (English sparrows & European starlings), near human habitation, near wetlands and rely on humans for protection from predators. Both sexes are surviving 5,000 mile treks one way from their wintering area in Brazil and South America. Those of you who have been privileged begin the process by opening up compartments and raising the housing vertically on poles. The wait is over when those purple melodious beacons hover over that sacred spot of where the housing exists. That magical moment is what many wannabes desire in their placement of over a million new purple martin houses each year.

In Wisconsin martins have been on the decline over the past 40+ years. Their past, present and future are dependent on how successful you are in being a landlord and your carefulness in protecting these Neotropical migrants in a northern climate. There are no guarantees except for your persistence to maintain, monitor and manage your colony. By the end of April to early May another invasion of martins comes from the much younger birds in the third and fourth year of their lives. These are the main elements of a colony. Last but not least is the final stage of the invasion of second year old birds during mid-May until the end of June. These youthful martins are on their first spring being coerced by the adults to become a part of their colony or being coaxed by you the wannabe to a new site. You need to be vigilant, patient, and resourceful by pulling out all stops to attract these newcomers for success will dictate their return in the future years.

Key items for all are to never take things for granted. Approximately half of all adult birds die each year with the majority of the deaths occurring due to migration (predation, starvation, collisions from cars, windows, wind or radio or television or communication towers, weather and other accidents). Late snowstorms, cool wet weather, cloudy cool days, three successional days of being less than 50 degrees, all can lead to starvation or death. Fuel in the form of live insects, surrogate dead insects and cooked eggs is basically needed to assure their survival. These can be tossed in the air by hand, sling shot, blow gun or any method to appear they are alive. This training is important for your martins to be able to cope with adverse conditions in Wisconsin not only in the spring but have occurred during May, June, July and early August. Insect species to be purchased from pet shops are mealworms or crickets. These can be kept alive or frozen for later use. To be successful or be a first time landlord all require patience but the rewards are everlasting when the gurgling commences. Here's to your success in this upcoming spring.

WPMA MENTOR NEWS-----WPMA MENTOR NEWS-----WPMA MENTOR NEWS

WPMA Mentor Toni Dougherty from Barron County recently gave a purple martin presentation to the St. Croix Valley Bird Club in River Falls, WI. Toni reports that there was a great turnout for her presentation with about 50 people in attendance.

Besides doing purple martin presentations, Toni also works closely with WPMA mentor Barry Wallace, of St. Croix County. Together they have assisted numerous individuals and groups to help them start and maintain purple martin colonies. If you live in Barron, Polk, or St. Croix County and you have a mentoring need regarding purple martins, you can contact Toni Dougherty by email at tmdougherty2002@yahoo.com or Barry Wallace at barrywallace@webtv.net

