Purple Martin
CHATTER
Fall 2024 | Preserving and Restoring the Purple Martin Population in Wisconsin | Volume 12 Issue 4

FALL HAS ARRIVED
President's Message

Co-President Introduction

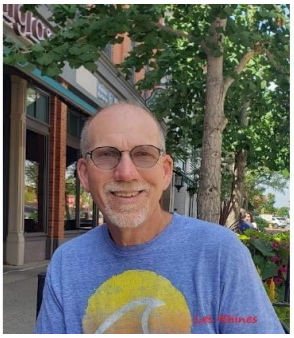
HARRINGTON BEACH UPDATE

BRAW Educator of the Year

MartinFest 2025

Public Colony Highlight

Thunder Mountain Trail -*Gail Bolden*



Fall Has Arrived!

Les Rhines

Hello again, by the time you read this the trees will be turning color or if you live in the northern regions of our state the trees will be at peak or past peak and raining leaves. My wife, Mary and I have been spending time near Crandon this past year and one of our favorite drives in the fall is on Highway 55 north from highway 29 to Crandon. There are sections where the canopy of colorful maples is just beautiful.

It was on one of those northern trips in late August, we were traveling from Crandon to Rhinelander to do some shopping, it was late afternoon, and as we traveled west, we could see these larger swallow-like birds swooping and darting back and forth in the sky. What we were witnessing, was a migration of Common Nighthawks. At first, we weren't quite sure what they were, but after awhile it became clear as we could see the tell-tale white markings on their wings. To be honest, it's been years since I've seen even one or two in the skies around my home near Plymouth, but to see hundreds in flight was worth the drive. For those of you that are unfamiliar with the nighthawk, they are also, like our Purple Martins, ariel insectivores. Nighthawks feed on beetles, moths, grasshoppers, also, swarms of winged ants and termites. It was fascinating to watch them darting all around as they foraged making it hard for me to keep the truck between the lines while driving on Hwy 8.

Common Nighthawk *Source ebird*

On to other business. In the summer newsletter I announced that Nicki Schumacher and I will be sharing the responsibilities of president. Nicki and I began working together as co-presidents in August, welcome Nicki and thank you. The first task that Nicki has enthusiastically taken on is the responsibility of organizing the WPMA booth at the PBS Wisconsin Garden & Landscape Expo held in Madison at the Alliant Energy Center on February 7-9, 2025. To further introduce herself to you, look for her introduction in this newsletter, again, thank you Nicki, I look forward to working with you.

What else? Well, planning is in the works for MartinFest 2025. Board member Dick Nikolai has been working with a group of people from the Oconto area to plan the days event. Look for the promotional flyer in this newsletter that provides the details. Be sure to get the date, June 28, 2025, on your calendar.

Also, Vice-President Greg Zimmermann and board member Larry Lienau have some news to share about the active public colony at Harrington Beach State Park. Look for that in Greg's Vice-President's message.

Well. I could go on and on, but it's time for me to close and say, first, thank you to everyone that helps our Purple Martins in any way and thank you to all that have contributed to the creation of this newsletter. So, time to get that beverage of choice and sit back and enjoy this issue of the *Purple Martin Chatter.*

Tell us your story. We would like to hear from you, our readers, please share your stories with us. Just submit to our editor, Gail Bolden. Please include photos.

Welcome WPMA Co-President

I'd like to introduce myself as the new Co-President of the WPMA, along with Les Rhines. My name is Nicki Schumacher, and I've been involved with the WPMA from the beginning. I took a break while my kids were in school, and am now returning. I look forward to working with everyone connected to the organization, and am interested in doing more outreach within the state. If you have any ideas on how we can better our group's mission, please let me know. Also, we are always looking for people to help out in various ways, so please let me know if you're interested.

A Word from the V.P.

Vice President Greg Zimmermann

Well fall is here once again; the weather makes it feel more like summer with very little rain. My birds left earlier this year compared to the past few years. Most farmers in my area already have their crops off the fields.

With that said, a local state park in Ozaukee County, Harrington Beach State Park, has a NorthStar martin house that is starting to deteriorate. This house was built at least 10 years ago by the late Ike Kumrow. The house wound up at my home after the season ended. Along with fellow club board member Larry Lienau, we got to work and replaced the roof and doors along with new tunnel entrances.

As we worked on updating the older house, we were informed that the Friends of Harrington State Park decided to purchase a new house. So, after some phone calls and emails they decided to purchase a house from club member Dean Heinen. Dean had an 8-compartment NorthStar all ready to go and it is complete with tunnel entrances made up of Pollywood. So now the park has a new house that should last for many years to come. They will hang some gourds off it and come spring the martins will have a new home.

As for the existing house, it will be available for auction this summer at our annual MartinFest.

Refurbished NorthStar house with new roof, doors, and tunnel entrances. The house will be in our Silent Auction for MartinFest 2025. *-Photo Greg Zimmermann*

What Was and What Could Have Happened

Dick Nikolai

As most of you are cleaning, planning for 2025, placing new poles, or just enjoying our stretch of nice weather, my September focus is away from Purple Martins. It contains a similar element of monitoring wildlife by chasing monarch butterflies for a purpose of tagging them (*See Figure 1 next page).* This is my way of lessening the stress of our recent nesting season while being cognizant of what has taken place in 2024. Monarchs are great distance fliers traveling up to 3000 miles to reach their oyamel fir forests in Mexico at an elevation of 3600 to 11,800 feet. These mountain hillsides provide microclimates for monarchs from predation that range from 32 to 59 degrees Fahrenheit with just the right amount of humidity reducing needs to use fat reserves or loss of moisture in their bodies. Those small creatures in late summer are the results of several generations removed of their ancestors navigating a landscape of changes of human intervention. Through perseverance they reach their winter destination. When late winter to early spring comes those same monarchs that survived the mountainous stay return northward mating and laying eggs, beginning the new generation. This migration dynamics is a special assumption that we ***always assume*** *will happen.*

Unfortunately, so goes my thoughts back to this past Purple Martin season where an abundance of rain fell impacting a portion of our recruitment or reproduction of this species. Most people would assume lots of rain brings insects. It is the other environmental impacts like the early cool spring. Then followed by extended patterns of very windy conditions with rain which further impacted adult purple martins' condition with lower weights. Longer times of flight to find and capture insects for feeding young and for the adults themselves set our population on a course of probability that our Wisconsin numbers may not be as plentiful in 2025. Think about that weather pattern continuing past early July when our second-year (SY) purple martins would be having most of their young hatch. These SY martins were abundant providing some in Wisconsin with a new colony start while others had new genetics infused to their chosen colony. If that rainy pattern stayed these new parents would be challenged greatly. As it turned out none of you probably thought of a collapse of our purple martin colonies with few returnees in 2025. Older adults would be in poor condition and the probability of those SY adults would also be in the same condition with a small amount of reproduction reaching fledgling. We in turn missed the deadly bullet to at least see a fair number of them fledging. We will find out soon the future 2024 nesting summary of Wisconsin's success. Report your summary and ask your friends and neighbors to do the same. *It is important!* Submit the form found on page 10.

For us, those SY martins were the important saviors. All of us contributed at our colonies a fabulous survival of the young from 2023. Your monitoring was an important part of raising an energetic group that were healthy with higher survival rates making it back to Wisconsin. Some of them surprised me for they were carrying important information bearing red bands with white lettering on one leg along with the usual aluminum band on the right leg. These were young purple martins that fledged in August 2023. The parents of them needed to endure another extended cool spring lingering into the summer with weights below normal and plenty of rain during the nesting season.

The caveat of two special SY martins is that they fledged in August 2023. Most martins already were fattening up during the day recovering their weight loss or just like all the young preparing for the long journey south. These two were representatives of 23 late youngsters that we happened to specialty mark. Their parents were a handful of adults trying to bring off a brood whether it was a renest or a delayed nest attempt. Procreation has a lot of purpose for wildlife for it transfers genetic material, ensures the next generation is moving forward for the species to exist and gives them the adaptability for the species to survive. If you are not fit you become food for another critter or become part of the soil or ecosystem where the individual expires; the law of survival.

As mentioned, two of these late fledglings out of originally 23 made it back to our colony or nearby colonies again. There may be more survivalists but already we know that hardships came to at least seven of them just prior to fledging. In 2023, 23 red-color bands were placed on young that were to fledge August 6-13, 2023. Of these, 7 died (30.4%) before fledging, at fledging or after fledging in August. The two fledged martins were captured in 2024 or 8.7% of the total or 2 out of 16 (12.5%) still surviving almost a year later. The ones that are known to have passed away were due to lack of insects, inexperienced adults, adults over worked trying to keep their lives going forward or due to late predation from some aerial predator who took notice of the lack of adults watching over the dissipated colony site. See Figures 2 & 3 on the following page for details for the surviving SY's along with their pictures. (continued)

Figure 1: Monarch butterfly shown with tag. These types of identification allow one to track wildlife even when they are as small and light as a butterfly. Information is collected from the finder and can be disseminated to see the migratory route taken and the days of life the species has survived.

Figure 2: SY-F caught 7-10-24 in cavity G-35 raised two fledglings from five eggs, five hatchlings and weighed 55 grams at High Cliff State Park (HCSP). Born in cavity G-19(2) at HCSP in 2023 with a second attempt by parents ASY-M (2891-88248) weighing 49.6 grams and ASY-F (3231-11853) weighing 50.3 grams who had five eggs laid first losing the eggs due to cold with a second time of laying four eggs, then four hatched, and being part of four fledged. Fledged August 8, 2023, 3231-11859 (WI-517).

Figure 3: SY-M caught 7-04-24 in cavity G-42 raised one fledgling from six eggs, one hatchling and weighed 53 grams at HCSP. Born in G-22 in 2023 by parents SY-M (3231-11851) weighing 50.5 grams & SY-F (3231-11852) weighing 50.3 grams who had five eggs laid with five hatched and four fledged. Fledged August 8, 2023, 3231-11863 (WI-521).

While 2024 had equal problems as 2023, only 11 red-color bands were placed on August fledged martins. Several late nests did not hatch in 2024 or the young hatched but failed to survive. Nature can be cruel but the goal is survival of the fittest. Keep your eyes peeled for SY's in 2025 for red-colored bands. They can arrive at your colony too and when they do, please report! I will be waiting for your band report.

Treasurer's Report

Deb Zimmermann

Savings	$5,000
Checking	$1689.67

Thank you to those that included a donation along with their membership dues!

Memberships As a reminder, WPMA memberships expire on December 31. You must maintain a current membership to receive the 2025 *Purple Martin Chatter* newsletter in email form.

Memberships are only $10.00 annually and run from January 1 through December 31, please contact Deb Zimmermann – Treasurer if you would like to become a member. Deb's contact information is provided at the end of the newsletter.

We will continue to offer these services to everyone, public meetings via Zoom, annual MartinFest event, Statewide mentor program, Free site evaluations, and managed public colonies. Please consider a WPMA membership for 2025.

BRAWs Educator of the Year 2024

Gene Kroupa, BRAW

Les Rhines, of Plymouth, has received the 2024 Educator of the Year Award from the Bluebird Restoration Association of Wisconsin (BRAW).

According to BRAW President Steve Sample, *Rhines has led the way in educating the public about the Purple Martin and environmental issues.* The retired Lakeshore Technical College instructor's interest in birds started at a young age. Rhines recalls the yellow canaries his grandmother raised and sold for extra income. His father maintained a flock of English Trumpeter show pigeons. Rhines' parents also hosted Purple Martins in a high-rise apartment style nest box. Today he is president of the Wisconsin Purple Martin Association (WPMA).

As for as helping birds today and in the future, Rhines said, *It is essential that organizations like BRAW and WPMA educate folks about our changing climate and how best to help birds.*

In accepting his award, Rhines noted, *Like most of us, we don't expect accolades for what we do. We just do it because we love birds.*

Established in 1986, BRAW's 900 members manage and monitor nest boxes statewide which annually produce as many as 14,000 bluebird fledglings and a like number of other native cavity nesters. More information about bluebirds, starting and monitoring nest box trails, and BRAW is available at *www.braw.org*.

Les Rhines, of Plymouth, who received the 2024 Educator of the Year Award from the Bluebird Restoration Association of Wisconsin, is shown with a Purple Martin apartment house.

Fall Migration Continues

Purple Martins have been long gone, but migration continues for those birds passing through Wisconsin and for those overwintering here. As the weather cools, Yellow-rumped warblers are what we notice first, followed by Palm, Magnolia and Tennessee warblers. Warblers are difficult to identify, but Eastern Phoebes will perch from your feeder poles and fencerows as they hunt for bugs; their tail-wagging is a great field trait to watch for. Dark-eyed Juncos and White-crowned sparrows have arrived in my area, seemingly overnight. Maybe you have noticed an influx of bird activity at your feeders or see the fluttering of birds visiting your trees. You can track migration via *dashboard.birdcast.info*. At this writing, an estimated 603,300 birds crossed my area overnight with a peak migration estimation of 2,752,400. Migration is a fascinating part of nature, and its a great bird activity that helps pass the time while awaiting our martins' return.

MARTINFest2025

June 28, 2025

10:00 a.m. - 4:00 p.m.

Oconto City Park - 5182 County Highway N

Wisconsin Purple Martin Association is teaming up with Oconto Bird City to reach a broader audience for MartinFest 2025. Join us for our popular Silent Auction and bird banding plus other activities hosted by

Bird City Oconto

Bluebird Restoration Association Wisconsin (BRAW)

Earthaven Museum

Brown County Beekeeper Association

Farnsworth Public Library

Raptor Education Group (REGI)

Archie's Angels

Food fundraiser by Oconto Parks and Rec

Look for the finalized flyer in the winter issue of *Purple Martin Chatter*

2024 Wisconsin Purple Martin Reports Due

For those that have yet to submit your reports to Dick Nikolai, please do so as soon as possible. Dick's report is published in the Winter Issue of *Purple Martin Chatter* and it reflects the health and numbers of the Wisconsin Purple Martin population. It is a comprehensive report, but it only reflects those colonies that send in reports. If you know of anyone that has martins, ask them to send in their reports as well! Look for the report form on page 10 of this issue.

Public Colony Highlight

Jetzer Lake

Our public colony at Jetzer Lake in Sheboygan County had a successful season this summer. It is located on County Road A between Elkhart Lake and Howards Grove. It had 7 successful nests (12 total) and fledged 18 babies, which is an increase from last season. Next year we are going to add gourds beneath the house to hopefully attract more martins.
-Nicki Schumacher

-Photos Nicki Schumacher

Did you know that the WPMA supports many public martin colonies throughout the state of Wisconsin? Most of these public colonies are actively looking for volunteers to help manage the colony, most notably by doing nest checks. Your involvement could be the difference in the success of the colony. If you would like to get involved or learn more about our public colony outreach, contact any Board Member.

If you would like your WPMA Public Colony featured in a future issue, we would love to hear from you! Contact information and submission instructions are listed on the back of this newsletter.

around Wisconsin

NEWS and NOTEWORTHY PLACES

Lake Winnebago Wood Ducks Added a second nest box this year, about 100' from the first and was lucky that a second pair took up residence. These two pair produced four broods for a total of 34 fledged ducks!

Governor Thompson State Park-Crivitz

16 miles of hiking trails, 2800 acres of woods, camping, fishing and skiing make the park a favorite all year round.

Closed for the Season A Red-tailed Hawk visits the neighbor's Northstar house every fall and winter, often finding enough prey to make him/her a frequent visitor. It is rare to see a Red-tailed during the Purple Martin season thankfully, but the Cooper's Hawks are *another* story.

Volunteers Needed

February is right around the corner, and we are in need of volunteers to help man the WPMA booth at the Garden & Landscape Expo in Madison on 7-9 February. Contact Nicki Schumacher if you are able to help, and as always *thank you for your support!*

PBS Wisconsin
GARDEN
& LANDSCAPE EXPO

2024 Wisconsin Purple Martin Nesting Report

Send to *prairiechicken@att.net*

Name: _____

Address: _____

First Scout: _____

How many nesting pairs or nests present? May include single SY-M. _____

Eggs laid: _____

Eggs hatched: _____

Young fledged: _____

Last nest fledged: _____

Last of purple martins seen at colony: _____

Indicate observances seen throughout nesting season that you feel are important: _____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

Purple Martin Chatter is a publication of the Wisconsin Purple Martin Association, an organization dedicated to preserving and restoring the Purple Martin population in Wisconsin. It is published four times annually in January, April, July, and October.

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Individual membership dues are $10 annually (January-December). Membership includes quarterly e-newsletter; please provide one email address per membership. Mail checks payable to:

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PM tips or stories? We welcome member's submissions! Please limit submissions to 500 words or less; photos must be your own for publication. Direct articles in Word format and jpeg photographs to editor.

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