



Purple Martins - Quick Reference Sheet¹

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Table 1.

Common Name:	Purple Martin		
Other Names:	Martin, Black Martin, House Martin		
Scientific Name:	<i>Progne subis subis</i>		
Appearance:	size	-	about 8 inches
	color	-	males are solid glossy steel-blue with purple iridescence
		-	females and immature males are dull above and buff-colored below
Range:	-	common statewide	
	-	migrate between the tropics (winter) and Florida (spring & summer)	
Habitat:	-	nest in large open areas without tall trees and preferably near water such as fields, yards, pastures, and golf courses	
	-	very adaptable to urban landscapes	
Diet:	flying insects		
Reproduction:	-	males ("scouts") arrive at Florida nesting territories in February	
	-	originally nested in natural tree cavities but now rely on specially designed, multi-compartment bird houses	
	-	prefer to nest in groups	

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	-	will not nest with House Sparrows or Starlings in adjacent compartments
	-	4 to 6 pure white eggs once each summer
	-	eggs hatch in about 2 weeks
	-	sexually mature second summer
Behavior:	-	young birds investigate several houses near their nest site when they begin flying and may return to one of these the following year
	-	Fall migration begins in July with many Martins forming large flocks
House Needs:	-	10-20 feet high on a pole at least 25 feet away from trees, and other high structures
	-	several compartments
	-	compartments should be the size of a 6 inch cube
	-	remove House Sparrow and Starling nests from the house before Purple Martins arrive
	-	each entrance hole should be 2 inches wide and located about one inch above the bottom
Problems:	-	noise from nesting birds or Fall migration roosting flocks may be disturbing
	-	droppings from Fall migration roosting flocks in certain areas such as city parks may be annoying
Solutions:	-	prevent access to roost with netting over trees (if few and small enough)
	-	discourage birds from roosting at certain locations by using large eye-spot balloons, owl decoys, inflatable snakes, and other frightening techniques
	-	prune small, interior branches on which birds are inclined to perch
	-	contact State Director of Animal Damage Control, U.S. Dept. Agriculture, APHIS (Animal, Plant, Health, Inspection Services; 904/377-5556) for recommendations for specific situations
Legal Aspects:	-	permits from the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service are required to use lethal control methods
	-	permits from the Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission and U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service are required to destroy or move nests
Fact Sheet Available:	yes	