

## PURPLE MARTINS

Common Name: Purple Martin

Other Names: Martin, Black Martin, House Martin

Scientific Name: Progne subis subis

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  
- 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 1/2 inches wide and located about one inch above the bottom

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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 Game and Fresh Water Fish Commission and U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service are required to destroy or move nests.