

Tips from the Purple Martin Conservation Association

Choose the right location. Their housing should be in the center of a large open spot about 30-120 feet from human housing.

Put up manageable housing. Choose a pole that telescopes, or is equipped with a winch or lanyard, and housing that has easy access to compartments. Avoid housing that only allows access by removing the roof, or layers of the house, or through entrance holes.

Install predator guards. Since all martin poles, wood or metal, are easily climbed by rat snakes, squirrels, and raccoons, all birdhouse poles require climbing animal barriers.

Open housing at the right time, and don't close it too soon. Adult martins are rarely attracted to new breeding sites — they return to the sites where they bred previously. Typically, it is subadult martins (last year's young) that colonize new sites, and they begin arriving about 4 weeks after the first adults. At new sites, opening housing when the "scouts" are due decreases chances of attracting martins by giving House Sparrows and starlings 4 weeks to claim the site before the subadult martins arrive. To improve your chances, keep housing closed until it's time for subadults to arrive. At active sites, the first martins usually show up within a week or two of previous years' arrival dates. Have your housing ready, but keep it closed until some martins return.

Practice active management by controlling House Sparrows and European Starlings.

These birds take over martin nests destroy eggs, kill nestlings, and prevent martins from nesting at un-established sites Starlings and House Sparrows are not protected by state and federal wildlife laws (since they are not native birds) and may be controlled by trapping, shooting, and nest tear-outs. You can also use starling-resistant entrances.

Conduct weekly nest checks, daily walk-unders, and keep written records.

Keep your martin housing in good repair. Remove nests and scrub housing with a 10% bleach solution (1 part bleach to 9 parts water) in the fall. Rinse and air dry before storing or closing for the winter.



You can find more tips on attracting and caring for purple martins at: <http://purplemartin.org>