

*Plain and Fancy*

**"Pothole Palace"  
No Problem For Parke**



The back roads of Lancaster County, affectionately known as the "Pothole Palace of Pennsylvania" positively pose no pertinent problems to the permanent position of Parke Good, Plain and Fancy farm pick-up person and Employee of the Month for May 1978.

Parke, who lives at R.D. 5, Manheim, Pa., prides himself in his ability to pick up his eggs and deliver them for processing without plastering the inside walls of his truck with egg yolks.

Parke's pleasant personality has apparently made a penetrating impression on those he works with, for whenever he partakes in a day off, people pop the question, "Where's Parke, is he ill?"

Plain and Fancy Egg Ranch will proudly present a \$25 savings bond to Parke Good for, among other reasons, pothole perseverance.

**The Purple Martin—part II**

by "Mr. Martin"

The annual arrival and departure of the purple martin highlights each year for the martin enthusiast. The birds' particular timetable still is a question that fascinates ornithologists and naturalists.

Bird enthusiasts who host martins wait anxiously for their birds to arrive in the spring. The first scout is a moment of excitement, and the first arrivals of the main flock are cause for elation.

The appearance of the martin scouts begins in late January in Florida and extends through April as the birds wing their way into the northernmost states and Canada. The scouts are older males and are considered to be leaders who arrive early, investigate available food and housing conditions, and return to bring in other members of the flock when conditions are right. Martin scouts

usually are correct in their assessments of the available food supply. Sometimes they are not, and they are forced to either retreat southward or rapidly starve to death.

After the scouts come the flocks of more mature birds with the younger birds following later. Sometimes the females lag behind by as much as two weeks. Young birds will arrive in the North as late as June.

The birds do not nest immediately and seem to enjoy the spring weather flying about and gossiping. Nesting can begin as late as June, but usually takes place in late March and early April for Pennsylvania.

Summer's end brings a sad moment to martin hosts. Suddenly the air is no longer filled with their friendly chatter, and despite the presence of other song birds, the atmosphere seems empty and quiet for

several weeks after the martins leave.

The eastern kingbird or bee martin are sometimes confused with the purple martin. They are similar in appearance and their principal food is honeybees. The martins do not destroy honeybees. Large dragonflies will eat and destroy honeybees.

Besides mosquitoes, another favorite food of the purple martin is these larger dragonflies. Thus, they are actually saving the lives of the honeybees, which would, otherwise, be prey to the dragonflies.

The following are also part of the martin's diet: flies, stink bugs, tree hoppers, negro bugs, may, ground, dung, cotton boll and clover weevil beetles, moths, dragon flies and other bugs.

The martin's enemies are pesticides, sparrows and starlings that usurp its nesting sites, inclement weather, and a variety of predators—cats, snakes, raccoons, and even an occasional owl.

Although martins can, like most birds, stand considerable cold, they cannot exist long without food. Flying insects are virtually non-existent during cold weather. Consequently, sudden cold snaps can cause the starvation of thousands of birds in a single area.

Because of the martins' high metabolic rate, they require large amounts of food daily; two to three days without food can kill a martin.

Discouraging sparrows and starlings has been undertaken with varying degrees of success. A man from Danville, Ill., used a transistor radio to rid his martin house of sparrows. The tiny, one-battery radio was left tuned to a music station for two days (no nights). The martins apparently liked the music, for they stayed; the sparrows

left.

As a last note on the purple martin, the following may help those who would like to have a martin colony:

A prospective martin host should analyse every aspect of the location of his house. A very simple factor may be preventing him from enjoying the birds. Here are a few tips from Mr. Martin:

1. Erect the martin house in an open space, 15 to 20 feet high.

2. A box with 24 compartments or more is best suited.

3. Proper ventilation and drainage.

4. Once you attract a colony, don't disturb them.

5. Good Luck!

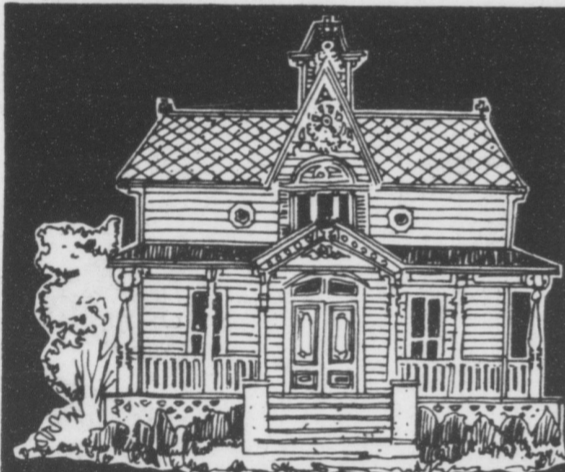
One additional thought that may increase your success: if your house seems to be in a proper location, but still remains unoccupied after three or four seasons, then try changing the location of it somewhat. Sometimes a house moved as little as 15 feet has immediately been successful.

Weather and other factors being normal, chances of getting martins the first season after erecting a house are good. Often two or three years are required, before the martins decide on a house.

Once a house has attracted martins, they will return to it year after year. The homing instinct in the martin is strong. There was a colony of martins in Marietta at one time. When they left for the South in late August the house was destroyed. Sure enough when the birds returned in April of the following year only the pole was there, but they came back for two years looking for their home that wasn't there anymore.

After two years of returning to a spot with no house, they looked elsewhere for a nesting site.

—the End—



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