

2023 Season Report

Chautauqua Bird, Tree & Garden Club Purple Martin Project

Martin chats: Four were given at the martin houses north of the Sports Club, at 4:15 on Thursdays June 29 and July 6, 13 and 20. The weather was good at each of the chats except July 6 when the chat was cut short by heavy rain. Attendance was estimated in the 30s for each one. Many people stopped to ask questions at routine nest checks.

Project notes: All housing was cleaned out and stored by September 4. Mites were found at several nests. The natural gourds were repainted. The cable for the Sports Club T14 was replaced and the adjacent Yew bush cut back to a stump. All housing was put up on 30 March. House sparrows were entirely absent. The first martin egg was laid on May 24, three days later than last year. Nests were checked every five days until the young fledged. To control blowfly parasites, nests have in the past been replaced on a regular schedule. Recent research suggests this may not be necessary, so again this year only a few nests were replaced. As in years past, the detailed data sheets will be sent to the Purple Martin Conservation Association for inclusion in their Project Martinwatch.

- A – Sports Club T14 with 18 compartments, 6 occupied
- B – Coyle (Sailing Center) T14 with 18 compartments, 11 occupied
- C – Coyle (Sailing Center) rack with 24 gourds, 15 occupied
- D -- Golf Course T14 with 18 compartments, 7 occupied
- E – Soccer Field rack with 24 gourds, 16 occupied

Fledged

	Eggs	Hatch	2023	2022	2021	2020	2019	2018	2017	2016	2015	2014	2013
A	35	30	20	47	31	49	44	25	14	49	28	59	67
B	52	31	13	38	56	36	68	58	56	42	31	68	60
C	77	68	40	69	64	54	55	41	32	49	25	50	87
D	34	29	9	39	28	49	34	36	29	68	38	84	68
E	90	73	47	56	66	77	54	39	38	36	22	52	74
Total	288	231	129	249	245	265	255	199	169	244	144	313	356

Production summary:

Occupancy rate: $55/102=54\%$ Hatch rate: $231/288=80\%$ Fledge rate: $129/231=56\%$

The occupancy rate continues to decline despite good housing well located and managed. The number of eggs laid was down by 48 from last year. The hatch rate dropped to only 80%. The fledge rate dropped from 80% last year to only 56% despite another year of good weather with little or no weather-related mortality. A Merlin was again seen capturing and eating a martin. Reduction of nest changes for parasite control did not appear to be a factor. Over the last ten years the average production was 244 fledged but this year's production of 129 is only 53% of that. Fish crows were present on the grounds but were not actually seen causing problems. A fully successful colony of martins might fledge an average of five young per compartment. By this standard, a colony eleven miles away on Lake Erie achieved 88% success, but at Chautauqua only 25%. Chautauqua's martins are suffering a serious decline with no apparent cause.

Recommendations: Continue the chats and nest checks. The remaining two Barber houses are in bad condition and are of no benefit to martins. They should be removed. The perch on top of the Sailing Center T14 is broken and needs to be repaired using a lift. This should be done prior to houses going back up at the end of March. The similar perch on the Sports Club T14 needs adjustment and probably repair.

