



RESULTS

This year, purple martins nested in 88 of the 90 condos at Minsi Lake. They produced 367 eggs, of which 245 hatched & 233 nestlings successfully fledged. Our team was able to measure, weigh & band 236 of the 245 chicks that hatched. Of those 236 chicks, three died before fledging, which is well within the expected mortality rate for purple martin nestlings.

In addition to banding martin chicks with numbered aluminum leg bands issued to our licensed bird banders by the Bird Banding Lab in MD, we also began placing color-coded aluminum leg bands on martin nestlings at Minsi Lake this year as part of a regional study to monitor nest fidelity & dispersal of martins in five counties in eastern PA. Lehigh Valley Audubon Society volunteers manage 372 condos on 15 towers at 12 sites. Each site has its own unique color-coded bands. Sighting color bands is the most efficient way to see if martins remain loyal to the colonies in which they hatched or are dispersing to other colonies after they return to their breeding grounds here in eastern PA from their wintering grounds in South America each spring. This citizen science project will help bird biologists better understand site fidelity & dispersal rates of purple martins, which can inform management practices for these fascinating & beloved long-distance migratory songbirds.

The information on both leg bands is submitted to several databases that help researchers track trends in bird populations & conservation, like the Bird Banding Lab in Laurel, MD; the Cornell Lab of Ornithology in Ithaca, NY; & the Purple Martin Conservation Association in Erie, PA.



Annual Project Timeline

March: Hang condos on the towers & place pine straw in each one for starter nests.

April: Martins begin to arrive from their wintering grounds in South America.

June-July: Weekly condo nest checks; examine nestlings for parasites; clean out the condo nests & freshen them up with clean nesting material if needed; band the nestlings at 12+ days of age; host interactive public education programs during each nest check.

August: Martins leave for South America

September: Take down, clean out & store the condos indoors until next March.