

Minsi Lake Up Date: Purple Martin Nesting Gourd Towers

By Jim Wilson/ Friends of Minsi Lake Sec.

UMBT - Beginning just three years ago & in partnership with Lehigh Valley Audubon Society, Friends of Minsi Lake has installed three Purple Martin nesting gourd towers at Minsi: two on the west side & one on the east side of the Lake.

In 2020, martins in one tower produced just three young. Last year, martins in two towers produced over 60 young. And this year, martins in all three towers are on track to produce over 120 young!

In June, our team of volunteers began monitoring all 54 gourds for nesting activity—18 gourds on each of the three towers. On July 3rd, our team began banding the first broods of young martins at Minsi Lake.

With the assistance of licensed bird bander Tim Kita, LV Audubon Society volunteers Linda & Scott Burnet & Mike McCartney, Northampton County Parks Foreman Greg Dawe & his twin sons Alex & Gabe & Northampton County Parks Recreation Specialist Jim Wilson, we banded 19 martin chicks and one adult, who refused to leave the nest! We anticipate banding about 40 more martin chicks this weekend & are hopeful that the dozens of martin eggs yet to hatch will be successful, after which time we'll return to band those young as well.

In addition to banding the young martins, which were each returned to the gourd nest in which they were hatched, we also cleaned droppings & other debris out of the nests & safely treat the gourds for mites & other parasites, which can be harmful to martin chicks & adults alike.

Purple Martin populations in Pennsylvania have dropped by nearly two-thirds over the past 50 years. The PA Game Commission lists Purple Martins among the state's Species of Greatest Conservation Need. Due to loss of natural cavity nesting sites, martins are almost totally dependent on human-made nesting structures. Minsi Lake provides ideal feeding habitat as martins prey heavily on dragonflies, which are common insects around lakes. Our friends group is pleased & proud of the Purple Martin nesting colony we've helped establish & support at Minsi Lake!

Martins are known for their chattering songs, aerial acrobatics & being very tolerant of people. Next time you visit the Lake, be sure to check out the martin towers & their residents & enjoy the sights & sounds of these amazing birds!



**Ken
Field**

*Owner of Slate
Belt Energy
Services*

Exclusively in the Blue Valley Times

Pain Threshold

It is everyone's job to conserve energy and to make the earth last as long as possible. Not for our generation because no matter how wasteful we are, it won't come spinning to a halt on our watch.

But life may be very different for our grandkids if we don't at least try to help. Prolonging the use of chemicals and materials that we now know are damaging to the environment is just holding the brake pedal going uphill. None of us really like spending money and certainly for things that aren't fun or something our friends and neighbors can't see, but life isn't always fun.

Now that oil prices are rising and electricity is right behind it, there is an uptick in people inquiring about energy audits and conservation measures.

I find it amusing that there needs to be a point where the pain in the wallet causes action. Making one's home energy efficient is not like a remodeling job where there is dirt and disruption for weeks on end and a huge bill at the end. Depending on how bad a house is the job can be done in a day or two. Some homes are like swiss cheese and after identifying all the problems, a plan needs to be made whether to address all of them or create a phase plan to bring everything up to snuff over time. Saving hundreds of dollars a year was possible before this spike in energy cost and I'd say that is thousands now for some. That will yield a very good return on the investment. That is if the work is done thoroughly and properly. Some insulation companies are just that; insulation and not energy conservation. Air leakage allows a huge amount of energy to escape your home. Why don't you drive with your car windows down in the winter? Because the heater cannot keep up with the fresh air coming into the car. A leaky house is no different and the heater will run constantly to heat the air that is entering the house to replace the warm air leaving through the roof. Those leaks need to be stopped before any insulation is added.

Then an effective material needs to be used for insulation. That is not fiberglass. Glass is a poor insulator. Why does a beer bottle sweat in the summer? Because the cold of the beer is being lost right through the glass. How is that stopped? Use a foam insulator on the bottle. I rest my case. Cellulose is the best insulation next to foam and can be used almost anywhere.

Then an effective material needs to be used for insulation. That is not fiberglass. Glass is a poor insulator. Why does a beer bottle sweat in the summer? Because the cold of the beer is being lost right through the glass. How is that stopped? Use a foam insulator on the bottle. I rest my case. Cellulose is the best insulation next to foam and can be used almost anywhere.

Ken Field is the owner of Slate Belt Energy and Field's Service, Inc. As a certified energy rater and contractor, he is qualified to assess every aspect of energy usage and prescribe solutions to save energy. He can be reached at 610-759-6306 or email Ken@FieldsService.com