

Winterizing Purple Martin Towers At Minsi Lake

By Michael Ortoski

UMBT - On October 29, Lehigh Valley Audubon Society volunteers Scott Burnett, Mike McCartney, Laurie Lyter & Collette & Virginia Cragin & Jim Wilson with Northampton County Parks & Friends of Minsi Lake, removed, cleaned & stored indoors for the winter, 54 plastic nesting gourds from the three Purple Martin towers at Minsi Lake. There are 18 gourds on each tower.

The gourd racks were lowered from the towers, the gourds were removed the racks, this year's old nesting materials were removed from the gourds & the interior of the gourds were scrubbed out with a drill brush. Keeping the gourds indoors over the winter will keep them safe from the elements & they'll last longer.

This was the third year for the Purple Martin nesting towers at Minsi Lake, which were purchased by our friends group & installed by LV Audubon Society volunteers & Northampton County Parks staff. There are two towers on the West Shore & one on the East Shore. This year, 82 Purple Martin chicks were hatched & fledged from the towers. In total, about 150 Purple Martin chicks have flown from the towers over the past three years. These amazing birds are now spending the cold weather months in South America; they'll return to our neck of the woods next spring.

Purple Martins are listed as a Species of Greatest Conservation Need by the PA Game Commission due to their declining populations. Because of significant losses in natural cavity nesting habitat, martins are almost exclusively dependent on artificial nesting structures. These gregarious, colorful, highly active & very human-tolerant birds, with their boisterous musical calls, have been welcome feathered friends & neighbors at Minsi Lake & we look forward to their return next spring.



Ken Field

Owner of Slate Belt Energy Services

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Insulation is a Better Business

I once received a letter from the Better Business Bureau questioning how I could advertise 50% reduction in energy usage. It was probably either a ploy to get me to join their ranks or in response to someone's complaint that my claim was false.

I explained that I had done hundreds of energy audits and dozens of energy retrofit jobs and had proven that the 50% reduction is entirely possible.

What my advertisement said was UP TO 50% reduction in energy usage. "Up to" starts at 1% so I really never should have been bothered by the Big Brother Bureau. Many people feel good when they see that logo in an ad but it means exactly nothing except that the advertiser paid some amount of money to be able to use the logo. It is much safer to speak with other people who have used the contractor you are interested in to verify the reputation of a business. My distaste with the money grabbing organization is that their sole purpose is to resolve complaints between businesses and customers. If I ever had a complaint I would settle it with my customer and not make them have to go to some other agency to do it.

Today we also have the state attorney general getting into the money grab game with the home improvement contractor license. Fill out a form and pay money to get licensed but it doesn't seem like any homeowner is better off for it.

There may have been a couple high profile cases for big money but nobody is any safer with this money draining agency around than they were with the BBB alone.

Now that I got that rant out of the way, the real topic is making your home more energy efficient. You can't control the cost of oil or gas or electric, but you can make your house use less of them. And once you make the improvements, you save forever. Airsealing and insulation are all done in places you never see but you will feel the difference and see the savings immediately. There are some new methods and products that make the value even better because of the time they save to install. Unfortunately all of the insulation products cost more now than they did a few years ago. I'm sure the price will continue to increase so it might be a good idea to get an energy audit and make a plan to improve the energy efficiency of your home now. Be cautious and get references from past customers to be sure you are using a legitimate contractor.

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