Purple Martin Season at a Glance

From The Purple Martin Landlord, by Brian Rolfs. Post it where you keep your nest-check kit.

Month	The martins	Your jobs
Jan.–Feb.	In South America. The first adults reach Florida and the Gulf Coast.	Clean, repair and paint the housing. Oil the winch. Check the rope or cable and the pole guard. Order parts, traps and pine straw.
Early March	Adults move north through the South.	Raise the housing with every hole plugged. Put 1 to 2 in. of pine straw in each room. Keep crickets or mealworms on hand.
Late March–April	The first adults return to the sites where they nested last year.	Established site: open the holes when they arrive. New site: keep the holes plugged. Remove sparrow and starling nests. Feed during cold snaps. Write down your first arrival date.
Late April–May	First-year birds arrive and look for sites. Pairs build nests and line them with green leaves.	New site: open about four weeks after the first adults. Play a dawnsong recording at dawn, and mount decoys. Start nest checks when nest material appears, every 4 or 5 days while eggs are laid.
June	Eggs hatch 15 or 16 days after the female starts to sit. Young fill the rooms.	Check every 5 to 7 days in the afternoon. Watch for mites, wet nests, heat and sparrows. Keep the housing open all month.
July	Young leave the nest 26 to 32 days after hatching. Families gather at roosts.	From day 22, only glance in, and use plug and string. Keep cats indoors. Walk the lawn before you mow. Return grounded young to their room.
August	Most birds leave for the roosts and the trip south.	New site: keep the housing open until late August for young birds exploring. Finish the season summary. Visit a roost.
Sept.–Nov.	Martins fly to South America.	Remove old nests, scrub with a 10 percent bleach solution, and plug every hole or store the housing. Make a repair list for winter.

Shift for your region. These months fit sites where the first adults arrive in late March, as in Missouri, Ohio or Virginia. Elsewhere, slide every row to match your area's median arrival date (see the table below). Go about 8 weeks earlier in Florida and 6 on the Gulf Coast. Go 4 to 5 weeks earlier in Texas, Georgia, South Carolina and the inland Gulf states, and 3 from Oklahoma to North Carolina. Slide about 2 weeks later in Nebraska, Iowa, the Dakotas, Pennsylvania, New York and New England; 3 in Michigan, Wisconsin, Minnesota and the Pacific Northwest; and 4 in Ontario. Everywhere, keep the housing open through June.

First adults: median report date, and when to open new housing (about four weeks later)

Florida First: Jan. 25 Open new: Feb. 22	**Gulf Coast** First: Feb. 9 Open new: Mar. 9	**South and coastal Texas** First: Feb. 19 Open new: Mar. 19	**North and central Texas** First: Feb. 23 Open new: Mar. 23	**Texas Panhandle*** First: Mar. 8 Open new: Apr. 5	**Inland Gulf states, GA, SC** First: Feb. 20 Open new: Mar. 20	**OK, AR, TN, NC** First: Mar. 5 Open new: Apr. 2
KY and VA to NJ First: Mar. 26 Open new: Apr. 23	**MO, KS, IL, IN, OH** First: Mar. 24 Open new: Apr. 21	**NE, IA, Dakotas** First: Apr. 5 Open new: May 3	**PA, NY, New England** First: Apr. 9 Open new: May 7	**MI, WI, MN** First: Apr. 12 Open new: May 10	**Canada** First: Apr. 23 Open new: May 21	**Pacific Northwest** First: Apr. 17 Open new: May 15

*Arrival dates: medians of PMCA Scout-Arrival Study reports, 2021 to 2026, as worked out in the book (*only 30 reports). Your own records soon beat any table. Free printables: arvumpress.com/martins/ · A Quiet Look at Birds · Arvum Press*