

Minutes of the Sussex Bird Club
Sunday, October 9th, 2011

President Bill Fintel opened the meeting

Treasurer Lou Archdeacon presented the finance report:

- Opening balance of \$2,293.47
- Closing balance of \$2,303.97

General Notices:

- Next meeting Sunday November 13th – Bill Stewart on Bird Conservation
- There are Cornell Lab audios for sale – for information call (302) 539-8078
- Thanks to Jim Basoli for a number of ABA magazines
- There will be a Chincoteague Birding festival the Sunday after Thanksgiving

Program – Chuck Fulmer presented today’s program on Purple Martins

Chuck built his first Purple Martin house in 1972 and now has three colonies he monitors including one at his workplace, ‘Pontoon Express in Harbeson where he has 52 houses of which all but three were occupied this past season! Purple Martins are our largest swallow, but contrary to popular belief they don’t eat a lot of mosquitoes. Early native Americans put up gourds to attract martins and as result, east of the Rockies, they are totally dependent on man for housing. Their yearly migration from South America cover 6,000 miles at approximately 600 miles per day, and because they feed on the wing it is a daytime migration. They will produce five to six young per year. They are extremely susceptible to bad weather and three days of rain with temperatures below 50° can wipe out an entire colony. Only 30% of fledglings survive the first year with 10% returning to the same colony!

Chuck’s presentation was filled with interesting facts to aid in the successful creation of your own colony! Martins are social nesters and you will need a minimum of 145 nest cavities in your colony. Each cavity should be at least 6 X 11 Inches and gourds make the largest and best nest cavities. The large cavities are necessary to protect the birds from owls, a primary predator that can wipe out an entire colony if proper housing isn’t provided. Baffles are also necessary to prevent predation from ground predators, such as snakes and raccoons.

Housing should be placed 30 to 100 ft. from your home or other structure with no trees within 40 ft. It is important to check the houses weekly to identify and treat for mites or other problems. Chuck lines the nests with pine needles and places ¼ to ½ tsp. of Seven Dust in each cavity to deter mites and other insects (this is also recommended for bluebird and other nest boxes! House Sparrows and Starlings are major competitors for nest cavities and are best controlled by trapping.

Chuck is a volunteer mentor for those interested in starting a martin colony, you can call or email for information!

Thanks to Chuck Fulmer for an extremely informative and entertaining program!

Respectfully submitted, Bob Edelen