

**The Purple Martin is an uncommon and declining breeder,
but a locally common fall migrant in the Hudson River Valley.**

Conservation Status

Breeding Bird Survey data indicate that populations in the state are stable or increasing. However, NY Breeding Bird Atlas data reflect a slightly declining distribution in the Hudson River Valley in the past twenty years.



Purple Martins are almost entirely dependent on bird houses for nesting.

Identification

This large swallow has a small bill and a slightly-forked tail. The adult male is a glossy purplish-black all over. The adult female looks similar to the male, but is not as bright above, with paler gray underparts, and a gray forehead and nape. It has many types of vocalizations, which are well described in Brown 1984.

Habitat

The eastern populations of this species are almost entirely dependent on bird houses. They historically inhabited forest edge and riparian areas containing dead snags with woodpecker holes. With conversion to nesting in birdhouses, eastern martins are now found almost exclusively around humans. They prefer open landscapes near water, but may nest wherever birdhouses can be installed.

Food

This bird most often catches insects in the air over water, marshes, or fields, but in cold weather occasionally forages by walking along the ground. It eats mosquitoes, mayflies, ants, wasps, beetles, grasshoppers, and dragonflies, as well as many other types of insects

Nesting

This bird builds its nest inside a cavity in a birdhouse or gourd. The nest fills the available space, and may be of various shapes depending on the cavity configuration.

Threats

- House Sparrows and European Starlings are aggressive in their attempts to nest in Purple Martin houses and can drive martins away.
- Predation by raccoons, snakes, red squirrels, American Crows, and various species of owls.
- Periods of cold, wet weather in spring reduces insect availability and can cause starvation.

Management Recommendations

- The Purple Martin Conservation Association (<http://purplemartin.org>) provides several excellent downloadable information sheets on various aspects of Purple Martin management, such as “Standards for Purple Martin Housing,” “Attracting and Managing Purple Martins,” and “Top 10 Reasons Why People Fail to Attract Martins.”



Hudson River Tidal Marsh

This management summary was adapted from Brown 1997.

For additional information, see the following references:

Allen, R. P. and M. M. Nice. 1952. A study of the breeding biology of the Purple Martin (*Progne subis*). *American Midland-Naturalist*. 47:606-665.

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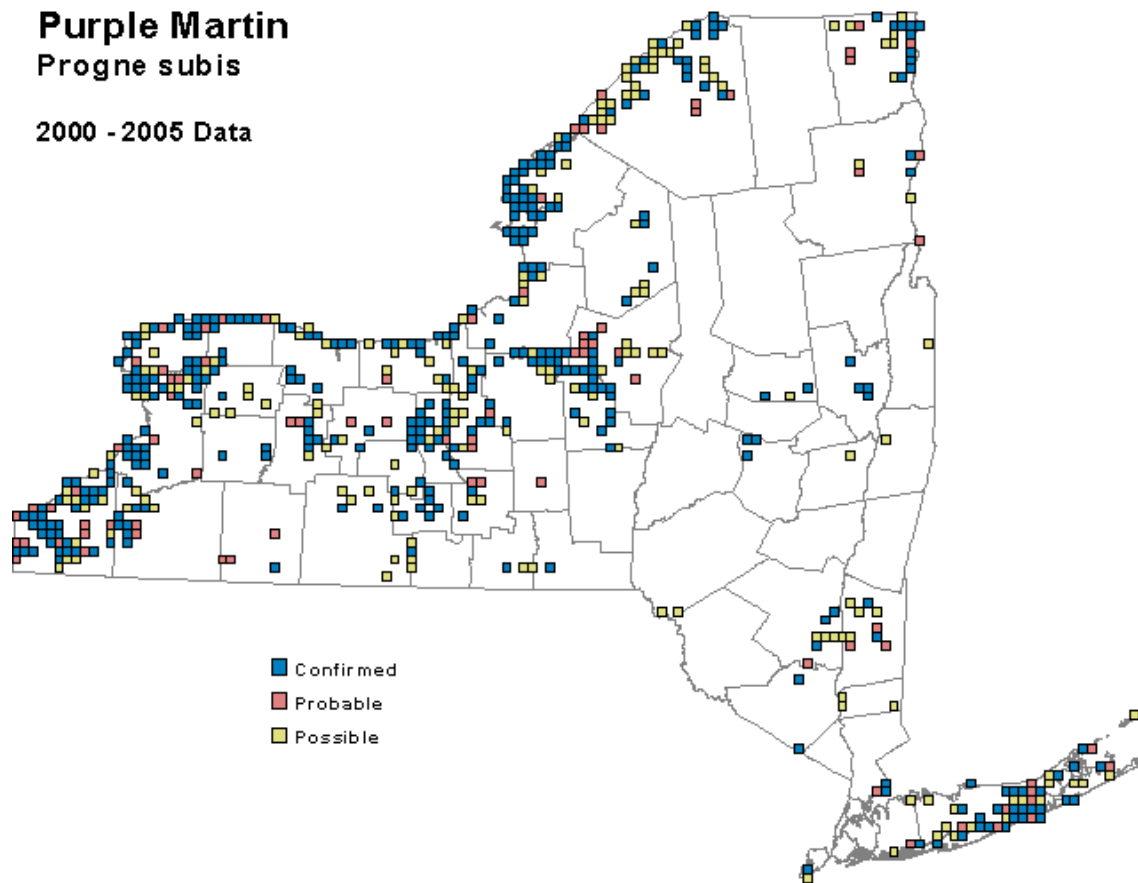
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NYS BREEDING BIRD ATLAS COMPARATIVE DATA

Purple Martin

Progne subis

2000 - 2005 Data



Purple Martin

Progne subis

1980 - 1985 Data

