While talking to my office manager Melissa Williams, I discovered that she has a genuine fondness for a certain type of bird. One of our clients and his wife, Tim & Angie Russell, share this same fondness. Melissa says that it is the way the birds glide and sing “of a morning” that first drew her attention. The birds I am talking about are the Purple Martins. If you are like me and know little or nothing about these birds, then sit back and let your mind absorb all the information that I learned while talking to Tim, Angie & Melissa.

First off, let me just say that there is a real dedication to being a purple martin fan. I’m sure we have all seen those tall antenna-like poles holding white birdhouses; well those are gourds that house the Purple Martins while they are nesting. The scouts will arrive in North Carolina anywhere from the 2nd week in February to the middle of March while the sub-adults (those who return from the previous year) start to arrive in April and continue to arrive until around the middle of May and stay until mid-August. In this time, they are mating, nesting and taking care of their young.

This past year Tim & Angie decided to grow their own gourds rather than purchase them and from the sounds of things this was quite an undertaking. He started with growing the gourds then last fall he pulled them and started the 1-3 month drying process. Once the gourds have dried out he will clean them up and paint them white and attach a “roof” to them. When I asked him how he figured out what to do with the raw gourds he said that he found the instructions on the internet and he had several conversations with a neighbor. Once the gourds are cleaned and painted then it comes time to put some nesting material inside. Tim will actually pack them himself with pine needles and some dirt but Melissa prefers to leave the nesting materials in a pile on the ground for the birds to gather themselves.

Once the gourds are prepared, Tim will start adding them to his telescoping gourd pole. He has room for upwards of 100+ gourds with room to add 3 more sections. Once the birds start arriving they will circle the pole until they are sure that the spot is safe. Amazingly enough once they decide to enter the “homes” they will fly right in without hitting the roof. They seem to know right where the entry hole is. Angie says it is fun to watch the little ones when they start to fly as they will knock into the gourds looking for the entry hole.

On that note, I am going to end this week's blog. Be sure to stay tuned for more fascinating Purple Martin facts in next week's Part 2 blog.

Happy bird watching,

Gina