


# Report finds fewer than 50 birds left in B.C.

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 As a result of a recent provincial government report (Fraser *et al.*, in press), Purple Martins have been recommended to be raised to a Red Listing. This means that they would be considered for designation for Endangered or Threatened status if the recommendation is accepted. According to the report, fewer than 50 birds are left in British Columbia. Some say the estimate should be closer to 30 since only 39 birds were sighted in 1989 some of which may have been the same birds. As a result of this report, several V.N.H.S. members have begun a nest box programme in a "last ditch" effort to save the species from disappearing from the Province.

Purple Martins traditionally nested in burnt or logged areas where tall snags still stood and in old pilings near the ocean. Because of the removal of old pilings and snags and from starling competition, the martin population has taken a turn for the worse. One of the few options left seems to be the need for a large-scale nest box programme.

The first phase of the 1990 Purple Martin nest box programme is nearing completion. Thanks to the kind support of many individuals, we have been able to build 162 boxes to date. Boxes have been erected in Sooke Basin, Esquimalt Harbour, the Inner Harbour, the Gorge, Purple Martin Pond (between Munn Road and Burnside Road just east of the power lines), and Cowichan Bay. At press time we were working on erecting boxes in the Nanaimo, Ladysmith, and Sidney areas.

For those that frequent any of the above mentioned areas and would be willing to monitor boxes, we can provide you with a detailed map of nest box locations. All boxes are marked with a numbered sequence. We are requesting that anyone that sees or hears a Purple Martin immediately report the sighting to us. If you notice any birds using nest boxes, you should take note of the box number. By reporting all sightings (even in the "usual locations"), we should be able to get a better estimate of the B.C. population and determine which type of nest box is the most successful. We would also like to know if other species are using the nest boxes such as starlings or smaller swallows.

Let us hope that our current population estimate of 30 birds is an underestimate. Hopefully, through the efforts of birders throughout the Province, we'll be able to see the

population return to historic levels. In this manner, our largest swallow will continue to entertain British Columbians with its graceful flight and striking song for many years to come.

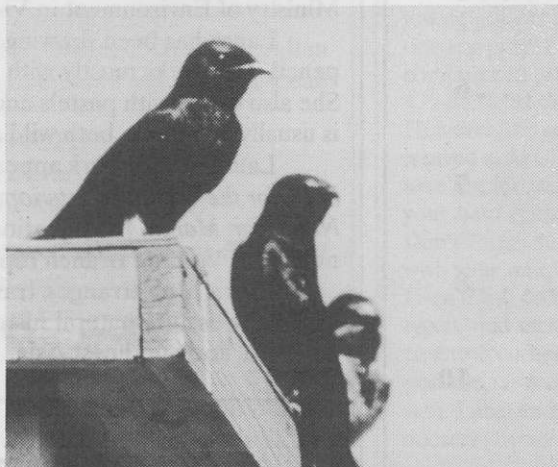
## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS:

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## REFERENCE:

Fraser, D.F., Walters, E.L. and C. Siddle. In press. Species management plan for the red and blue listed forest and grassland birds of British Columbia. Contract report for the Wildlife Branch, Ministry of Environment.

**CALL: ERIC WALTERS 385-0927 OR DARREN COPLEY 479-9879 TO REPORT SIGHTINGS, OBTAIN MAPS OF NEST BOX LOCATIONS, OR ANY OTHER INFORMATION.**



**Purple Martins: VNHS members have begun a nestbox programme in an effort to save the species from disappearing in B.C. (Photo: D.F. Fraser)**

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