

# **Sacramento Purple Martin Project**

The Sacramento Purple Martin Project is a volunteer organization that conducts research and coordinates management actions to benefit the remnant Purple Martins population that nests in Sacramento overpasses and elevated freeways (“bridges”). Our goals are to:

- monitor martin population status,
- provide information applicable to management and protection efforts,
- coordinate management activities,
- offer opportunities for student participation in research and management, and
- educate the public about martins.

Dan Airola serves as Project Director. Work is conducted by many volunteers, including major contributions by Dan Kopp and a large number of volunteers from Sacramento State University, consulting firm Jones & Stokes, and other local biologists and birders. Many state and local agencies are cooperators.

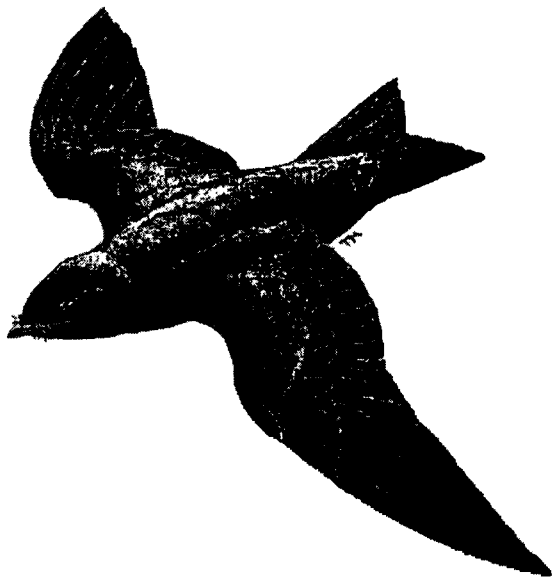
We conducted initial monitoring in the early 1990s, and have monitored colonies annually since 2002. Monitoring has focused on determining local population size and trend and the local distribution of martin colonies. We also have analyzed factors that determine which bridge sites are suitable, to evaluate potential for population expansion and focus future monitoring efforts. Martins have been colored banded annually since 2003 by Washington martin biologist Stan Kostka, and color-banded birds have been monitored to determine annual survival rates and annual nest colony and nest site fidelity. Other studies have included evaluating competition with starlings in bridges, testing for West Nile virus (by Stan Wright of the Sacramento-Yolo Mosquito and Vector Control District), participating in a range-wide genetic evaluations of martin systematics, and evaluating management actions.

Management actions have included coordination with Caltrans and other landowners to protect sites from incompatible uses and installing wire “nest guards” in weep holes entrances to reduce nestling fallout. We are currently working with Sacramento Regional Transit to reduce substantial mortality from collisions with light rail cars at one site.

We offer opportunities for supervised monitoring to ornithology students at California State University and local high schools. We have gained publicity for martins through several newspaper articles and television news features. We are collaborating with the California State Railroad Museum on a public interpretive program for martins there. We also have published results of studies in the Central Valley Bird Club Bulletin, Western Birds, and the Purple Martin Update.

**The project is mostly funded by volunteer monitors, with financial assistance from the California Department of Fish and Game and San Joaquin Audubon Society. We are actively recruiting part-time volunteers to assist with a variety of tasks. Many monitoring tasks require only several hours per week and can be performed flexibly over the breeding season**

**For more information contact:  
Dan Airola, 916-454-3073 (d.airola@sbcglobal.net)**



**Purple Martin**

*sketch by Tim Manolis*