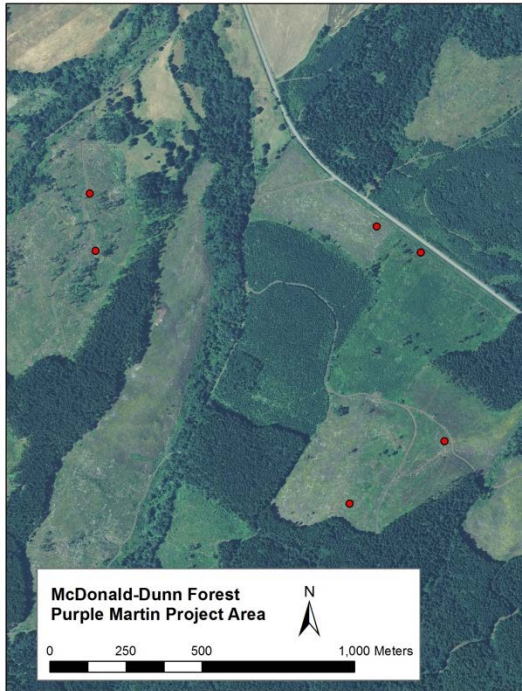


McDonald-Dunn Forest Purple Martin Conservation Project

Location

Oregon State University's McDonald-Dunn Forests,
Benton County, Oregon



Background

Local birders have been observing a small purple martin colony in two clearcuts located in Dunn Forest for several years. The colony has been using cavities in snags that have been retained on clearcut harvest units. Regular observations suggest that European starlings are becoming increasingly numerous near the Dunn Forest martin colony. In 2011, the Oregon Wildlife Institute (OWI) erected two artificial gourd racks and placed 11 wood nest boxes with starling-resistant entrances at the site to increase recruitment of the martin colony.

2011-2012 Monitoring & Banding

During 2011, a pair of martins used one of the artificial gourds in the 110 Rack and successfully raised 5 young to fledge. The juveniles were banded with aluminum numbered bands and red color bands. Martins also used cavities in three snags at the project area, although it is not known how many juveniles fledged.

In 2012, two gourds in the 110 Rack were used by martins and two gourds in the Tampico Rd Rack were also used. Eighteen juveniles were banded in 2012. Martins were also

observed using three snags in 2012. None of the individual wood boxes have been used by martins to date. There were no known mortalities among any of the 2011 or 2012 martin nestlings.

A previously unknown colony was discovered in 2011 on OSU McDonald Forest 5 km from the existing project area. Martins are using at least 5 different snags at the site.

Management Issues

Starlings were observed nesting in the project area throughout the 2011-2012 seasons, although none have been observed attempting to enter artificial gourds. There has been no evidence of predation at the gourd racks, but a chipmunk was observed preying on eggs in one of the wood nest boxes used by a house wren. All of the 2012 nestlings were heavily infested with an external parasite (probably a mite). The planted conifers near the racks and boxes are likely to overtop the nesting sites in the next 3 years making them unsuitable for use by martins.

Future Plans

OWI will continue to monitor the McDonald-Dunn martin colonies for at least another two years. It is hoped that some martins fledged from the project area will disperse further into the Oregon Coast Range where they might find snags retained on clearcuts and starlings are rare. OWI will seek funding to establish additional gourd racks on public and private lands on the Willamette Valley floor where the continuing presence of starlings precludes use of most snags by purple martins.

Acknowledgements

The McDonald-Dunn Forest Purple Martin Conservation Project has been supported by a grant from the Oregon Wildlife Heritage Foundation. Additional material and technical support has been contributed by the USFWS Willamette Valley Refuge System. Joan Hagar of the U.S. Geological Survey performed banding of the martins.

For more project information: contact Dave Vesely, (541) 602-6046, dave@oregonwildlife.org

Further information about western purple martins: [Western Purple Martin Foundation](http://www.westernpurplemartin.org)



The Oregon Wildlife Institute is a non-profit organization dedicated to the conservation and enhancement of wildlife resources in both native and human-altered environments through research, education, and conservation planning. Visit our website at www.oregonwildlife.org