

Purple Martins Reading Comprehension

Name _____



Photo: Lorrie Shaw

Purple martins are the largest swallows in North America. A swallow is a small bird that spends much of its time in the air. Swallows are fast and acrobatic fliers and can twist and turn in all directions when hunting insects like dragonflies and moths.

The purple martin is the largest swallow in North America. Males are totally purple and females are grayish and white. In the eastern United States, purple martins use man-made martin houses to nest in. These houses are different from most birdhouses. Martin houses are placed high up on poles and have room for lots of nesting martins. Some martin set-ups have a few pairs of martins, while others may have hundreds of pairs in several houses. People who care for colonies of martins are called “landlords.” Landlords care for their martin colonies by taking steps to make sure owls, snakes, sparrows, and starlings don’t destroy their colonies.

In the late summer, martins start the long journey to their winter homes in South America. This is called migration. When purple martins migrate, landlords begin cleaning the houses and preparing them for the spring, when, if all goes right, their beloved martins return.

1. Swallows...

- A. are poor fliers.
- B. are large birds.
- C. spend much of their time on the ground.
- D. eat insects.

2. Where do purple martins spend winters?

- A. South America
- B. Eastern United States
- C. North America
- D. The passage doesn't tell

3. Why are "landlords" important? Circle all that are true.

- A. They help martins migrate
- B. They help make sure martin colonies are as safe as possible
- C. They clean martin houses
- D. They help martins get dragonflies and moths

4. Which is true?

- A. Starlings are not a threat to martins
- B. Many pairs of martins often nest together
- C. Purple martins don't usually come back to the same martin house
- D. Male and female martins look alike