

Researcher's job is for the birds

Enlisting the help of Michigan "landlords," Richard Wolinski is about to embark on a study of some special tenants.

Unlike bunnies, these flighty in-laws take seasonal residency, locating in Michigan backyards.

Wolinski, a visiting lecturer at Eastern Michigan University, is studying the purple martin, the largest member of North America's swallow family.

It winters in South America, mostly Brazil, then migrates north during the summers, nesting in the multi-compartmental birdhouses sprinkled throughout Michigan.

IN THE FIRST year of his five-year study, which is funded by the Michigan Department of Natural Resources non-game program, Wolinski will survey martin birdhouse owners. He will ask about the birds' arrival and departure dates and the number of compartments used.

Wolinski expects to make a num-

ber of conclusions. One would be an approximation of the birds' population, which he suspects is declining. Another would be to determine whether the thermal environment provided by large inland lakes induces the birds to nest earlier and leave later.

According to Wolinski, the population information alone could be critical. "For example, if we do find that the purple martin population is in trouble, we will be looking for ways to maximize their production," he said.

"In other words we would want to raise as many young as we can from the adult returning birds. So, using the arrival dates, we could map the lines of arrival. Then people who buy or have martin houses could put their houses up at times that would maximize martin occupancy and the birds' production, as well."

WOLINSKI is asking purple martin "landlords" with established martin houses for help because it's

physically impossible for me to actually go around the state and get permission from each landlord of a martin colony to obtain this information.

"So, I'm gathering the information piecemeal, and putting it in a format in which all a person would have to do is check a box, or fill-in a couple of blanks. Hopefully, the majority of the people will participate year after year," he said.

To get involved in Wolinski's purple martin survey, or for more information, write: Purple Martin Survey, 2450 Baker Road, Dexter, Mich. 48130.

Wolinski particularly enjoys the purple martin. "It's an aerial insectivore, and it's a nice bird with a pretty song. . . if you want to know what I mean, just ask martin landlords how they feel in August, when their martins have departed," he said.

WOLINSKI has been an active birder since 1963 and actually real-

ized his interest in ornithology while a sophomore at Bridgeport High School near Saginaw.

Part of his pleasure in studying birds is in the ease with which they can be researched and observed. "In terms of being an organism that's really good for study, or even just to enjoy as a bird-watcher, they're perfect subjects," he said.

"They're visible. They sing. They're easily identified and it takes a minimum amount of equipment. Take a pair of binoculars and a field guide and you're set."

Wolinski formally pursued his interest in birds through his studies in biology at Central Michigan University, where he earned his bachelor's degree, and at Eastern Michigan, where he completed his master's degree. In addition to teaching at CMU, he currently is working to obtain a secondary teaching certificate so he can teach in a high school or community college if not employed permanently by Eastern or another college in the fall.

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Olsen joins parks board

John E. Olsen, an Oakland County commissioner - from Huntington Woods, has been appointed to the 10-member county Parks and Recreation Commission.

Olsen, a third-term Republican, was appointed by the county board to replace Lillian Moffitt, a former county commissioner who resigned from the post in January.

A General Motors financial administrator, Olsen was honored last year by the Michigan Recreation and Park Association for his work with a local men's club which developed a tot pool and bus programs.

Unions train for politics

A day-long training session in political activity to be held May 10 is designed to mobilize union members, minorities and women, according to its sponsors.

"You and Politics" will run from 8 a.m. to 5 p.m. in the Airport Hilton Inn, 31500 Wick Road, Romulus. A \$35 fee covers lunch and materials.

Reservations are being taken at 764-0492. Speakers will include Sam Fishman, president of the state AFL-CIO, and Tom Turner, president of the Metro Detroit AFL-CIO.

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