

How To Tell When Martins Are Making a Renesting Attempt

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Bird eggs can fail to hatch for a number of reasons. They can be infertile, where no sperm from a male bird reaches the egg to

fertilize it. This can happen if the male is immature, if his sperm is bad, or if he and the female fail to make sufficient cloacal contact during copulation. Insufficient frequency of copulation also affects egg fertility.

Eggs may also fail to hatch when addled, where a live embryo dies and begins to rot. This can happen if incubation is suspended for too long during cold weather, or if the egg suffers a blow that cracks the shell allowing bacteria to enter.

Eggs can also fail to hatch if they get too wet, or are handled excessively by humans. The normal skin oils on human hands can clog the microscopic pores that allow the embryo to respire

Date		Male/Female Age	Date First Egg is Laid	Projected Hatch Date	Actual Hatch Date	Earliest Possible Fledge Date	20 May	25 May	30 May	4 June	9 June	14 June	19 June	24 June	29 June	4 July	9 July	14 July	19 July	24 July	Egg #	Hatch #	Fledge #
WH-1	A	5/22	6/11				PM	4E	6E	2E	7E	7E	7E	5Y	5Y	5Y	5Y	4Y	4Y	N	6	0	0
R	A	6/05	6/24	6/24	7/20		N				7E	7E	7E	5Y	5Y	5Y	5Y	4Y	4Y	N	5	5	4
Using the codes below, record exactly what you find in each compartment on every nest check and any action you may take. Using the laminated baby pictures, record age of nestlings on first encounter.																				Nest Record Sheet Totals:			
																				11	5	4	

Above: Part of a hypothetical Project MartinWatch sheet showing the details of a failed nesting attempt, followed by a successful renesting attempt. Below: A removable nest tray from a T-14 wooden house showing two old and five new Purple Martin eggs. Note that the old eggs are dirt stained and speckled, and that one is partially buried. Old eggs are not always this conspicuous.



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through its shell.

In this modern age of martin management, where landlords do frequent nest checks and re-

placements, and keep detailed records of their birds's breeding success, landlords often find nests with 9, 10, 11, or even 12 martin eggs and think their birds have broken the clutch-size world record. What usually is occurring is a renesting attempt where the first clutch of eggs failed to hatch and the female has laid a second clutch without removing the first.

How can you spot a renesting attempt? Simply, if you are keeping Project Martin-Watch-type data (see chart above), you will see clutch-size increases (or decreases followed by increases) long after the original clutch was completed. Landlords should record what they find, but leave the eggs alone. Let the birds reject the old eggs.

