



Debra Glisson

# MARTINS AT WORK

**Robert Gang**  
Cicero, NY

**H**ow would you like to head for work each morning knowing that Purple Martins will be there to enjoy when you head outside for your lunch or a break? Thanks to a suggestion I made to senior management at my company, that's my current work situation, or at least it will be once our new housing attracts martins. I work for Blasland, Bouck & Lee Inc., (BBL), an environmental engineering firm with corporate headquarters in Syracuse, New York. Besides the potential benefits of a well-managed site for martins, I'm getting a lot (I MEAN A LOT) of interest from employees at BBL about our new colony attempt. I cannot walk through the halls without getting stopped and asked about martins. I'll be conducting an in-house seminar on April 25th to explain how and what we are doing to attract second year (SY) birds. Once we get a pair, I'll conduct another seminar on breeding ecology. Here's what got the idea going. Last summer my company conducted it's annual United Way Campaign. As a way to help raise money, I offered to allow three families help me conduct a nest check at my colony on Oneida Lake, with the idea that their kids would be able to see the baby martins up close and learn a bit about martin ecology. Bidding started and ended at \$10.00 with one family making the bid. The successful bidder was the Glisson family, who had a unique story. Tim and Melissa Glisson had three adopted children (ages 14, 2 and 2) when Melissa received a phone call from a Christian orphanage in Opa Locka, FL asking them to consider taking more. The orphanage had a sibling group of 7 kids who would be split up unless they could find a couple

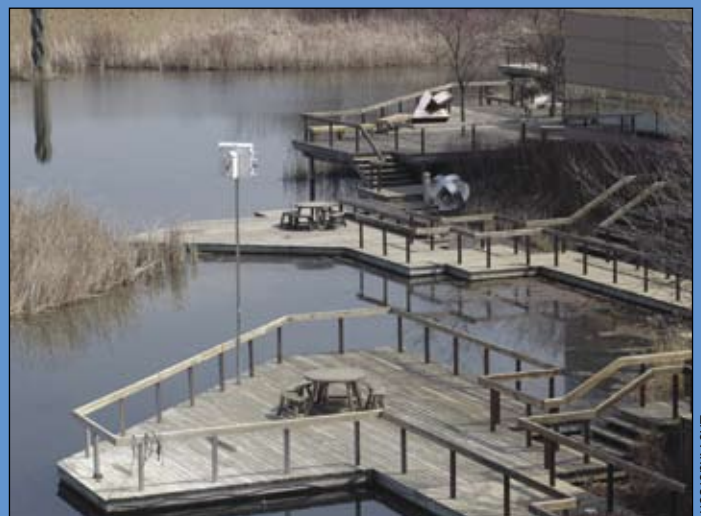
willing to adopt them all. The next morning, Tim woke up and asked Melissa if they could adopt them all. Melissa asked how they would be able to provide for 10 children. Tim said that the Lord would help them provide, and they adopted the children. Melissa quit her job to home school the children, and today they have a total of 15 adopted children.

We had a wonderful time at the nest check. The kids were full of questions and fired them at me 4 to 5 at a time. While I tried to field the many questions, there was one little guy pulling on my pant leg trying to get me to answer his. I had used the word "predator," and he wondered what a predator was. I explained and he went off. While I answered other questions, he came back with one of the *PMCA Updates* that I had, showed me a picture of a Great Horned Owl, and asked me if that was a predator. What a great experience I had. A few days later, I received drawings the children had done of Purple Martins and my colony. I believe I received tenfold what I contributed.

That fall, BBL's CEO, Robert Goldman, invited all of the United Way Contributors to lunch. I happened to sit next to Bob, who asked the group if anyone had any interesting hobbies. I said that I did and that it related to the United Way. At the end of my story, I mentioned that BBL's office site, with a marsh in back of the building and decks overlooking the marsh, would be a perfect spot to establish a colony. I told Bob that if he wished and would provide the funds, I would attempt to establish a colony. So now a Lonestar Alamo is up and ready for martins. As part of the deal, I'll be holding



Eric Anderson



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**Left:** Bob Gang checks to make sure BBL's martin house is ready for tenants. **Above:** BBL's location, with decks overlooking a marsh, has excellent potential for attracting martins.



**Left and Below Left:** Take Our Daughters and Sons to Work Day provided an opportunity to introduce BBL employees' families to Purple Martins. BBL's Wayne De-Carr's presentation on martin conservation got an enthusiastic response from the group of potential future landlords. **Below:** Two young ladies get a feel for nest replacements with Wayne looking on.

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brown bag lunch talks for the employees about martin ecology. If successful, we'll also set up a web cam in one of the nests for employees to watch for a healthy diversion. Other plans include conducting nest checks for Take Our Daughters and Sons To Work Day, a United Way fundraiser and for our adopted school, Dr. Weeks Elementary. As I mentioned earlier, I conducted a martin seminar on April 25th and introduced employees to the Purple Martin, martin migration and I explained the different methods we will use to help attract them (dawn song, pre-built nests, decoys, mud smears). If we're successful in establishing a colony I'll hold a follow-up seminar on martin breeding ecology. This isn't my first work place project for martins. In 1991 I set up a colony (two Trio Castles) at Miller Brewing in Fulton, NY. In 1992, we had one pair that nested, and Miller Brewing Corporate wrote an article about the colony in their employee publication. Unfortunately, I was downsized in February 1993 and don't know if the pair returned. In 1994, the plant was closed, and in 1995 or 1996, the houses were taken down. One of them was given to me for use at my own colony site. This house was banged up a bit on December 15, 2005, when wind-

driven ice wiped out my shoreline and another house, a Trio Musselman. My wife, Lisa, has helped make a difference at another colony site. She was conducting Safety Training at a Landfill Facility in Bath, NY. At the landfill, she noticed a neglected martin house that was filled with House Sparrows. She mentioned that if the housing was given proper attention, they might be able to attract Purple Martins. To her surprise and delight, the very next day she watched as the house was taken down, cleaned up, and moved to a more open location. Sometimes just planting a seed is all that it takes for something good to happen. I hope other martin landlords will pursue the possibility of a martin project at their work places, as well as at schools, senior centers, and parks. It was not difficult for me to get two different companies to try to establish a Purple Martin colony. For the investment they make in buying the housing, they stand to get good public relations and enhance their corporate setting. Their employees can also enjoy the martins at work and learn about attracting and managing them. Some of the employees may go on to set up housing of their own. No one comes away from these situations a loser, most especially the Purple Martins. ➡