

For the birds

City prepares to welcome thousands of Purple Martins



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There are some types of birds that are not too welcome in Lewisville.

They are large birds, who make loud, noisy sounds. They walk around on shopping center parking lots, looking for food that people may have dropped. They are ugly and somewhat scary. They seem to think that

vehicles make excellent bathrooms.

But then there are other birds that are very welcome in Lewisville. They are smaller, beautiful birds that make pretty music. They are clean and leave few or no messes behind.

Such are the Purple Martins.

Every year, in either late February or early March,

about 50,000 of these beautiful birds come to spend the spring and summer in Lewisville. They are scattered throughout the Lewisville area, but a large number of them seem to especially enjoy an area around the Lewisville Public Library and the Fred Herring Recreation Center.

They are very welcome. In fact, they are so welcome

that city crews spent much of Thursday morning erecting three new multi-family residences for them, near the Fred Herring Recreation Center.

The birds are actually a tourist attraction for Lewisville.

"Hundreds of bird lovers visit Lewisville each year, near sunset, to view the

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MATT NACHTRIEB/STAFF PHOTO

Preparations have been made for the arrival of about 50,000 Purple Martins. The beautiful birds come to spend the spring and summer in Lewisville.

FROM THE FRONT

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roost and watch the aerial acrobatics of the purple martins," said James Kunke, city communications manager.

"The Purple Martins will be coming in for about a six-months stay," Kunke said, "where they will raise their young and prepare for their non-stop migration across the Gulf of Mexico and back to Brazil."

He said the first martins to arrive, called "scout birds," have been spotted by local bird watchers during the past two weeks.

"Lewisville is home to the

largest Purple Martin roost in North Texas and one of the largest in the state," Kunke said. "A new city logo unveiled this month features the purple outline of a bird inspired by the Purple Martin, a protected migratory songbird."

The birds make their temporary homes across Lewisville and surrounding areas, favoring man-made homes in populated areas, especially those near a stable water source such as Lewisville Lake. Many area residents erect martin houses in order to attract these graceful visitors.

"The city already has

martin houses at local parks," Kunke said, "but this is the first time houses have been placed at an occupied city facility."

When egg-laying season begins, the Purple Martins form a single roosting area near Main Street and Civic Circle. The roost can start in the second half of July and last into the early part of September, depending on weather conditions and food supply.

MATT NACHTRIEB/STAFF PHOTO

City staff has erected new houses anticipating the arrival of Purple Martins.

