

THE PURPLE MARTINS

Good day everyone...it's a beautiful day in Pennsylvania.

Our Commonwealth has always been a refuge for wild birds, following a natural path north and south in their fly-ways. So, Pennsylvania is loaded with those persons who watch the fly-way fowl in their travels to the Everglades or in the opposite direction to Hudson's Bay. They are our latter-day Audubons, Bartrams and Burrows who sit at river's edge along the Delaware, Susquehanna and Allegheny and play Frankie Laine's "Cry of The Wild Goose" on their transistor stereoes-- as they watch the birds. Sometime in late winter I was travelling north to Danville and saw a flock of Canadian honkers resting their weary wings along the Susquehanna in the vicinity of Hoover's Island. I am not a Pennsylvania birdwatcher, but I was thrilled. It is simply that I am interested in tradition; like the day--(March 19)--when the swallows come back to Capistrano. For example, in Harrisburg, they have had for many years a famous Purple Martin house--one which houses, along the Susquehanna some families of that bird--the purple Martin. And (like the legend of the swallows) the purple Martins allegedly come to Harrisburg on March 28 and leave July 28. Because this is the 21st of June, they should be there right now--mating, chattering or doing whatever purple martins do on the 21st of June. The predecessors of these birds made their home in the vicinity 100 years ago, and have been coming back to the location of the old Susquehanna Camelback Bridge for a century. Thus, when a

famed utility company founded by a man named Bell--bought their property some years ago--the corporation had the graciousness to re-locate the Birdhouse nearby on the Susquehanna River. It had been for years in a state of disrepair and was almost shunned by most of the birds--but fortunately the home was redone as a sort of high-rise bird-apartment house. Now, (if they are there) the purple martins of the Susquehanna should be very happy. It was two years ago to the day that the new home was erected--an urban renewal project for birds--and they are enjoying it, I am told. On the bird committee (this is a fact) were people named Wayne Saporow, George Crow, George Peacock, Jeanne Drake, Marilyn Duck and three persons named Martin. I don't know a purple martin from a green grackel, and I can't tell you who is occupying those bird apartments. The only purple martin I've ever seen in Harrisburg is the late Governor and Senator, whose face turned a shade of purple in 1947, after the Democrats had refused to okay one of his capitol fund budgets. Governor Martin said that day in effect--that Pennsylvania Democrats were for the birds.

This is Pete Wambach. It's a beautiful day in Pennsylvania.