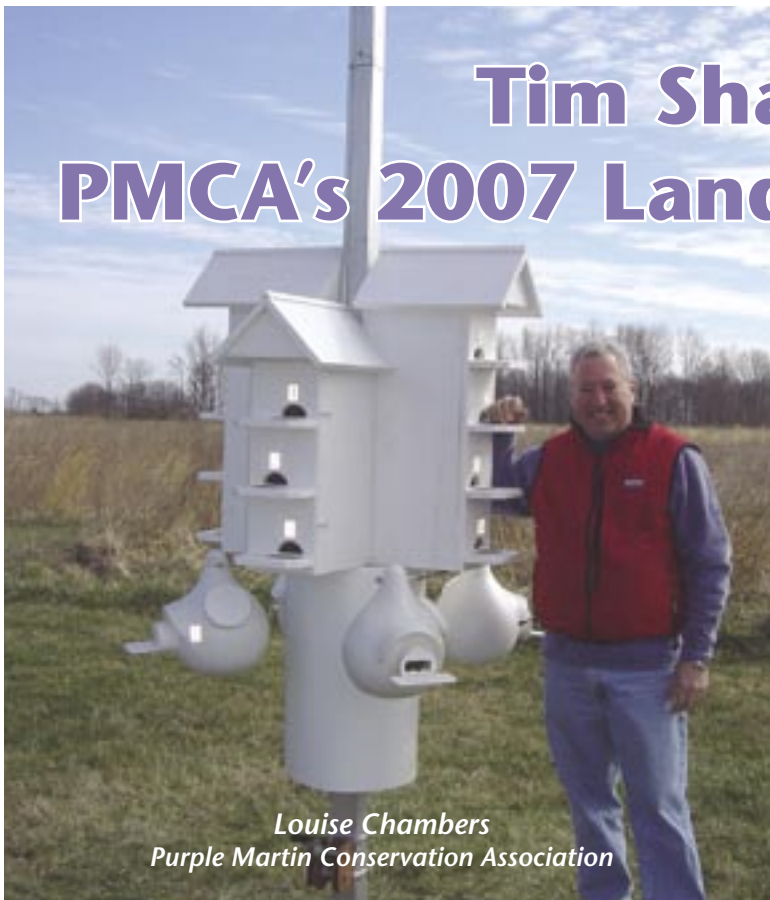


# Tim Shaheen: PMCA's 2007 Landlord of the Year



Louise Chambers  
Purple Martin Conservation Association



Erika Bozza

The PMCA is pleased to honor Tim Shaheen of Locust, NJ, as 2007 Landlord of the Year. A landlord since 1997, Tim's interest in martins and his willingness to help others have molded him into an outstanding landlord, mentor, and educator. Besides maintaining his own colony of 55 pairs, Tim mentors throughout central New Jersey, bands martins and puts on workshops and seminars for parks, refuges, Audubon groups, and bird stores.

Tim helps landlords in other states by mentoring them via email, and has contributed several articles to the *Update*, including, *Taking Mentoring to a Higher Level*, Vol 11(2); *House Sparrow Revenge Syndrome* (with Allen Jackson), Vol. 11(4); *House Sparrow Trapping Strategies* (with Allen Jackson), Vol 12(4); and *Martin Pole and House Integrity: For the Safety of You and Your Martins*, Vol. 13(4).

Some accomplishments from the 2007 season include starting six new colony sites. Martins moved into new T-14 houses that were installed at a Monmouth County Park in Lincroft, NJ; a Colts Neck, NJ, property; and, as part of an Eagle Scout project at one of Monmouth Beach Borough's parks. Two Trendsetter houses on Colts Neck Township properties by the Environmental Commission were occupied, and a Heritage Farms Quad Pod system at a riverfront home in Little Silver, NJ, also attracted martins.

Four indoor seminars were given, and two outdoor workshops were held at large colonies. Tim banded 1200 martins in 2007, along with some Tree Swallows and bluebirds. His assistant at many of the workshops is his sister Mary White, known as Nurse Martin since Tim is known as Doc Martin.

Tim has been a self-described nature nut since childhood, hunting and fishing with his dad, and raising chickens, ducks and pheasants. He first learned about martins when he saw a Purple Martin house in a garden catalog. Once he put up

a martin house at his home, it took him from four years to attract martins. What finally did the trick, he says, was moving the house from the yard, which had too many trees, down to his dock. When he saw martins there he called out to his wife, Patty, "We have martins—now I can die in peace!" His site attracted two pairs that first year and seven young fledged. Says Tim, "The PMCA was extremely helpful in answering all the questions I had those first few years. My colony has now expanded to 60 compartments with 55 nesting pairs. 228 young fledged this year." Tim says his favorite types of housing are T-14s and SuperGourds. "SuperGourds are by far the best nest for martins due to their shape, their individuality and ease of maintenance. The nestlings never get out of the nest bowl due to the shape. I also am a big fan of the tunnel entrances made by Sandy Bunn. It takes me about five minutes to convert a standard gourd to a tunnel entrance. Also, the T-14 is absolutely the Cadillac of martin houses. All decent colonies should have one. Thank you, Andy Troyer!"

## Supplemental Feeding

Tim learned to feed his own martins in the spring of 2003 and became a strong proponent of supplemental/emergency feeding. He terms the Bed & Breakfast Feeder as his best friend when it comes to feeding martins. His belief in supplemental feeding led him to create a videotape and DVD showing how to feed martins. He enlisted a local filmmaker he knew to do the filming at Tim's site during 2003's cold, rainy spring weather. It includes what to feed, how to feed, when and why. The video and DVD are sold by the PMCA and Tim has generously donated the proceeds to the PMCA as well.

## Banding

Since 2002, Tim has banded a total of 6500 martins in central and southern New Jersey. Tim enjoys looking for those birds the following years. He has one 5-year-old martin that has been resighted at his colony every year from 2003-2007. He usually reads about 35-45 bands each year among the

**Opposite page left:** Tim with the T-14 system he built and donated to Bombay Hook NWR. **Opposite page right:** Tim's sister Mary White assists with a nest check at Dorbrook Recreation Area. **Right:** Tim's home colony site on the Navesink River in Locust, NJ. Caring for his own colony comes first with Tim but he also manages to mentor at about 24 additional sites, along with banding and giving workshops and seminars.



Erika Bozza



Tim Shaheen

Shaheen Colony Data, 1997-2007												
	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	Average/Total
ASY Scout		4-18	4-8	4-5	4-9	4-1	4-3	4-10	4-7	4-2	3-31	
SY Scout			5-21	5-10	5-11	5-11	5-20	5-1	5-10	5-13	4-22	
1st Egg	6-14	5-31	5-31	5-20	5-16	5-17	6-8	5-17	5-21	5-16	5-17	
# of Eggs	9	30	46	79	129	146	138	218	227	255	298	1573
# Hatched	7	18	36	66	105	129	118	175	198	237	248	1342
% Hatched	78%	60%	78%	84%	81%	88%	86%	80%	87%	93%	83.22%	85%
# Fledged	7	17	34	58	102	116	95	172	161	201	228	1188
% Fledged	100%	94%	94%	88%	97%	90%	81%	98%	81%	82%	92%	89%
# Compartments	16	14	26	26	39	49	46	60	60	60	60	
# Active Nests	2	6	10	17	28	27	29	42	48	52	55	
Occupancy Rate	12.5%	42.8%	35.5%	65.4%	71.8%	55%	63%	70%	80%	87%	91%	

roughly 110 martins at his colony. Besides banding the birds at his own colony, he's held numerous outdoor workshops focused on nest checks and banding at various colonies for the Monmouth County Park System, the NJ Audubon Society, a golf course in Mendham, NJ, and local wild bird stores.

### Mentoring

Tim has been a martin mentor since 1999, working with numerous wannabes and active landlords. He had the support of wife Patty to go ahead and get more involved. She knew how much he enjoyed the martin hobby and supports him by tolerating a kitchen full of crickets, and a microwave scented with the permanent aroma of microwaved eggs. One lesson he has learned while mentoring is not to neglect his own colony because he's so busy helping others.

Tim met Allen Jackson, 2002 Landlord of the Year, through the mentor program. They quickly became friends, working as partners to effectively mentor, band, and educate throughout south and central New Jersey. Since becoming a mentor, Tim has given numerous seminars every year. His first, given for the Monmouth County Audubon Society in 2003, attracted an audience of 100. A presentation he gave at Bombay

Hook National Wildlife Refuge in Delaware in May of 2005 for their annual migratory bird festival led him to come up with a plan to upgrade the refuge's old-style martin housing and to coordinating a cost-share program with the PMCA. He's also worked with Boy Scouts, putting on a seminar for an area scout troop and their parents. He supervised Eagle Scout Alec Walzak and his brother Shay this year as they made martins the focus of their project. Tim builds a T-14 each winter and gives the houses to public or other good sites. Expanding from martins to bluebirds, this winter he will be redoing the bluebird trail at Thompson Park, his newest project.

As a mentor he has learned from experience how to boost martin numbers. He stresses the need for proper, manageable housing and good locations. He only works with landlords who are open to doing the work, once he has shown them what to do and how to do it. This leaves him free to work with new mentees each season. He finds his new mentees through the online Mentor page, local wild bird stores, and word of mouth. He strives to teach them the skills and practices that will enable their colonies to thrive, including keeping accurate records

House Sparrow control is always a problem for landlords, but for Tim, the main problem is convincing landlords to do



John Werring



Erika Bozza



Erika Bozza

**Left:** Tim bands nestlings as part of Bird Day at Mendham Golf & Tennis Club, a family-focused event. **Center & Right:** Banding at Dorbrook Recreation Area. **Lower Right:** Tim tries to include a built-in sparrow trap in every house, often using the attic to house a Spare-O-Door trap.

nest checks. For next spring, he is planning a series of three seminars that will be aimed at landlords with active sites, focusing on the benefits of nest checks, better House Sparrow control, and emergency feeding. Tim now mentors at approximately 24 colonies in his area.

### Public Education Projects

Tim comments on his current projects: Dorbrook Recreation Area in Colts Neck, NJ: *"This colony was adopted by my sister Mary White and myself. It was doing okay but was in need of updating (sreh, oversized compartments, HS control). The colony has been one compartment shy of being 100% occupied for the last two years (29/30). This is the site of a martin workshop sponsored by the park system every July."*

Bombay Hook NWR in Smyrna, DE: *"I was asked to present a martin seminar there two years ago. I had never been there and immediately realized this large colony was in drastic need of improvements (starling-resistant entrances (SREHs), access doors for natural gourds, predator guards, etc.) Thanks to a PMCA cost-share program, the refuge was able to purchase a new gourd rack and SuperGourds. I built a T-14 and donated the house, pole, gourds and miscellaneous equipment to the refuge. The colony is now producing as it should."*

Bird Day at Mendham Golf & Tennis Club: *"One of my favorite sites! The "Bird Guys" are great to work with and they listen! I have also learned much about bluebirds from them. The Mendham Bird Day with the members and their families is the highlight of the martin season."*

Little Egg Harbor Yacht Club in Beach Haven, NJ: *"I had placed a T-14 at Rumson County Day School, but the site never attracted martins, so the house was donated to the Yacht Club—another successful adoption of a colony that was being neglected. I am very proud of this colony. When I first got involved here the colony consisted of a Trio Grandpa house that had seen better days. I worked with it for a few years and with good management, fledged a number of martins. Then I replaced it with the donated T-14. I got really worried when no martins showed any interest until well*

*into June, but finally three pairs moved in and were successful in raising their broods."*

### Being a Landlord

Asked what he enjoys most about Purple Martins and being a landlord, and mentor, Tim replies, *"About Purple Martins—how absolutely reliable and faithful they are to their landlord and colony. They willingly accept anything new that I throw at them. They never disappoint me! About being a landlord—this answer is easy; 1200 fledglings in my 1st 11 years, an 89% average of fledged birds to hatched birds, and knowing I am doing the absolute best I can for my colony. With mentoring, telling the mentee what my plan of action is and then having it "come together" is a great feeling. Preaching how persistence in dealing with House Sparrows does eventually pay off. Convincing landlords that they need predator guards even though many feel it is not necessary. I love telling the story of how I lost four gourds full of nestlings because a pole guard was 4" too low."*

*I especially like working with landlords that act on the advice I give them. So many are "yes" people who say yes and then do not follow through—I eventually stop calling on those people. A few who have really listened and made the proper changes are the Bird Guys from Mendham Golf & Tennis Club, the Colts Neck Environmental Commission, John Brennan, Michael Miller, Jason Gancarz and especially my sister Mary White.*

*My philosophy as a landlord is to treat my colony as if it is the only one. If I do not do the best I can for my birds, then how can I justify running all over central Jersey helping others? I band only as many birds as I can without taking away from my own colony and other non-martin obligations. Take care of the home colony and then do the best you can for others as a mentor."*



Tim Sharfeen