

Homes for the birds

By JEREMIAH O'HAGAN
Staff Reporter

Purple martins are large for a swallow, but still smaller than a starling and many sparrows.

The males are deep purple, fading to dull gray on their wings. The females are dull gray with a crown of vibrant purple.

Purple martins are of interest because they're native, but have been driven out by non-native species like starlings.

On the East Coast, they nest primarily in houses that people put up for them. In the West, they take to woodpecker holes in dead snags.

The Nature Conservancy (TNC) is trying to strike a middle ground at its Port Susan Preserve at the end of Boe Road, just outside Stanwood.

Feb. 13, TNC volunteers spent the day installing homes for the martins.

Jolene Boyd, TNC's Puget Sound stewardship coordinator, said 14 people installed 12 bird boxes and several "gourd trees."

The gourd trees are a T-shaped post with three

or four hollow gourds mounted on top.

"Purple martins are known to nest on the west side (of Port Susan). There's a colony near Iverson Spit," Boyd said. "We're trying to attract them to the east side."

Purple martins begin nesting mid-March, she said. Once the martins' nesting season is over, the houses will be removed so they aren't used by unwanted species.

Martins like to nest over water, so the pilings and stumps near TNC's property are ideal spots.

Purple martins are only one species that is struggling from development pressures as natural habitat disappears to make way for humans, and TNC is only one group trying to address the problem.

On Camano Island, Camano Wildlife Habitat Project, under the nationwide umbrella of National Wildlife Federation's Backyard Wildlife Habitat Program, is teaching people to harmonize with nature right in their own yards.

Val Schroeder has quietly — well, at times not



COURTESY OF THE NATURE CONSERVANCY

The Nature Conservancy volunteers spent a day, Feb. 13, installing homes for purple martins at its Port Susan Preserve at the end of Boe Road, just outside Stanwood.

exactly so quietly — led the movement to get as many Camano yards as possible certified as wildlife habitat.

"Camano was the 10th certified community wildlife habitat in the nation and the second in the state," Schroeder said. "There are now 15 in the state and 86

in the nation."

She said 838 individual properties and nine neighborhoods on Camano have been certified as wildlife habitats by the National Wildlife Federation. These habitats are corridors, veins that connect parks, preserve, forests and beaches.

They let people live with nature in everyday ways.

Each year, Camano Wildlife Habitat Project sponsors the Camano Island Backyard Wildlife Habitat Garden Tour. The event is free to the public.

The ninth annual garden tour is June 25. Maps will

be available the day of the event. For information: 360-861-6372, camanowildlifehabitat.org, or camanowildlifehabitat@gmail.com.

You might even see a purple martin.

Jeremiah O'Hagan:
johagan@scnews.com or
360-629-8066 ext. 125.

RE/MAX
Associates Brokers



Anne Taylor

annetaylor@remax.net
360-507-9140
370 NE Camano Drive
Camano Island

Are you dreaming of owning a trendy Mid-Century Modern home where you can moor your boat right out front in Utsalady Bay? Call Anne today for a private showing or a free Luxury Home Market Report with graduated price ranges. \$999,950 MLS# 897269



NEW CONSTRUCTION BUILT ON YOUR LOT

BUILT FOR PERFORMANCE

LEXAR HOMES OF SNOHOMISH

16404 SMOKEY POINT BLVD, SUITE 202,
ARLINGTON, WA 98223

360.657.1968

WWW.LEXARHOMES.COM #LEXARH*850NC