



# The Remington Nature Center of St. Joseph Nature News

Summer 2016

## Purple Martins Take Up Residence

By Beth Downey, Front Desk

It's taken three years to entice Purple Martins to the Martin houses on the grounds, but it has been worth the wait.

These aerial acrobats are the largest swallow in North America, measuring only seven to eight inches. They fly at speeds of 40+ miles per hour, and catch most of their food in midair at heights of 160 to 500 feet. This is too high for mosquitoes, which only make up a small portion of their diet. They get their water in midair as well, flying over it and scooping it into their bill.

Native Americans would hang hollowed-out gourds by their crops to house the Purple Martins to help protect their plants from flying insects.

Purple Martins migrate to South America in the winter, with the migration taking two to three months.

They will be more likely to return to the houses we have at the Remington Nature Center now that they have nested in them. We certainly hope to see them for many years to come, which seems highly possible with their long life spans, with the longest recorded being 13 years.



## Upcoming craft events

**Saturday, August 27 1-3pm**  
**Paper Plate Dinosaurs** - Travel back in time to the Mesozoic Era and create a colorful dinosaur.

**Saturday, September 17 1-3pm**  
**Wacky Whatever with Odd'n'Ends**  
We'll put out lots of craft "stuff." You bring your imagination and create something marvelous!

**Saturday, September 24 10am-5pm**  
**Smithsonian Magazine Museum Day** - The nature center will offer free admission for everyone. No ticket or preregistration required; just show up! Kids 15 and under can participate in an indoor scavenger hunt for a small prize, however, do need to be accompanied by an adult.

**Saturday, October 22 1-3pm**  
**3rd Annual Scout Badge Day** - Both boy and girl scouts of all ages can earn a unique Remington Nature Center badge by completing various activities at the nature center. You do not have to be a scout to participate; families welcome to take part, as well. Stay tuned for additional information!

## Eastern Red Bat Baby

By Shelly Cox, Naturalist

Bats are one of those animals that illicit extreme fear in many people. It's no wonder so many of us have such a visceral reaction to these flying creatures of the night; we grow up learning that bats carry rabies, they will fly in our hair (and get stuck), and they will even suck our blood. Movies and media haven't helped the bats reputation either, with horror flicks featuring bats as evil creatures to be feared... just think Dracula. Media are quick to report the negative side of bats, but, all too often, forget the positive.

Recently, a family of Eastern Red Bats came into my care. Mother bat had flown into a garage door while carrying her four offspring. *(cont'd)*

**FISH  
FEEDING  
FRENZY**



**10:30am, EVERY Friday**

Come help us cut up worms to feed the Missouri River fish who live in our 7,000 gallon aquarium. Their diet consists of minnows, worms, corn, and peas.



# photos...



Two Ribbon Finches and a Shaft-Tail Finch

Photo by Jocelyn Weir



Program at Woodson Chapel Christian Church

Photo by Shelly Cox



Worm Cutting for Friday Fish Feeding

Photo by Andrea McCoy



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[www.facebook.com/RemingtonNatureCenter](http://www.facebook.com/RemingtonNatureCenter)

[www.stjoenaturecenter.info](http://www.stjoenaturecenter.info)

**Hours:**  
Monday-Saturday  
10am - 5pm

**Sunday**  
1pm - 5pm

**Admission**  
Adults: \$3  
Seniors: \$2  
Youth (4-15): \$1  
3 and under: Free

**Closed on...**  
Martin Luther  
King, Jr. Day  
President's Day  
Easter  
Thanksgiving  
Christmas Eve  
Christmas  
New Year's Eve

## Eastern Red Bat Baby *(cont'd)*

She was grounded in the hot sun for a long period of time and became dehydrated. We can only guess as to why she hit that door, but one could speculate that it was due to her heavy load. After hydrating mom and looking her over for injuries, she wiggled free of my hand and flew away leaving me with four babies. I placed those babies on the tree where their mother landed and hoped for the best. The largest of the four babies flew away, but the remaining three were not strong enough to fly. With any luck, they will be ready for release in a week or so. For now, they will remain in my care being fed mealworms and water until they are strong enough to fly and feed on their own.



There are 14 species of bats that live in Missouri; some are migratory and others remain here throughout the winter hibernating in attics, crawl spaces and hollow trees. The most commonly encountered bat in our region is the Big Brown Bat. It often shows up in houses by mistake, gets confused and exits the attic by way of your living room, instead of the eaves of your home. This can be a bit discerning to many of us. When faced with a scared, disoriented bat flying erratically around your house it can send you screaming from your home, or land you in your closet covering your head... after all mom always said, "bats will get in your hair." The best thing to do is remain calm and do your best to capture the bat safely by using strong leather gloves or a towel and escorting your unwanted guest outside. If your nocturnal guest shows up in the middle of winter, escorting him outside is not a safe option, as it will freeze to death. At that point, you will need to call someone to come get it.



Several species of bats in Missouri are endangered, some critically so. This is due to loss of habitat, destruction of cave ecosystems, and overuse of pesticides which kill their food source, insects. Conservation of bats is critically important if for no other reason than the insect control they provide. One small bat can consume hundreds, if not thousands, of insects in a single night. Multiply that times thousands of bats and you have significant insect control. Insects such as mosquitoes spread disease, beetles and moths can destroy crops costing billions of dollars in agricultural losses each year. Many bats around the world provide pollination, seed dispersal, and are an important food source for predators like snakes.

Many people I talk to are concerned about rabies in bats. While it is true bats can spread rabies, they do not carry it. They are not born with it. They have to contract it the same as any other mammal does, by being bitten or scratched. Only half of 1% of bats contract rabies and can transmit it to other mammals, including humans. So, the risk is low. However, if you should encounter a bat on the ground during the day use caution and do not handle it. Bats are strictly nocturnal and should not be out during the day. Therefore, a grounded bat could be sick. It might also be injured. Call animal control to handle such situations.

So, is it true that bats become tangled in your hair? I am happy to dispel that myth and say "no." There is no self-respecting bat that would allow itself to be caught in your hair. Their eyesight is as good as ours, which dispels another myth that bats are blind. By eyesight alone, they would see you and not want to tangle themselves in your hair and risk injury. They also possess an advanced eco-location capability that allows them to see in complete darkness. They know you are there, long before you are aware of them.

If we try to set aside our fear for a minute, breathe deep and take a moment to appreciate these magnificent flying creatures for what they truly are... they are unique in being the only flying mammal, they provide free pest control, pollination and seed dispersal. We can learn to appreciate them, and fear them a little less. Bats are the largest group of mammals with 1,300 or more species found worldwide. Some are small and others are large with wingspans up to six feet. As you sit outside in the evening this summer and fall, watch for the bats as they swoop and soar, gobbling up bugs in the night sky, and be thankful for the service they provide.