

Feeding Tips

Supplemental feeding is frustrating at the beginning but the rewards of saving your colony outnumber this discomfort of a sore finger or getting wet. Here is how we taught our martins to eat. First don't try to teach your Martins to eat scrambled egg, just won't happen. Break down and buy some crickets. Depending on your colony size you will want at least 1000 pre wing size (1") crickets. Place your order for crickets before your Martins return. When your crickets arrive place them in your freezer, box and all. I leave my frozen crickets in the box, till I need them, but you could place frozen crickets into storage bags if that suits you better.

When your weather turns (and it always does) retrieve some of your frozen crickets and place them on a paper plate or paper towel. You can defrost them using a microwave or leave out to till the crickets have reached room temperature. Never feed a frozen cricket.

Now the martins need to be hungry, so on the first day of inclement weather, your martins may look at you comically as you fling crickets, but still, stand near your racks and using a plastic spoon launch the cricket air borne, (place cricket on spoon head, hold handle in one hand, and gently pull back on the spoon head till the plastic spoon is flexed, and let go, the cricket will be airborne) over the martins head, but never flick crickets directly at the martins.

It takes only one martin to get the frenzy started. Once your martins accept your flinging crickets your half way there. Now comes the easy part. Do you have a bed and breakfast or did you build your own feeding platform?

Lets face it, humans are generally lazy, why fling crickets if we can teach the Martins to eat at one place, and we don't need to get wet? Well, how can we accomplish this? Start by placing a few crickets in your B&B or on your platform. If your feeding station raises, like our B&B, raise up the trays with crickets on it. Stand under or near the feeding station. Begin to launch your crickets using your spoon. Try to get the martins near the feeding platform. Feed less crickets than you may normally, getting the martins near the feeding station to see the provided crickets. Walk away. Again it takes only 1 martin to land on the feeding platform. Once this happens you can place more and more crickets into the feeding station.

During long cold wet spells, your martins can eat you out of house and home. That's when egg comes into play. You have trained your martins to eat crickets from the feeding platform, now its time to add scrambled eggs. We make our scrambled eggs by placing 6 eggs into a microwave safe bowl, add a little water and whisk. Microwave till cooked and then chop into small pieces. Place your scrambled eggs into your feeding trays, spread it around, add a few crickets, and watch your martins. During long cold spells you will need to fill your feeding station as often as possible.

It's such a thrill to see them eat your offerings. Knowing that your martins will survive this cold snap brings you great joy. You will notice that your Martins will even come to greet you as they await your food. It's such a thrill! And fear not, your Martins will return to catching their own food as soon as the temperatures raise and insects are flying. It is also my opinion that there are now so many of us landlords who supplemental feed that more and more martins are catching on faster every year.