

## Member contributes plan to build owl/hawk guard to protect martin gourds

Nature Society recently received a colony report from Joe Levins of Wetumpka, Alabama and accompanying photo (at right) of his gourd racks with owl guards. We contacted Joe to see if he would mind sharing his idea on how to install owl guards over gourds. He readily agreed. Like nearly all purple martin landlords, Joe was only too happy to offer something that might help others benefit purple martins.

Hawks are becoming an increasing problem as a predator of purple martins. Installing owl guards to protect housing should at least keep hawks from reaching inside compartments to pull out unsuspecting birds. Joe said that he actually witnessed hawks hitting and bouncing off his guards. And went on to say that the martins have no trouble entering or exiting their nest compartment.

After speaking with Joe by phone, John Lightle, of Nature House Inc., has written a set of instructions (see below) with a couple of illustrations for those interested in placing guards over their gourds.

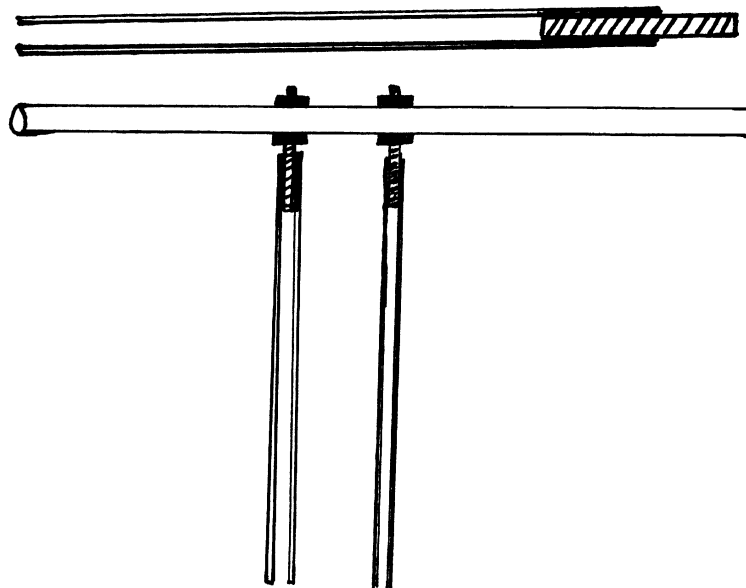
### Joe Levins' owl/hawk guard for gourds

*NOTE: Joe Levins builds his gourd racks using 1/2" EMT conduit bending it into an octagon shape, and hangs one gourd in the center of each of the eight sides.*

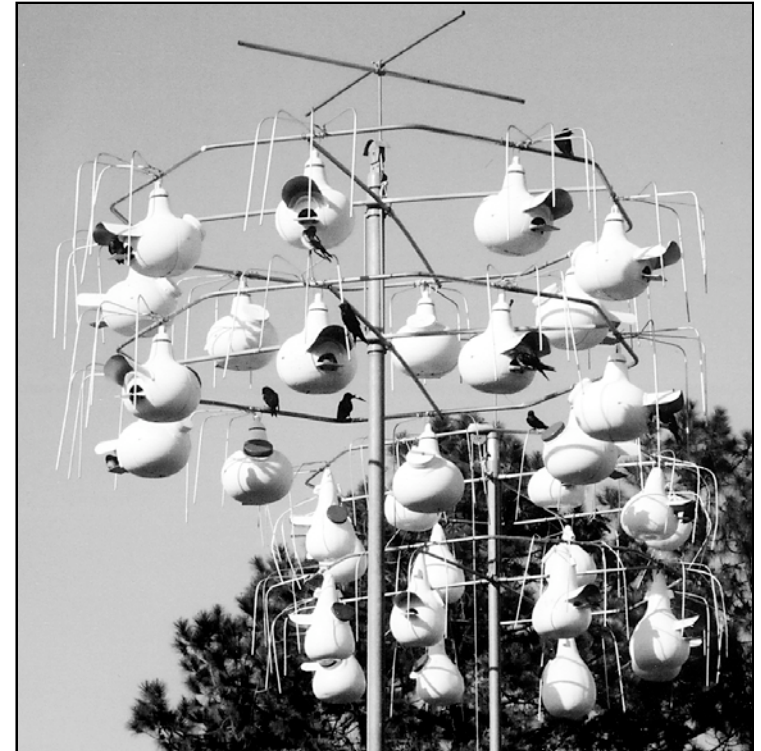
Use a 3" long piece of 1/4-20 all-thread or a 1/4-20x3" full thread bolt with the head cut off.

On each side of the 3" long piece of 1/4-20 all-thread, weld a piece of 3/16" diameter by 24" long plated steel rod. Leave about 1-1/4" of the threaded rod free to allow for the 1/2" conduit and two lock nuts.

It is easier to make the vertical bends in the guard rods before the assembly is mounted on the conduit



frame. The diameter of the gourd determines where the vertical bends are made. Bend the rods around a piece of large pipe, post or similar object to create a smooth 90° bend.



Drill 1/4" horizontal holes completely through the 1/2" conduit. Thread a 1/4-20 nut on the free end of the threaded rod. Slip the threaded end through the hole in the conduit and fasten with another 1/4-20 nut. Tighten both nuts securely. The spacing between the rods can now be adjusted by hand bending.

*If you would like to receive a complimentary information packet about purple martins and the Nature Society News, please contact the Nature Society by calling 1-800-255-2692 or e-mail <natsoc@adams.net> or write to the Nature Society, PO Box 390, Griggsville IL 62340-0390. Be sure to include your complete mailing address. (We do not sell, rent or share name/address lists.) We're on the web at: [www.naturesociety.org](http://www.naturesociety.org) and [www.naturehouseinc.com](http://www.naturehouseinc.com). If you're ever in Griggsville please stop by the Nature Society Showcase at 109 W. Quincy Street (M-F 8-5 CT).*