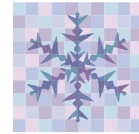




Fall ... **2020** ... Winter



## **ONTARIO PURPLE MARTIN ASSOCIATION Newsletter**

[www.ontariopurplemartins.ca](http://www.ontariopurplemartins.ca)

[www.essexpurplemartins.ca](http://www.essexpurplemartins.ca)

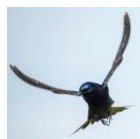


### **2021 MEETINGS and EVENTS**

The OPMA Board has assessed the viability for 2021 of the events we normally schedule. The well-being of our members is our first priority. Given the current COVID19 situation, and respecting the guidance and recommendations of our health experts and governing officials, we are proceeding as follows, **subject to change as circumstances evolve.**

- February meeting: Not scheduled.
- April meeting: Not scheduled.
- May and/or June meeting: To be determined. Will assess closer to these times.
- July MARTINFEST: Postponed to 2022.
- September HawkFest To be determined.
- October meeting: To be determined. Hopefully it will be safe by then!

***All meeting dates are subject to change as necessary, and changes will be communicated to everyone. Everyone will receive a reminder email OR phone call prior to each meeting.***



## *Message from our Chairperson:*

I hope that everyone is doing well during these most trying times. One thing the Coronavirus did not interrupt was the spring return, mating and fledging of the Martins. No matter what happens in the New Year, they once again will return to the housing we provide for them.

Unfortunately we haven't been able to meet as a board and as a result, along with COVID restrictions, not much planning has been possible for 2021.

I contacted Colasanti's about reserving the Willow room for our 1st meeting in February but was informed that they are not taking any reservations at this time or for the foreseeable future because of the pandemic. I will continue to reach out to them but it does not seem feasible at this time to plan for any meeting for February. We can still be hopeful that our outdoor meetings could still take place in late spring and early summer but we have to wait and see how things are progressing.

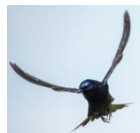
I can report that John Balga and Ron Delcourt have put up a grandpa and a T14 to go along with the gourd rack at the new site just east of Holiday Beach on County Road 50. If you drive down this way you can clearly see them. It will be interesting to see how many Martins will use this site in April and May.

John Balga would still like to have the statistics on your colony. It helps to keep track of how well the Martins are doing. He then is able to pass the information on to Nature Canada.

Even though we have not been able to meet as a group to discuss our colonies and other items of interest, I hope that the association will remain viable for years to come. We still serve a purpose in promoting the success of the Purple Martin. The club's newsletter will continue to be sent out with interesting information. Thanks again to Mary Wilson for taking the time and effort to maintain this very important resource for our club.

We will meet again as a group of interested individuals for the Martin but we want to make sure it is going to be safe to do so. Keep up the good work you do for the Martins. Remember, they need you.

*Paul Hamel, Chair*



Our member **Ron Sebastian of Niagara Falls** submitted these pictures. This handsome couple (Mike & Helen ©) are bringing tasty wasps to their offspring.



You may remember from the last newsletter that our member **Mary Anne Adam** had waited a long time to get Martins. 2020 was the year! She has submitted this picture of her new "bird family"! And what a beautiful setting it is!



*"Hello: Finally had a chance to take a decent photo of my martins. They've been circling and circling for the last couple of days.*

*I assume they are getting their bearings and preparing for the long trip south. Wish I were joining them. I'm not a winter person.*

*Mary Anne*

## An Unusual Purple Martin Summer .... By John Balga



Often Purple Martins are very selective when selecting housing units provided for them. But how fussy are they?

Most Purple Martin stewards have heard the story over and over again that housing should be a minimum height of 10-13 feet from the ground and about 40 feet away from trees and other buildings, preferably out in the open. Several years ago, some of our OPMA members were successful in attracting martins to single gourds suspended on Shepherd hooks. This spring I challenged this tenet by experimenting with two shepherd hooks by adding more gourds to each one.

All the gourds that I provided for the martins this year were used so I had a suspicion that there would be another influx of ASY/SY birds arriving soon at my Essex colony. I did not want to put up another gourd rack so I chose to add a couple of flower pot hooks which I adapted to use as gourd racks.

The one Shepherd unit had two hooks and the second one had three arms. By adding 5/16" rods to the arms and securing them with 1- inch pipe clamps and zip ties for added strength, I was able to provide six more gourd units for the martins. Four horizontal gourds were suspended on one pole and two horizontal gourds on the other. To my surprise the hook with four gourds hosted 4 ASY pair and the other 1 ASY and 1 SY pair. Both setups were successful and fledged 30 young.

It was a pleasure to watch them close up as they began nest building, feeding their young and taking their first flights. After the young fledged, they all returned in the evening and some returned even after their parents had left the colony.

### **Observations and Lessons Learned**

- These Purple Martins were unusual in that they were not afraid to set up living quarters under a nearby tree and close to our porch railing and patio just ten feet away.
- The Martins were less fearful around humans and regular activities and often stayed on their gourds even when a mower passed by or a neighbour came to visit. Friends were in awe to see them so close up and carrying on with their business.
- Other Purple Martins often visited the gourds to check their status. Sub adult males had no reservations of harassing the young.
- Competition for gourd occupancy also developed as more SY martins arrived.
- House monitoring of the young and nest changes were easy because the gourds were at chin level or lower. (2-4 feet above ground)
- No predators attempted to come close to the gourds and even if the odd sparrow showed up, it quickly flew away.

This close glimpse of Purple Martin behavior was a very special summer treat. Perhaps some of you might wish to try this experiment next year.





## **LOOK UP! PURPLE MARTINS DELIGHT DOWNTOWN NASHVILLE**

Our member Carol Taves submitted this link for an article about roosting Martins in Nashville that were in danger of being discouraged by a pest control company, but after a little education, the Martins were allowed to stay, and the location became an unlikely place for people to come together safely during the pandemic!

[www.npr.org/2020/08/31/907918163/look-up-purple-martins-delight-downtown-nashville](http://www.npr.org/2020/08/31/907918163/look-up-purple-martins-delight-downtown-nashville)

### **HELP, THIEF!**

*Hey! Go get your own!*



*( .... Crime footage from the colony of Al & Anne Hamill .... )*

### **RESOURCES**

Remember to check the wonderful OPMA website maintained and provided by John Balga, our **website** manager. [www.essexpurplemartins.ca](http://www.essexpurplemartins.ca) or [www.ontariopurplemartins.ca](http://www.ontariopurplemartins.ca)

❖.....**The Feed Store** in Harrow carries many Purple Martin products. They are located at 2564 County Road 20 East, in Harrow, and can be contacted at 1-519-738-2261.

❖.....**The PMCA** (Purple Martin Conservation Association) is a non-profit organization dedicated to the conservation of Purple Martins through scientific research, state of the art management techniques, and public education. **The PMCA forum does not require sign-up, is totally free, and is a wealth of information from landlords all across N.A.** [www.purplemartin.org](http://www.purplemartin.org)

❖.....**Nature Canada:** Nature Canada's Purple Martin Project is part of an international initiative between university researchers, naturalist groups, Purple Martin landlords and citizens to help protect and recover aerial insectivore populations. The OPMA are partnered with NC in this endeavour and they are the recipients of our end-of-season colony statistics that are collected by John Balga.

<http://naturecanada.ca/what-we-do/bird-conservation/purple-martin-project/>

**OPMA Board: Contact anyone below with questions:**

**Volunteers are NOT Board members, but Board members may also be volunteers.  
Volunteer functions are separate from board functions.**

**(Board) Executive:**

Paul Hamel..... 519-738-3476.....kp\_hamel@live.ca ..... Chairperson  
..... Vice-Chair  
Al Hamill ..... 519-738-6932.....alhamill70@gmail.com ..... Treasurer / Finances  
Mary Wilson..... 519-326-1710.....helenmwilson@yahoo.com ..... Secretary / Member Records

**(Board) Directors-at-Large:**

Fern Bellavance ..... 519-257-0013.....fern.bellavance@gmail.com  
Gilles Breton  
Audrey Festeryga ... 519-712-9708.....afesteryga@yahoo.com  
MarieAnne Knapp .. 519-726-6180.....marianne1937@yahoo.ca  
Lyle Papps..... 519-354-6404  
Ron Delcourt  
Dennis Shady ..... 519-738-4411.....dennisshady@yahoo.ca

**(Non-Board) Volunteer Functions:**

John Balga ..... 519-800-2504.....martinman@hotmail.com ..... Advisor / Website  
Fern Bellavance ..... 519-257-0013.....fern.bellavance@gmail.com ..... Lending Library  
Lyle Papps..... (see above) ..... Natural gourds  
Nancy Robson..... 519-326-8557.....nancyrrobson@gmail.com ..... Media  
Carolyn Recker..... Goodwill Ambassador  
Dennis Shady ..... (see above) ..... New Member Advisor  
Mary Wilson..... (see above) ..... Newsletters / Cricket Ordering

***Happy New Year !!!***

***Wishing you many purple blessings for 2021!***