



SPRING ... 2020



ONTARIO PURPLE MARTIN ASSOCIATION

www.ontariopurplemartins.ca

www.essexpurplemartins.ca



PLEASE NOTE:

All events referenced in the newsletter are cancelled or in a tentative status due to the coronavirus situation. As we approach each date, we will assess its viability, governed by the recommendations and restrictions put forward by our public health officials and government.

Message from our Chairperson:

It's that time of year again! We can begin to think about our Purple Martins returning! Checking on the PMCA website, one can see that Martins are well north into Ohio as of March 26, so they are not too far away. Hopefully our landlords are beginning to think about their housing and making sure it is ready for the soon-to-come arrivals. Also, tree swallows have been sighted locally, so their housing needs to be ready for them too.

We had our first meeting on February 22nd at Colasanti's. There were over 60 people in attendance to listen to Ted Cheskey from Nature Canada give his presentation. I would like to thank Ted for coming to our meeting to give such an informative talk about the Purple Martin and swallows. I always get a feeling of great pride in our organization when we come out to support our club's efforts.

I would like to welcome Gilles Breton and Ron Delcourt to our OPMA board. They have come forward to bring their expertise to our organization and to give their time to help our club continue to promote the Purple Martin in our community. This brings our board to 10 members with John Balga continuing on as a consultant to the board. I am still hopeful that someone will come forward to take on the vice-chair position. It is an important position because it helps me as the chair and this person will take over as chair in the future. If you are interested, let me know either by phoning, emailing or talking to me at our upcoming ~~meeting in April~~ **(cancelled)**.

We will be involved in a number of events this year, and in all cases, volunteers are needed! If you are able to help, please let us know so we can include you on one of the lists:

- ❖ On May 9th, we will take part in *World Migratory Bird Day* at Colchester Harbour with our information booth to share about Purple Martins. This will be our 1st time participating in WMBD, and we think it is a great opportunity to connect with the public and share about Purple Martins.
- ❖ On July 11th, we will once again host *MARTINFEST* at Colchester Harbour.
- ❖ Finally, in September, we will take part in HBMO's "*HawkFest*" at Holiday Beach Migration Observatory.

Thank you to MarieAnne Knapp for agreeing to host our May 23rd meeting. She has a great location for a meeting and is always willing to share information on how to be a successful landlord. Henry and Elaine Wolting have also volunteered again to host our June 27th social gathering. If you have never attended one of our socials, I would strongly recommend that you do. It is a great time just to have the opportunity to visit with each other and to talk about our colonies. I might add that the food is great because of the contributions from everyone and especially the main dish that Elaine puts together for us. Henry has a great colony and he is always ready to demonstrate what he has done to make it a successful one. A great big thank you goes out to Elaine and Henry for their hospitality.

Finally, our organization continues to grow. We have over 70 members who support the Purple Martin by being landlords. Our annual dues of \$20.00 are now due for 2020. This is the only source of income we have to promote our endeavors as a club. Because we only collect dues from our members, we are not obliged to promote anything but what our club wants. We are doing a great job so let's keep up the good work because the Purple Martin's survival depends on it.

I look forward to seeing you all on ~~April 18th~~ (**cancelled**) at Orchard View Golf Course.

Paul Hamel, Chair



Welcome to our new members!

*Giovani Abata, Windsor
Dr. David Fisher, Belle River
Ian Fisher, Windsor
Sharon Johnson, Kingsville*

*Jim & Jan Lapain, Essex
Lorraine & Dwight Moon, Maidstone
Rita Christie, Staffa
Rick & Carol Ouellette*

2020 MEETINGS and EVENTS

All events are in a tentative status due to the coronavirus situation. As we approach each date, we will assess its viability, governed by the recommendations and restrictions of our public health officials and government.

- ◆ All meeting dates are subject to change as necessary. Changes will be communicated to everyone.
- ◆ We will make reminder emails **OR** phone calls prior to each meeting.
- ◆ For “**member-host**” meetings, in case of questionable weather, individuals should contact the “host” to confirm if the meeting will be held as scheduled. **It is NOT the responsibility of the “host” to contact everyone.**

- ❖ 9:00 am..... Feb. 22Colasanti’s, Ruthven In the WILLOW Room
- ❖ ~~9:00 am..... Apr. 18Orchard View Golf Course, Ruthven~~ **cancelled.**
- ❖ **New!!** May 9OPMA Booth at Holiday Beach for “World Migratory Bird Day” (10 to 3)
- ❖ 9:00 am..... May 23“Member-Host” Meeting
- ❖ 9:00 am..... Jun. 27“Member-Host” Meeting/BBQ
- Sep. 12-13.....OPMA Booth at Holiday Beach for “Hawkfest” (10 – 3)
- Sep. 19-20
- ❖ 9:00 am..... Oct. 17Orchard View Golf Course, Ruthven

A shout out to the Manitoba Purple Martin Club!

This club celebrated its **40-year anniversary** this past February! We’ve been blessed through the years in receiving a copy of some of the newsletters written by their president Ernie Didur, who was also part of the founding group. And Purple Martins have been blessed by the stewardship of the caring landlords who put 40 years-worth of Martins into the air!

Our OPMA is nearly **20 years** young, and even though we can boast some very experienced landlords, I’m sure all of them could sit down with Ernie for a chat over coffee, and come away having learned a whole lot!

Here’s an excerpt from the latest newsletter, in which Ernie has given **us** a shout out!

“The Purple Martin Conservation Association, the Ontario Purple Martin Association, and the Manitoba Purple Martin Club are full of wonderful people who are taking matters into their own hands and caring. We have ornithologists, professional people, and biologists in our ranks. The bulk of our membership is made up of normal everyday people, who have become champions of conservation, the heroes of environmental protection. When it comes right down to it, it is we, the real people, who make the difference. We do not have the “Grass Roots Department” on the side to take care of these people, we are these people. Always have been and always will be, Thank-You! “

At our February Meeting

Our guest speaker, **Ted Cheskey, of Nature Canada**, presented the topic of:

"PURPLE MARTIN HOUSING and ROOSTS - 2 critical stages for Purple Martins".

Ted began with an overview of the impact of climate changes on many species, and the ongoing crisis of extinctions all over the world.

Several initiatives undertaken by Nature Canada:

- Pushing our Federal Government to uphold and support conservation efforts here at home.
- Supporting the initiatives of the **Aichi** accord: 196 nations signed on to the Protocol which was adopted in October 2010 in **Aichi** Province, Japan. Its objective is the conservation and sustainable use of biodiversity.
- Supporting a new initiative called Bird City Canada, which promotes actions to make cities safe places for birds.

Various citizen science initiatives exist for you to contribute to the understanding of aerial insectivore declines. You can help provide information regarding long-term population and distribution trends by participating in things such as:

- eBird: <https://ebird.org/region/CA-ON> Post your sightings; see what and where various birds have been spotted.
- **NatureHood** <https://naturecanada.ca/?s=naturehood> This is part of the Nature Canada website, and invites all of us “citizen scientists” to find the nature in our neighbourhoods.
- Nature Canada’s **Purple Martin Project** is designed to track and monitor populations and important habitat of swallow species in Canada. It also promotes the installation and stewardship of Purple Martin artificial nesting houses.

Declining numbers:

The trend data of the decline in our swallow populations are derived from the [North American Breeding Bird Survey](#) (BBS) and are specific to Canada.

- Aerial insectivore decline was studied over the last 50 years and the last 10 years, and shows an alarming decrease in our swallow species, with Bank Swallows and Purple Martins having the worst decline.
- September 2019 media story – 3 billion birds lost since 1970 in North America. (On the bright side, there are also about 300 million fewer HOSP now than in 1970 😊)

Save our Swallows Campaign: For the last 2 years, Nature Canada’s SOS campaign has had 3 areas of focus in Ontario:

- Rural landscapes (help rural landowners do things to help birds)
- Purple Martins (entirely dependent upon humans for housing in which to nest, and the 2nd fastest declining bird in Ontario), and
- Roosts.

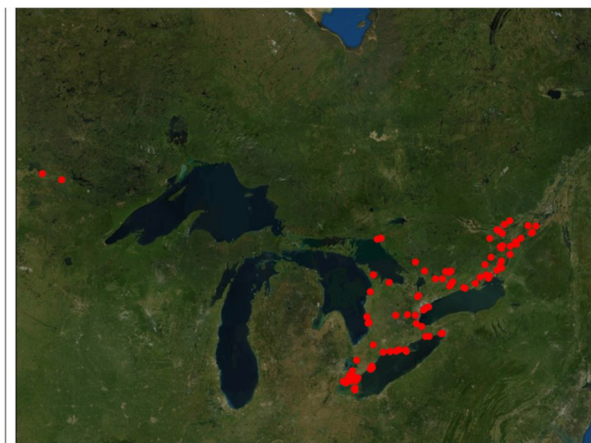
PM Habitat giveaway: Before May 2020, which is when the Trillium grant funding this giveaway ends, Nature Canada will have supplied 30 new housing units in total to help Purple Martins.

Nature Canada Website Information:

- “Beneficial Practices” pages are on the Nature Canada website for all swallow species
- PM Story map – go to “Purple Martin Project” on website.
- Interactive map of Purple Martin landlords is a work in progress: (excerpt from the N/C site)

Where do Purple Martins Live in Ontario?

Here is a [“heat map”](#) that Nature Canada is working on, created from data provided by members of the Ontario Purple Martin Association (OPMA). It shows both the distribution of housing in the province as well as details provided for certain years on occupancy, type of housing and other associated variables. This map is very much a work in progress. Nature Canada’s intention is to periodically update the map with new information provided by the OPMA. To view the full interactive map, [click here](#)



Tracking Purple Martins: First it was geolocators, then GPS, and now MOTUS.

- MOTUS is Latin for movement, or motion. Motus tags use telemetry to track wildlife (radio signals). There are numerous stations to detect the signals of the tagged birds' movements; signals are emitted every 10-15 seconds. (Reference - Birds Canada)
- 45 adults received MOTUS tags and 62% of them were detected.
- 115 hatchlings received MOTUS tags and 70% of them were detected.
- Furthest displacement of an adult was 576 km.
- The highest distance of "total displacement" (all movement) was 4026 km by a juvenile.

Roosts:

- a roost is a nocturnal safe place, and is used by the birds for interactions and learning.
- Bank swallows locate a roost site before they have finished the nesting cycle.
- Birds leave about 30-50 min. before sunrise.
- Wetlands are now dominated by phragmites, which, although considered a very invasive imported species, have now become very important roost habitats.
- Roosts are visible on weather radar in US (NEXRAD network). In the late 90's PMCA began using weather radar to identify roosts based on characteristics – signature shape, timing of start and dispersal, etc.
- There is a learning module to use weather radar on the NC site.
- ROOST MONITORING PROTOCOL: developed by NC in collaboration with the OPMA and ECFN (Essex County Federation of Naturalists). This is the conversion of a roost signature from radar to an actual number of birds. An algorithm has been developed to do this, and although the "number of birds" is probably lower than actual, they think, it did show a provably correct relation between lower numbers and poor weather conditions from year to year.
- What's needed next for work on Roosts? Protection of roost sites which are vulnerable because of the concentration of birds. Citizen science, and young people to get interested and carry on.

Ted closed by thanking the OPMA and members for their partnership and dedication to PM conservation, and then opened the floor to questions:

Q&A:

- Declining insect life is a concern. What is being done?
 - *Pesticides are becoming less toxic, but social pressures to minimize fears such as West Nile leads municipalities to use things such as BTI (?) which kills mosquito larva but also most other things in the larval stage.*

- North Bay used to have Martins. Now they are gone. How far south has the most northern reach of Martins moved?
 - *The best source of this information is the Ontario Breeding Bird Atlas: <https://www.birdsontario.org/atlas/index.jsp>.*
- Brazil fires: any info available on how they affected the Martins last fall / winter?
 - *No info known by N/C. Ted said that many, maybe millions, of PM's have been known to congregate on a large island in the Amazon. Perhaps that was a safe haven for them. However, the continual clearing of rainforest and resultant loss of insect life poses an ongoing threat.*
- A member recommended the PMCA magazine (obtained through membership to the PMCA) to everyone, in particular one issue that focused on the impact of Neonicotinoids on bird life. These pesticides target the neural system of insects.

The presentation was very informative, and the OPMA presented Ted with a gift, to express our appreciation for the time and effort he gave to share his expertise and knowledge with us. **Thank you, Ted!**

Also, our member and “webmaster” John Balga was presented with a gift in appreciation of his work on the website during the late fall of 2019. Due to problems with the hosting platform for the website, John had to remove it, find a new host, and then totally rebuild the site. This entailed a great deal of his time, and the OPMA recognizes that our website is a critically important part of our ability to reach the public with our conservation efforts. **Thank you, John!**

RESOURCES

Remember to check the wonderful OPMA website maintained and provided by John Balga, our **website** manager. www.essexpurplemartins.ca or 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
- ❖ **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/>

Congratulations to our member Tim Shortridge! Tim was honoured with an Essex Region Conservation Volunteer Award for “significant contributions in community tree planting, citizen science, and monitoring tree health. He is a member of the Essex County Field Naturalists’ Club and has adopted an amphibian route within the Marsh Monitoring Program.”

OPMA Board: Contact anyone below with questions:

The OPMA Board consists of 4 executive positions, and up to 5 directors-at-large.

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.caChairperson
 Vice-Chair
 Al Hamill 519-738-6932.....alhamill70@gmail.comTreasurer / Finances
 Mary Wilson..... 519-326-1710.....helenmwilson@yahoo.comSecretary / Member Records

(Board) Directors-at-Large:

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

(Non-Board) Volunteer Functions:

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

