

# *Fall ... 2021*



## **ONTARIO PURPLE MARTIN ASSOCIATION**

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

### *Message from our Chair:*

It has been a long time since we have been able to meet but rest assured that the executive along with the board are continuing to maintain a viable Ontario Purple Martin Association. We hope for better opportunities to meet in 2022 but it may not occur until we can meet outdoors safely.

I hope that you had a successful year with your Martins. Covid or no covid, the Martins will continue to return with enthusiasm to build their nests and raise their young. I have heard that many colonies had more nesting pairs than the year before. If this news holds, it looks like the Martins are continuing to thrive in our area.

We will still be collecting dues for 2022 because our organization still has expenses to cover our various commitments. Dues remain at \$20. Please see next page for payment details.

I would like to thank Gilles Breton for all his help with our association over the many years as a member and founding member. He joined the board a few years ago but has offered his resignation. I along with the rest of the board wish him well.

We are still in need of a vice-chair and we now have an opening on the board for a director-at-large. If you're interested, let me know and I can discuss the duties of these positions with you.

The board along with the three executives are committed to keeping the Ontario Purple Martin Association together so we can still promote the importance of maintaining a colony and provide support to those who want the Martin to continue to be successful in our communities. We cannot do this unless we have your support by continuing to be a member of our group. Together, we will move forward and this will definitely help with the Purple Martin's continued success in our area.

Thank you for your support this past year and hopefully we will once again be able to meet in person. On behalf of the board, I would like to wish each and every one of you a joyful holiday season.

*Paul Hamel, Chair*

## **Options for payment of 2022 member dues ----- \$20**

Per our Treasurer Al Hamill, dues can be paid by cheque, cash, or e-transfer, and receipts will be issued for all.

### **Cheques:**

Please make payable to **Ontario Purple Martin Association** or **OPMA** and mail to:

***Al Hamill, 2643 County Rd. 20, RR #1, Harrow, Ont. N0R 1G0***

**E-transfer:** To do an e-transfer from **most** financial institutions:  
(*Some institutions will charge a fee for e-transfers but others may not.*)

1. Log onto bank site.
2. Go to **Interac** transfer.
3. Set up a recipient name (this can be whatever you want) Suggestion: Ontario Purple Martin. This will stay there until you delete it.
4. Put in the email address as [opmamembership@gmail.com](mailto:opmamembership@gmail.com)
5. You will need to confirm this email address.
6. Go back to the **Interac** transfer page and:
  - o put in your bank account from which the money will be withdrawn;
  - o the amount (\$20.00)
  - o fill in the recipient name (you can put in a message for me if you want (2022 OPMA membership) but it is not necessary.
  - o Usually it then says "**SEND**" or "**NEXT**" and it is done.



Photo courtesy of member MaryAnne Adams

## **2022 MEETINGS and EVENTS**

**Start times 9:00 am unless specified otherwise.**

- ❖ Feb. ?? . . . . . Date and location to be determined.
- ❖ Apr. 23 . . . . . Orchard View Golf Course, Ruthven
- ❖ May 14 . . . . . OPMA Booth at Holiday Beach for “**World Migratory Bird Day**”
- ❖ May 21 . . . . . “Member-Host” Meeting
- ❖ Jun. 25 . . . . . “Member-Host” Meeting - Social Potluck & BBQ
- ❖ July . . . . . (date TBD) **MartinFest** - 2nd ever!
- ❖ Sep . . . . . (date TBD) OPMA Booth at Holiday Beach for “**Hawkfest**”
- ❖ Oct. 15 . . . . . Orchard View Golf Course, Ruthven

## **Point Pelee Roost update:**

Ron Delcourt and John Balga visited the roost site three times but there was no assembly of swallows as in the past. This is the 2<sup>nd</sup> year in a row that the Point Pelee Roost did not form.

## **Gourd, Nest Tray Cleaning and Milk Crates .. .. by John Balga**

End of season martin house and nest tray cleaning is an important part of managing your Purple Martin Colony. It isn't one of the more pleasant jobs but is indeed a necessary one to prepare your colony for the next season and to put your equipment into storage without worrying too much about any problems or issues with nest parasites.

Parasites including lice, fleas and other ectoparasites tend to hide in cracks and openings where they are difficult to eliminate. Even if you have taken the time to do nest replacements at regular intervals, the end of season cleanup can be a dirty chore.

At the end of the season, you should clean the gourds using a mild cleaner, like 409 all-purpose cleaner. Some landlords like to use a diluted bleach solution. Begin by removing all the old and dirty nesting material and dump it into a wheelbarrow. Be sure to wear rubber gloves, face protection, and a cap to keep insects out of your hair.

To clean gourds and nest trays set a milk tray on a table and secure the crate with some plastic tie-downs so it won't move and then put your gourd or nest tray inside. Tie that down with a bungee cord so it won't move and then use a power washer or hose to clean the gourd. This keeps the gourd or nest tray from rolling or moving around as you wash the dirt away. You can clean the inside neck and the cap entrance in a couple of minutes and hang it out to dry. Below are several photos of the design. You can move your crate in whichever position is convenient.



## Vacancy sign lit up for purple martin house at wetlands

<https://www.clintonnewsrecord.com/news/local-news/vacancy-sign-lit-up-for-purple-martin-house-at-wetlands-2>



*Member Anne Melady set up a new colony this year in the West Perth Wetlands, and although Martins haven't nested yet, they saw them checking out the site.*

*A good omen for next year !!!*

“If you build it, they will come” is not just the memorable line from movie Field Of Dreams. For Anne Melady and Rita Christie, members of the West Perth Environment, Forestry & Trails Committee, it also refers to a purple martin house they put up at the West Perth Wetlands in May.

Along with committee member Bert Vorstenbosch, Sr., the two women put up the house that faces the southeast cell at the back of the wetlands, and have seen at least one and possibly two of the birds around the house already. If it was erected earlier this spring, more could have nested there, but the committee members are still hopeful some will move in and many others will nest there next spring.

With “rooms” for 12, there is plenty of vacancy anyway, with the possibility of doubling capacity if all goes well in the future.

“There’s no place here to nest, the only place you’ll ever see them if you build houses,” Melady said.

“Insectivores are losing habitat and especially purple martins and barn swallows. They’re having a very hard time, a lot of barns being built are closed because of biosecurity which is understandable so this is why these houses are going up, to try and draw them,” added Christie. “They’re such a beautiful bird. It’s exciting to see how many will make their homes here.”

The purple martin, from the Passeriformes order, is the largest swallow in North America, according to Wikipedia. Despite their name, purple martins are not truly purple. Their dark blackish-blue feathers have an iridescent sheen caused by the refraction of incident light giving them a bright blue to navy blue or deep purple appearance.

Purple martins enjoy vast quantities of insects on the wing, and are much sought after for controlling annoying insects like mosquitoes. They love to eat mosquitoes, beetles, flies, dragonflies, and moths.

“Being close to the water like this draws bugs which is what they love,” Christie said. “I was glad to see it go up because I’ve always thought this was a perfect spot for them.”

Melady, a member of a purple martin group in Leamington, decided last year to see if the EFT committee could get some funding to buy a house and put it up here in West Perth. With purple martin houses located in Bayfield and Amulree, having one in West Perth made sense. Melady mentioned the idea to Christie, also a frequent visitor to the wetlands, and the two presented the idea to the EFT committee last fall and a decision was made to go ahead and purchase one, for an approximate cost of \$800.

Supply chain issues due to COVID-19 slowed the delivery of it, but Melady made a few calls to her Leamington friends and found one in Harrow, outside of Windsor, that was purchased and shipped here. Christie's brother put it together and with the assistance of Vorstenbosch, the trio put it up one cool, windy day in May.

The lightweight metal purple martin house works with a winch and cable and goes up and down like a flag, and the pole is cemented in the ground. Before winter, the house will come down and stored until spring.

"We couldn't have done it without Bert," Christie said.

There's been a report of one purple martin being there but Melady said she wasn't sure if it stayed.

After they got it erected someone with the Purple Martin Society suggested they put in a handful of pine needles in each of the compartments to help with their nesting.

"To have some around already is remarkable, really," Christie said.

"If we don't get them this year, I have faith for next year," added Melady



*Anne also made the local paper with her whimsical sense of humour  
– see article and pics below for a great chuckle!*

## **'Great wheat sharks' making waves in Southwestern Ontario field**

*(Mike Hensen / The London Free Press)*

[Great wheat sharks' making waves in Southwestern Ontario field | London Free Press \(lfp.com\)](https://www.lfp.com/2021/05/27/great-wheat-sharks-making-waves-in-southwestern-ontario-field/)



Anne Melady is making waves with shark fins in her wheat field near Dublin, west of Mitchell. Melady got the idea from a similar display last summer near Erin. She got to work cutting up some quarter-inch plywood and asked a friend, **"What do you think these look like?"** The response was they looked like shark fins so Melady thought: **"Well, I'm good to go."**

You can see their triangular fins peaking above a field of the golden grain on Hwy. 8 between Stratford and Goderich near the hamlet of Dublin.

As anyone who has seen the movie *Jaws* can tell you, the dorsal fin poking above the wheat, about 30 metres back from the road, is the telltale sign of a relentless predator.

The purpose of these wheat sharks — the creation of retired nurse and landowner Anne Melady, 75 — is to promote mirth. All Melady wants is for those driving by the property to get a laugh amid the pandemic doom and gloom.

**"We need some fun,"** said Melady, who got the idea from a field she saw last year near Erin sporting similar fins. **"It was so fun to see somebody make a wheat field look a little different. It just made me smile,"** she said.

Melady sharecrops the land with a local farmer, and once the decision was made to put in wheat, she went to work, building the fins out of plywood before spray-painting them black. A welder friend helped attach brackets to them, and they are fixed to the ground with half-inch electrical piping.

**"When the wind blows they do move some,"** Melady said, which adds to the illusion. The more realistic, Melady figures, the bigger the laugh.

She's heard from several people who enjoy the sight gag. One woman told Melady her three-year-old "loves to drive down the highway and look for the sharks." And her sister-in-law in Manitoba confirmed to Melady that images of the shark-infested field have been shared online at least that far away.

But Melady has never seen a shark in person, although she did once get up close with a pod of orcas. **"It's a whale of a story,"** she said.

## RESOURCES

Remember to check the wonderful OPMA website maintained and provided by John Balga, our **website** manager:  
[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.....helenwilson@yahoo.com ..... Secretary / 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  
Ron Delcourt ..... licensed bander  
Dennis Shady ..... 519-738-4411.....dennisshady@yahoo.ca

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

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



*Dennis Shady's Trios all decked out for the season!*



***A very Merry Christmas and Happy New Year to all !***

