

Spring ... 2021



ONTARIO PURPLE MARTIN ASSOCIATION

www.ontariopurplemartins.ca

www.essexpurplemartins.ca

Message from our Chair:

I hope everyone is doing well in these most difficult times. Just remember, the Martins will be returning in a few weeks and this will bring great joy to the many Martin landlords who will have their housing ready for their return.

It has been a year since our association has been able to meet. Rest assured that the Ontario Purple Martin Association is still a very viable one. We will meet again hopefully sometime this year and will be able to once again talk about our beloved bird. We are still here to support our members and to help those that are considering hosting a Martin colony. Our website is available for all to access and I am always ready to answer questions about the association and the Purple Martin. If I cannot help, I will refer you to someone who can help.

In order to help carry out our mandate and the business of the association we still need to cover all our expenses. The way we do this is to use the dues we collect from our members. We do not have any other source of income which allows us to maintain our independence as an association. Our dues for 2021 will continue to be \$20.00. It is hoped that you will continue to support the association and continue to be a member for this upcoming year. Remember that by being a member you will be on our list to receive our newsletter three times a year, as well as notification of all meetings and any other events we schedule, and any information we feel may be helpful and interesting to our members. We are only as strong as our membership and by having a strong membership we will be able to continue our work to promote the Purple Martin. If you've already renewed your membership, we thank you, and if not, you can remit your dues to Al Hamill, our treasurer, by cheque or e-transfer. *(For your convenience, see details elsewhere in this newsletter.)*

It has been decided that the OPMA Board will remain the same for 2021. Since we will not be meeting in person for a while, it was felt that trying to hold elections would be too difficult to manage. Hopefully, everything will return to normal in 2022. (See Board members and contact information on last page).

We will meet again and we will get on with the business of the association. So in the meantime be safe and enjoy the return of the Martins this spring.

Paul Hamel, Chair

From this:



Scary.

(Thank you to Leamington photographer Linda Enns for permission to share her photo.)

To this:



Nothing says spring like a bluebird!

(Thank you to OPMA members Don Bissonnette & Marie Hall for these beautiful pics.)

Welcome to our New Members

Mary Glendinning, Toronto

Brad Johnston, Bracebridge

Ontario Purple Martin Association 2020 Results ... by John Balga

2020 marked another year of collecting nest data about the number of PUMA pairs and fledglings for our Ontario Purple Martin Association (OPMA).

Landlords diligently collected results of their weekly nest checks to help them recognize and intervene with individual problems before they became a major colony problem. In year 2020, OPMA was able to collect data from 35 participants and 1032 nests which led to **4238** fledged young as of the reporting date of February 19th, 2021. The Southwest Ontario region seemed to be on par or slightly higher with last year's 2019 results of 35 participants reporting 830 nests which led to 3196 fledged young.

The U.S.A. Northeast region, according to the Purple Martin Conservation Association, fell below last year's level of nest productivity in every metric. However, they had higher nestling survival, leading to a greater number of fledges than average for the numbers produced. It appears the Ontario Purple Martin breeding range had an excellent year even though adult martins were hit by high mortality as a result of spring storms. Purple Martin stewards reported that unpredictable spring weather forced martins to seek out supplemental feeding resources. Landlords provided crickets and tossed scrambled eggs to get them through. May- July 2020 was also one of the wettest on record and many of the martins fed their young from supplemental feeding trays.

As the climate becomes more unpredictable during spring and the nesting season (extra rain, drought during incubation and hatching) many things can go wrong. Intervention is certainly desirable to guarantee a number of productive years in a row. It is through this vigilance and intervention that there may be better population growth in Ontario.

Congratulations go out to OPMA member Louis Kociuk whose family colonies in Port Rowan and Long Point produced 940 fledglings from 230 nesting cavities.

HOW TO REPORT A BIRD BAND

If you find a banded bird, please report it! You can do so online at reportband.gov or by leaving a message at **1-800-327-BAND (2263)** Reports help with the collection of data regarding bird movements, longevity, etc., AND, it also is interesting to find out where your Martin was banded as a nestling and raised to fledge successfully! For details:

<https://www.canada.ca/en/environment-climate-change/services/bird-banding/how-to-report.html>

THINGS WE CAN DO TO HELP THEM SUCCEED ... by Mary Wilson

The spring homecoming of our Martins can pose some difficulties with poor weather. Here's a couple of ways we can help them:

“Pre-nest”: This term is used when some sort of nesting material is added to the cavities before the martins arrive. The importance of this is not that you are helping them build a nest (*they sure don't need us!* ☺), but rather that it keeps the birds off the cold hard plastic or metal surfaces which would really sap their strength quickly. It helps them conserve their energy for finding food in our (oftentimes) marginal spring weather, rather than using their energy to try to keep warm.

Wooden housing is naturally better insulated than metal or plastic, but even it can be made more comfortable with a generous handful or two of soft pine needles, oak leaves, or cut up straw.

In aluminum housing such as Trio castles, some landlords hook up a low wattage light bulb, put it into a sealed off lower compartment, and the heat radiates throughout the house and really helps the birds conserve their energy.

Supplemental Feeding: As we saw in Texas just several weeks ago, Martin killing cold snaps can reach even the deep south. (*More to come on the topic of feeding in a separate email when our birds start to return.*) Many landlords use **a platform, or feeder trays**, to offer not only food, but **grit**.

Offering Grit:

If you see birds on the side of roads, or in driveways, they probably are searching for grit. Grit, as well as food, can be offered on a feeding platform or tray, or on the ground. (For their safety, on the ground offerings should be only in **VERY OPEN SPACES.**)

Here are Martins collecting egg shells from a driveway (*photo from the PMCA forum*).



Preparing Egg shells:

Here's how I do mine: Rinse eggshells to remove the gooey stuff, and peel out as much of the papery membrane as you can. This only takes a moment, and it prevents having a stuck-together-mess later when you crush them. Put the halves of egg shells on a microwavable plate, and let them air dry. Then microwave on HI for a minute – removes any potentially harmful bacteria. When cool, use your fingers to crush into pieces about the size of a pencil eraser. Some folks freeze them. I never have, and they seem to keep indefinitely in a closed container kept at room temperature.



Birds use many things for grit, which is needed by both adults and nestlings to digest their food. Martins pick up bits of gravel, snail shell, etc., and these you will sometimes find in the nest. The natural diet of a martin provides plenty of protein but no calcium, which is thought to be needed for egg production. Providing crushed egg shells (or oyster shells), gives us another opportunity to view the activities of the colony, and reduces the potential and danger of birds landing on roadways to find grit.

If you have a raised feeder tray, this is where you can place your egg shells. If not, then you can spread it somewhere in your yard or even driveway, roof of a shed / garage, etc. – keeping in mind the need for openness for their safety from hawks, cats, etc. Other birds may also come for the eggshells, including barn swallows. You can put eggshells out in the winter, too - according to a study done by Cornell Lab of Ornithology, about 60 species of birds will consume them for the grit and calcium they contain.

Platforms and Feeding Trays There are many types - commercial and DIY - and some “already there”:



This is from a PMCA forum discussion where a couple found that the “**best feeding tray ever**” turned out to be their boat. Apparently seagulls don’t maneuver well around the various lines and rigging on a boat, so now these landlords just dump their food offerings on the boat and the Martins are not hassled anymore.
<https://www.purplemartin.org/forum/viewtopic.php?t=12894>

A roof low enough to deposit food for them works well. In cold weather, they often go to a roof to absorb some heat from the shingles, so if you see that happening, it may be a good place to try to offer food.

A member of our group feeds her birds on the railing of their elevated deck. They have a great view and the birds let them know they’re hungry by congregating on the railings.





Duncraft.com Purple Martin Feeder & Pole



Northern Skys (Bob Buskas) .. northern skys.ca

Covered feeders keep the offerings dry, and also keep out larger birds. The feeder on the right is described as a “robin-proof” feeder tray, with the roof apparently low enough that robins can’t get in. (Yes, robins love egg.) And the clear roof would allow the Martins to keep an eye out for hawks.



From the FAQ section on Chuck’s Purple Martin Page - <http://www.chuckspurplemartinpage.com/>

They don’t need to be fancy. Some trays are on a fixed high pole and the landlord uses an extension pole with a cup on the end to refill the tray. Some people have made their trays to hold removable interior trays, for easier cleaning and refilling.



Bed & Breakfast Feeder Tray

We have this feeding tray at Erie Shores Golf Course, and for the past several years a single egg-loving seagull has hung around. It caused real trouble last year.

The “boat” post above gives me something to think about. Perhaps some lines to prevent landing and sitting, while still giving the Martins good flyways.

Ideas. anyone?

PMCA’s Education / DIY <https://www.purplemartin.org/education/83/diy-plans/>

This link takes you to DIY plans for a variety of things: our own John Balga’s Taverner house plans; an owl guard for a gourd rack, and a Feeding platform that is designed to hold removable trays for easy cleaning and filling, ... and more.

E-transfer payment of membership dues: (Receipts will be issued.)

To do an e-transfer from **most** financial institutions: (Some will charge a fee 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
5. You will need to confirm this email address.
6. Go back to the **Interac** transfer page and:
 - put in your bank account from which the money will be withdrawn;
 - the amount (\$20.00)
 - fill in the recipient name (you can put in a message for me if you want (2021 OPMA membership) but its not necessary.
 - Usually it then says "**SEND**" or "**NEXT**" and it is done.

Cheques (payable to *Ontario Purple Martin Association* or *OPMA*) can be mailed to: Al Hamill, 2643 County Rd 20, RR #1, Harrow, Ont. N0R 1G0

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.**

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|----------------------------|--|
| ➤ 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.

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/>

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

***Our Martins are coming to bring us some cheer;
Let's hope we and our birds have a wonderful year!***