



# OPMA Chatter

December, 2022

#1

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

## *Hello fellow OPMA members!*

This is the first edition of the [OPMA Chatter](#) which we hope will be the start of a new tradition in our correspondence with you.

Our association had its beginnings in 2001 when a small group of like-minded individuals started to meet in Gilles Breton's garage to bring their ideas and discuss their relationship with the Purple Martin. Soon they were meeting on a regular basis and thus the Essex Purple Martin Association was born. It was made up of 36 local members with Gilles Breton as President, John Balga as vice president, Judy Breton as treasurer, and Mary Wilson as secretary.

Twenty-two years later, we continue to meet but now as the Ontario Purple Martin Association. The name change took place in 2012 when we realized that our membership had spread out into other Ontario communities mainly because of the creation of our website. John Balga developed it and continues to improve and maintain it. Now we have 72 members directed by a board consisting of 7 directors-at-large, as well as Paul Hamel as Chairperson, Mary Wilson as secretary and Al Hamill as treasurer.

Many might ask why we have an association devoted to the Purple Martin. The answer, or answers, can be found in our list of objectives that we formulated many years ago. I am going to take a look at some of these in order to answer the question. I might add that it is easier to achieve these objectives if we do it under the banner of OPMA rather than try to achieve the same objective individually.

The first objective is to promote enthusiasm and appreciation of Purple Martins in the local community and throughout Ontario. We have achieved this through our local members' meetings and by participating in the Festival of Hawks, the Leamington Home and Garden Show and by hosting our own Martin Festival. Many of our members have also made presentations to other organizations. We also maintain a website that reaches out to the world with information about our group and the Purple Martin. It would be quite difficult for one person to achieve this but as a group we can make a very effective case for the Martin.

A second objective is to encourage the installation and management of Purple Martin housing with the aim of increasing nesting accommodations and successful breeding of Purple Martins throughout their nesting range in Ontario. As many of you know, the Purple Martin nests only in housing provided by landlords east of the Rockies. It has taken hundreds of years for them to change from nesting in a natural habitat to one provided by humans. If for some reason we decide not to provide this housing, the Martin population would quickly be reduced because they would have nowhere to have their young. Could they transition back to nesting in natural habitat quick enough to prevent them from becoming extinct? Remember it has taken hundreds of years for them to get used to using our housing so you probably can speculate on what the outcome would be. Our association will continue to provide information and help to prevent this from happening.

A third objective is to assist new and existing purple martin landlords by providing advice, guidance and education to improve success of their sites. A successful site means a successful fledging experience. OPMA has many members who have been involved with the Purple Martin for years and can offer expert advice on how to have a successful colony. We also have a lending library which has great information on how to manage your site. It is free for members and any item can be signed out to be used to improve their colony. We also have information pamphlets from various organizations that we provide to new members to get them started. By having an association like ours, we are able to make sure that anyone who wants to have a colony can have a successful one.

A fourth objective is to monitor trends from year to year by surveying the number of fledged young from Purple Martin houses monitored and reported by our association members. This is an extremely important role that we play in keeping the statistics on how well the Martin is doing from year to year. This information is passed on to Nature Canada and can be used to see if the Martin population is increasing, decreasing or maintaining its numbers in the recording areas. This would not happen if it were left up to each individual to report their numbers. It is because of our association asking members and non-members for this information that we are able to gather the required statistics about your colony. They are recorded and kept for future reference which allows us to compare many years of statistics to see how the Martin is doing.

You can easily see that having an organization like ours greatly benefits the continued success of the Martin. Hopefully, we can continue on for many more years to bring the joy of being a landlord to all those that would like to get involved with this very beautiful and interesting bird.

Finally, I would like to take this opportunity on behalf of our board to wish each and every one of you a joyous and peaceful holiday season. 2023 will soon be upon us and it won't be long before reports start coming in about the Purple Martin moving north again.

*Paul Hamel, Chairperson, OPMA*

