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Welcome to our new members!

*Shawn Saulnier, Stoney Creek
Dino Gerardi, South Woodlee
Jim & Trish Roebuck, Barrie
John Roland, Harrow*

May 20th Meeting and “Martin Night”

Our members Fern & Linda Bellavance hosted this meeting as well as Martin Night (*but because we combined two closely scheduled events, it ended up being a Martin “Afternoon” instead*) at their home in Harrow. The topic of the “Martin Afternoon” was **Nest Checks**.

Twenty-six members came out to enjoy fellowship and see Fern & Linda’s wonderful backyard, full of our favourite birds! Rain was in the forecast, but although it didn’t occur, we all were comfortable sitting inside Fern’s spacious and bright workshop for our meeting. Coffee, cake and muffins were provided for us to enjoy as we listened to the conversations that followed.

We began with our traditional “go-around” which is always informative and generates interesting discussions.

Our chairperson Paul Hamel kicked it off by asking how everyone’s colony had fared through the rough weather in late April and early May.

Here are some of the specific things which came up:

- Many people reported losses during the bad weather. A few reported that more males perished than females, likely because the males are the first to come back in higher numbers.
- Someone asked about a heat source. Re-usable hand warmers were discussed, as well as putting a trouble light with a 40 watt bulb inside an aluminum house. Any additional warmth will be a help for Martins that are weakened after a prolonged period of poor/no-feed conditions.
- The importance of adding some nesting material in aluminum houses or plastic gourds was emphasized, as Martins sitting on cold surfaces will lose body heat and strength more quickly.
- It was stressed that to offset the sadness of losing many Martins, landlords who provide supplemental food can take some comfort in having helped their colony survive, because any colonies that weren't fed in the prolonged period of bad weather we experienced would certainly have perished.

Every year the OPMA conducts a **draw for a paid membership to the PMCA**. The winner enjoys a year of membership with the Purple Martin Conservation Association, and as a member, would receive discounts on any purchases they may make, as well as getting the superb PMCA Update magazine 4 times per year. This draw was done at this meeting, and the winners were:

Rolf & Sharon Sax - Congratulations!

Martin Night Afternoon Event: Nest Checks:

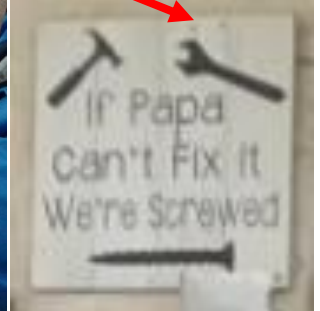
The meeting ended, but after a short break, everyone headed out to the Martin Colony in the backyard for Fern's show-and-tell of nest checking and record keeping.

We all enjoyed watching the wonderful bird activity in Linda & Fern's back yard! Martins and Tree Swallows were everywhere!

Fern lowered one of his units and explained the importance of record keeping in a Martin colony:

- Open compartments to count eggs/young. *(If this is done every 5 days during egg laying, you will have a fairly precise date of when fledging will occur – in the southwestern Ontario neck-of-the-woods, its 29 days on average after hatching!)*
- How and why to change a nest: If nest is wet, or extremely buggy/dirty, remove the contents (eggs/young) carefully and then put new material such as pine straw in before replacing the contents. *(This will not deter the parent birds from returning!)*
- If you have recorded each compartment, it is quick to add everything up, and then compare from week to week to monitor gains / losses.

Here are some pics from the day!



Fern opening up one of his three T-14's.



One of Fern's many creative and whimsical items that are throughout the backyard.

They have 15 tree swallow houses, currently with 12 resident pairs





This is Fern's feeding tray.
It has a "floor" of hardware cloth.

And for the icing on the cake!

"We also were blessed with a pair of Cliff Swallows nesting at our home A rare bird in this area."



Fern's new Cliff Swallow colony has grown from 1 pair to 8! Most are on the house, but 1 chose the shop building.

Some have taken advantage of a special concave box, made just for cliff or barn swallows, that Fern has provided.

← Update from Fern on July

