



www.ontariopurpleMartins.ca

Welcome to our new member!

Michael Conway, Normandale

Do humans affect migration by offering food ?

Here's an article which answers a variety of migration questions. The 2nd question, although not mentioning Martins specifically, discusses whether our feeding activities affect the migratory habits of birds.

<https://www.audubon.org/news/ask-kenn-kaufman-will-my-feeder-keep-birds-migrating>

Are Purple Martins returning earlier? Records for Ontario in the PMCA's Scout Map begin in 2004. Here's 20 years of dates and places.

2004:	04-03	Port Rowan	2014:	03-28	Woodslee
2005:	03-25	Atwood	2015:	04-01	Charing Cross
2006:	04-01	Kingsville	2016:	03-17	Aylmer
2007:	03-30	Kingsville	2017:	03-25	Pelee Island
2008:	04-02	Woodslee	2018:	04-05	Leamington
2009:	04-01	Elmer	2019:	03-28	Grimsby
2010:	04-02	Union	2020:	03-26	Blenheim
2011:	04-04	Kingsville	2021:	03-30	Blenheim
2012:	03-29	Forest	2022:	03-25	Holiday Beach
2013:	04-02	Harrow	2023:	03-30	Colchester

2016 was notably early, with an additional 10 reports of March returns that year!
 Excluding the 2016 data, over 20 years the arrival times span 12 days: Mar. 25 → Apr. 5.

Why When and How To offer Supplemental Food

WHY? For those who don't live in a "Martin-rich" area, it may have taken many years to attract them, and it can take only one bad spring to lose them. As they are a species in decline, the wait might be long again if that should happen.

It is a terrible experience to lose them. May 2002 was when many in the OPMA experienced the total loss of all of our ASY birds (After Second Year) which are the first wave to return in the spring. And the following year many of us set to work teaching our birds the skill which would help them to survive.

It is a wonderful experience to train them! For a landlord, there's great satisfaction knowing you can help your Martins. You may not save every one, but you won't lose every one either. And once they've learned, they remember. And they learn how to "tell" you that need help. This happens in various ways – they might sit on a wire close to your house. They will line up on a feeding tray if you have one. Or, if you walk around your colony they might fly around you or close to you.

Supplemental feeding is now so common that it could be considered another normal activity in the management of Martins (just like pre-nesting, weekly nest checks, and nest changes for instance). But it is also a personal decision that everyone has the right to make for themselves, and the aim of providing this type of information to our members is simply to assist anyone who may want to give supplemental feeding a try.

WHEN? Martins can survive intermittent days of no-feed condition, but after about 3-4 consecutive days of no food, they are weakened to the point of not being able to fly even if the weather, and insect availability, improves.

This is especially true of the earliest returning birds, since they may have flown long distances through very marginal conditions to get home, and are therefore already in a somewhat weakened state. Martins that sit listlessly, are mostly silent, and have drooping wings, are in distress.

Here is a guide to help us when figuring out if our Martins are able to find enough natural food.

50 degrees: **sunny** **no wind** = **bugs**
50 degrees: **overcast / rain** **strong wind** = **few or NO bugs**

Although 50 degrees is the often-stated threshold for flying insects, there are factors other than temperature that affect the natural food source. Strong winds, persistent rain, and consecutive overcast / cold days can limit the bugs available, even if the temperature gets into the 50's or higher.

Non-stop foraging for a small insect supply can expend as much energy as is gained.

HOW? A wealth of information is available on the OPMA website, PMCA, and YouTube about the “how” of teaching Martins to accept food.

Even if yours aren’t trained, they might have learned the skill already!

Many landlords throughout the US have reported that their numbers swell and then decrease as the migration goes forward in the spring. These landlords suspect that they are feeding birds that stay for a bit and then continue northward. And several years ago, one of our members confirmed this: she had not trained her birds, but in a particularly bad spring, wanted to try feeding them, and they took her offerings right away. So, it doesn’t hurt to try, either by flipping, putting some food on a feeding platform if you have one, or even putting some food on porches or just inside compartments. We know that Martins learn from watching other Martins, and your birds might have learned this along the migration route!

All previous **newsletters / Chatters** are available on the **OPMA website**, under the **More** tab.
www.ontariopurpleMartins.ca

The following are the ones which include major articles on **feeding** and/or related topics such as **rehabilitation**, or **weather conditions** that precipitated losses.

Summer, 2020
Summer, 2017

December, 2014
January, 2014

April, 2011
January, 2010



See you soon!