



ONTARIO PURPLE MARTIN ASSOCIATION ---- (Founded in 2000)
www.ontariopurplemartins.ca

Welcome to our new members !

*Patricia & Peter McManus, Goderich
Bert & Marietta Mulder, Dunnville
Suellen & Lyndon Satchell
Chuck & Isobel Hathaway
David & Yvonne Hernandez, Harrow
Bruce Jacques*

April 24th Meeting at Orchard View Golf Course, Ruthven:

Thirty-nine members came for our 2nd meeting of the year. Here's a summary of what went on:

- **Lending Library:** Fern Bellavance is stepping down from many years of taking care of our lending library. Our Chairperson Paul thanked Fern for his dedication to this task, and also expressed thanks to Ken & Christine Winter who have volunteered to take it over. The lending library has become an important resource for our members.
- Lyle Papps, OPMA's "**natural gourd**" expert, brought a variety of samples of his creativity in converting natural gourds to homes for purple martins. He also had a large photo display on view.

- Our Board vacancy is now filled – Mike Rajki has volunteered to join as member of the OPMA Board. Thank you Mike!
- Treasurer Al Hamill gave a finance update, and thanked members Tiffanie Rajki & Marie Hall for doing the necessary audits.

Our “**Go-around**” is always interesting. Many have martins back by this time. Here are some of the specific topics that came up for discussion:

- Question: How to entice martins to investigate new gourds / housing?
Suggestions: Smear mud around and inside entrances to make the unit look “used”. Try a small mirror inside the cavity.
- Someone used hand warmers for the 1st time this year – they retained heat for 18 hours.
- A member experienced “wing entrapment” in a Conley style SREH. She lost the male but freed the female trapped behind him. Professor GOOGLE was immediately called upon by our attendees, and the various “wing entrapment” corrections that many suppliers have come up with were discussed. In the opinion of some of our most experienced landlords, Chirpy Nest seemed to have come up with the best solution, as their “fix” will fit on every style of Starling Resistant Entry door.
- Chirpy Nest housing is considered by many to be the leading edge for PM housing design going forward.
- The importance of dawn song and pine needles in the spring was emphasized:

Dawn Song is a recorded purple martin vocalization that is available on CD. (Our lending library has several; it can also be ordered from PMCA – Purple Martin Conservation Association). It is helpful to draw martins down to check out housing.

Pine Needles are important in spring to keep martins insulated from the coldness of being directly on the floor, particular in metal and plastic units.

- We heard about the “mother lode” of pine needles! Some OPMA members had been to a large Christmas tree farm, and were welcome to bag up as many pine needles as they wanted! Apparently the heavy layer of pine needles at such a farm can be a fire hazard which the farm has to deal with, so they were happy to give them away.

It has become a tradition to have a **supplemental feeding** session at the close of our April meeting, as there always are many martins back home by then at the Orchard View colony. Paul invited anyone interested to gather at the PM Gourd Rack, where “cricket flinging” was demonstrated and anyone who wanted to give it a try was able to do so. The martins weren’t too hungry this year, but several of them humoured us by flying after our crickets.

May 24th Meeting at Cove Landing Restaurant, Lighthouse Cove

This meeting venue was new to us, and proved to be an excellent recommendation. The staff was extremely welcoming and opened early to accommodate our meeting, after which we enjoyed a lunch chosen from several specials that were put together for our group.

A beautiful setting on the water, delicious food and great service, all added up to a very enjoyable experience!

Forty-eight people attended. Our member Ken Winter who is from the area had arranged for Councilor **Larissa Vogler** and Mayor **Tracey Bailey** to attend our meeting. Councilor Vogler gave a fascinating talk about the storied history of the Lighthouse Cove area. She has given permission to share it here for all of our members to enjoy:

History of Lighthouse Cove

The Thames River drains over 5800 square kms and originally served as a vital trading route for First Nations. The mouth of the Thames would later play an important role in the War of 1812, the Underground Railroad, and Prohibition.

The origins of the community of Lighthouse Cove began over 200 years ago with the construction of the Thames River Lighthouse, one of the oldest and most important lighthouses in Ontario. After the original “lighthouse” (2 lanterns and a wooden structure from 1754) was destroyed by fire during the war, a 30ft stone tower was built. A brick extension was added after confederation, bringing the Lighthouse to its current height of 53 feet. A pioneer family named Cartier settled at the mouth of the Thames River in the early 1800’s and the Cartier family looked after the lighthouse for about 130 years until William “Dick” Cartier died in 1950.

The Lower Thames Valley Conservation Authority obtained the lighthouse in 1973 and has since moved the structure and rebuilt it stone by stone. Seasonal cottages first started to appear in the 1800s with hunting and fishing attracting

enthusiasts to the area. As a result of the region's growing popularity, the Lighthouse Inn (1947) and Radlin's Marina (1964) were established.

In 1966 "Lighthouse Cove Development Ltd." began work on the series of canals that today make up the most distinctive characteristic of our community. Permanent residences soon followed.

With growth came the development of Luken Marina (1970), Mariner's Restaurant (1980), and the Thames River Yacht Club (1981) as well as the formation of the Lighthouse Cove and District Lions Club (1983). Within the decade Cove Marina, Dockside Restaurant (now Cove's Landing) and Lighthouse Variety were built.

In 1999 Lighthouse Cove became part of the Municipality of Lakeshore and today boasts a population of over 500 full time residents.

Native species in the LHC area:

Saint Clair National Wildlife Area (NWA) is an extensive marsh habitat that spreads from Mitchell's Bay to the mouth of the Thames River, along the southeast shore of Lake Saint Clair.

Originally established in 1978, the NWA is dominated by wetland habitat, with remnant patches of tall-grass prairie. Saint Clair NWA is listed as a Ramsar wetland, an International Butterfly Reserve, and part of the Eastern Lake St. Clair Important Bird Area (IBA).

Lake St. Clair and adjacent marshes are the most important staging area for waterfowl in Ontario, south of James Bay. The wetlands consist mainly of cattail marsh encircled by constructed dykes that mimic natural water-level changes. This area is located at the transition between two major migratory routes: the Atlantic and Mississippi flyways.

Every year during migration, hundreds of thousands of waterfowl, including the tundra swan, pass through this NWA. Puddle ducks, geese and diving ducks also use this habitat as a staging area every year during migration. This area provides important habitat for both common and rare marsh birds, reptiles, amphibians, mammals and rare prairie plants.

The St. Clair NWA provides habitat to 20 species at risk (endangered, threatened, and special concern), ranging from birds, mammals, fish, insects, reptiles and plants. Some examples of species at risk include:

American Badger
Bald Eagle
Common Nighthawk
Hooded Warbler
Least Bittern

Short-eared owl
Eastern fox snake
Northern map turtle
Monarch

Ontario is home to a diverse array of native species - estimates suggest that Ontario has over 30,000 species, including a variety of fish, wildlife, plants, and insects. This makes it one of the most species-rich regions in Canada. The Wild Species 2020 report lists a total of 25,776 insect species.

Did you know?

- Native pollinators will choose native plants 90% of the time.
- 113 bee species will ONLY interact with native plants
- 90% of caterpillars are host plant dependent
- Native oak supports 450 species VS English oak only 4 (Oak is a keystone species which has a disproportionate influence on ecosystems' life supporting matrix)

A single nest of songbirds will consume over 9000 caterpillars/insects before they fledge, so if you care about birds, you have to care about the insect population, and the BEST way to protect that population is through the planting of native species.

Just a 30% introduction of alien plants starts to negatively impact insects and thus birds.

And that is food for thought. Thank you, Councilor Vogler.

The "**Go-around**":

- PM egg production seems to be widely different from colony to colony. Many reported no eggs as of their most recent nest check. Some colonies seem far more advanced.
- Many of our members also host Tree Swallows and Bluebirds. Karen Padbury has an Eastern Screech Owl in a nest box. The Poisson's have a pair of wood ducks.
- Cliff Swallows: Jacques & Linda Barrette in Tilbury have a long established colony that now is about 150 nests. Carol Taves also has them, and Fern did as in Harrow.
- Ken Winter is taking care of their home colony (15 pairs), as well as the Cove Landing housing (8 pairs currently) and the new colony at the Lion's Club location.
- Ron Delcourt takes care of his own colony, plus HBMO, ERCA, and BIG CREEK.
- Al reported that even with the poor weather, his birds didn't seem to need any of the help he offered. They were absent all day, presumably finding some food, and returning at dusk.

- John mentioned the “Blink” camera, installed in a compartment, which gave him a “birds-eye” view of a purple martin as she laid her 6th egg.
- Moving housing to a new location in the yard: This was recommended by Fern to someone who said they see martins checking out their housing but they never stay. A number of members shared that they too had been given this advice at some point through the years, and as soon as they moved their housing to a different spot on their property, they ended up with martins.
- Passive Sparrow Control: Dennis Shady mentioned the importance of this. Not allowing HOSP to breed can lower their numbers dramatically in your yard and neighbourhood.
- Mud dams in nests seem to be a little more common this spring, as noted by several members. Maybe their preference is to always build a mud damn, but sometimes it may be difficult to find a good source of mud.
- Don’t move a Martin nest: Someone presented the idea of moving a martin nest and/or eggs and young to another location to establish a colony. Several responses were:

It is technically illegal. It won’t work. Nest will be abandoned; babies would die.

Within their colony, it is thought that martins know which particular gourd or compartment is theirs (out of the multiples on a rack or house) mostly by the position it occupies in space. (For that reason it is important to be able to put a house/rack back into the correct orientation if it were to swivel because of a broken cable for instance.) If a gourd were moved to a different location on that rack, the adult birds would return to the original location. They have no other way to locate their young.

Al Hamill asked Mayor Bailey to draw a name for the annual **PMCA membership** (purchased by the OPMA for the winner), who receives four annual issues of the stunning PM Update magazine, as well as a member discount for anything at the PMCA online store.

Congratulations to our winner: **James Roebuck of Barrie !!!!**

Paul thanked everyone for coming. He specifically expressed OPMA’s appreciation for the support and welcome of the Cove Landing Restaurant, the support of both the Mayor and Councilor, and for the wonderful presentation given by Ms. Vogler.

MARTIN FEST – JULY 12TH

With our Martin Fest date coming up quickly, here's an update:

A 3rd house has been installed by Al Hamill, Ron Delcourt, Fern Bellavance, and Dennis Shady at the Colchester Heritage site. In less than 5 minutes of cranking it up, there were martins checking it out! (Photos: courtesy of Al.)



At both our April and May meetings, our **Martin Fest flyers** were available in three sizes for members to pick up and post or leave within their own communities. We will also ask all of our OPMA members to help us advertise by sharing our flyer via social media.

Other **advertising**, such as online and printed, has been ongoing for several months.

To-date:

We have 12 **VENDOR BOOTHS** confirmed.

We have five **SPEAKERS** scheduled who will be presenting information on the topics of:

- Butterflies and Moths
- Bat Box Research
- Great Lakes Water Quality
- Essex County's Natural Environment
- Falconry and Environmental Bird Abatement.

Seven nature affiliated organizations are joining us with an “**INFORMATION SHARING BOOTH**”:

- Canada South Land Trust
- RAEON (Real-Time Aquatic Ecosystem Observation Network)
- Jack Miner Sanctuary
- Essex County’s Natural Environment
- PIBO (Peelee Island Bird Observatory)
- Essex County Field Naturalists
- HBMO (Holiday Beach Migration Observatory)

Two Purple Martin **BANDING SESSIONS** are scheduled.

At our **OPMA tables**, we will have:

- our “Welcome Desk” volunteers, along with a Guest Book for signing
- our voluntary donation box (All donations go to Hospice)
- our volunteer/s to sign up New Members
- volunteers to answer questions and present information on PM topics, such as:
 - Identification: PMs....TS....Chimney Swifts
 - Housing – what, when, where
 - Challenges – predators, competitors, weather
 - Nest Checks – Record Keeping – Maintenance
 - Natural Gourds – Lyle Papps will share his expertise

The above will be supported by excellent educational booklets provided to us by the PMCA.

Thank you to everyone who has contributed to and volunteered for this effort to-date. When Martin Fest 2025 is behind us, there will be many more to thank, who played a part in bringing it to completion. But for now, we express our great appreciation for every single contribution of time and effort that has gotten us this far!

