



OPMA Chatter

July, 2026

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ONTARIO PURPLE MARTIN ASSOCIATION ---- (Founded in 2000)

www.ontariopurplemartins.ca

<https://www.facebook.com/groups/ontariopurplemartinassociation>

Welcome to our new members !

John Huschilt....Tecumseh
Maggie & Roger Shires....Stratford
Paul Juhlke....Beamsville
Patti Neville....Leamington
Angela Goodwin....Harrow
Robert Goulet....Belle River
Ray Lachance...South Woodlee

Mystery Member ! We are looking for the gentleman who went to the home of our Treasurer in Harrow in the early days of June to pay his membership.

Somehow we missed getting your name. 😞

Please contact Al and let him know who you are! 519-738-6932 alhamill70@gmail.com

April 25th Meeting at Orchard View Golf Course

Our Chair **Paul Hamel** welcomed everyone and opened the meeting.

GO-AROUND:

Many members reported having Martins back, and many members host Tree Swallows as well. Several are using mealworms this year for any supplemental feeding needed.

Sometimes it can be a long wait to get Martins to stay. *Audrey Festeryga* is still waiting, and this is the 8th year of waiting for *Tim Shortridge*. But Tim reports that things may be looking up for him, as his neighbor has moved on and it is quite likely that some trees may be coming down. *Norm Long* has tried for 5 long ☺ years to attract them.

Cy Poisson reported no Martins this year, and sported a bad bruise on his arm, a result of his house crashing down when the cable broke. This opened a discussion about the importance of having a stop/guard on the pole to prevent injury in case this happens.

Reports were made from a number of our **OPMA satellite colonies**:

- Holiday Beach - approximately 4 dozen.
- Big Creek - 1 pair.
- North Side Park (new gourd rack installation in Tilbury) - no martins to date.
- Harrow Feed Store - lots of birds have returned.
- Colchester Schoolhouse site - no martins present as of about a week ago.
- Lion's Club site, Tilbury - there was concern that an Osprey nesting nearby might be detrimental to the martin housing here. This led to many comments that Osprey eat only fish and they wouldn't be a problem for the martins - in fact, it was commented that it would be a good thing as the Osprey would keep other predatory birds from coming into the area.

JOHN BALGA brought a number of items and ideas to share with our members, and

- demonstrated a method of saving gourd connections to the aluminum arms where damage had occurred to the gourd;
- showed a wooden pre-nest item for use in gourds, which could be installed prior to the pine straw to help start a nest;
- demonstrated his **BLINK camera** set-up and showed how to install one on the gourd cap. (See Chatter #12 on the **OPMA website** - under **MORE** ↓ - to see a previous article by John giving detailed instructions on this topic, along with photos.)

John mentioned that aluminum doors for the **ERVA** (formerly Trio) housing are no longer being manufactured. They are getting scarce, so anyone who needs them should pick them up while they can still be found.

Al Hamill added that **ERVA** products aren't readily available anymore, and will no longer be carried by the Harrow Feed Store. They will now focus on getting PM inventory mainly from **Troyer**.

Grape Jelly was collected by members who had placed orders.

At the end of our meeting, a draw was done for the giveaway of 2 beautiful Troyer calendars, featuring Purple Martins, which were donated by the Harrow Feed Store. Winners were **Norm Long** and **Carol Taves**.

Also, 5 gourds were brought by member **Mike Beale**, who offered them free to anyone who could put them to use. Much appreciated!



May 23rd Meeting at Dock & Vine Restaurant, Tilbury

On a cool, windy and rainy day, we met at the Dock & Vine Restaurant (formerly Lighthouse Cove).

Our **Vice-Chair, Ken Winter**, led the meeting. The Purple Martin Dawn-Song was playing on one of the screens in the restaurant, and it was a nice background sight and sound as people gathered and chatted before the meeting began.

Ken expressed appreciation to the new management of the restaurant for their welcome to our group, and for the various menu options and specials they provided for us. It was a very pleasant venue for our meeting.

Councillor Larissa Vogler, who represents the region, gave a short but very informative talk about her own personal interest in environmental issues and conservation of natural species.

She discussed a recent change by the Ontario government which was the consolidation of the provinces' **36** conservation authorities into **9** regional authorities, overseen by the OPCA (Ontario Provincial Conservation Agency).

Goals are to streamline processes, reduce administrative duplication, and improve watershed management and flood resilience.

As this will likely result in budget and other cuts that may have a negative effect, and as the current government has been known to pivot on some issues, she stressed that we the public can effect changes. Write to our MPPs re the concerns about amalgamation of conservation areas.

Larissa also is a volunteer foster for **Wings** - a wildlife rescue in Amherstburg. She told us several fascinating stories from her personal experiences, and emphasized that this is another way in which everyone can help our native species survive.

- The annual **PMCA draw** was done by Christina Winter, and the winner is **Sharon Johnson**.

Sharon will receive a 1 year membership to the Purple Martin Conservation Association, courtesy of the OPMA. With this, she will be sent 4 issues of their beautiful PM Update magazine.

- Ken mentioned **future events** that the OPMA has committed to attending:
 - July 18 (10-3) - OPMA Booth at Colchester Market (Schoolhouse Site).
 - Sept. 19-20 - OPMA Booth at Holiday Beach Migration of Hawks.

The “Go-Around”

Ken reported 16 pairs at their home colony, in an 18-unit gourd rack. The marina house is in its 3rd year. There are 2 pairs so far this year at the Lion’s Club colony (2 pairs last year). The ospreys that had been seen earlier at the Lion’s Club site, and which caused some concern for the martins, have moved on.

Nancy Robson: 3 Gourd racks (28 units total), are mostly fully occupied.

Carol & Lyn Quick: Their T14, 4 gourds, and older house are mostly full.

Mary Wilson: No numbers to report yet. There are lots of martins around and on the gourd racks. Found a few dead, which didn’t seem to have starved (did not have a sharp keel). Sometimes they just die of old age / exhaustion after the spring migration.

Mike & Tiffanie Rajki: No report, as they have no martins at their new location.

Karen Padbury: 16 gourds and 12 Chirpy Nests. (Some PM landlords believe the Chirpy Nest is the future for Martins with its many positive features.) <https://www.peacefulvalleypurplemartins.com/>

Audrey Festeryga, after waiting many years, has her first ever Martin pair settling in!

Norm Long: This is his 5th year of trying to get Martins. On Mother’s Day, 2 martins arrived !

Dan Gahwiler: Two units of 12 plus 8 gourds.

Carol & Ernie Taves: 3 Trios, 2 Castles, and a mini castle. 21 nests - no eggs yet.

Rudy & Marianne: 1 Trio Castle, fully occupied.

Linda & Jacques: They waited 18 years to get martins, and now they have a big colony, well established for many years now. They fed 8,000 crickets this year, plus eggs. They also have lots of cliff swallows which have for decades built their mud nests under the eaves of their outbuilding.

Patti Neville: new member who joined at our April meeting, lives in Leamington and feels that her yard has too many trees to attract martins. She loves birds and misses the variety of birds in her old home (Owen Sound area). Patti is excited to learn about Purple Martins.

Henry Wolting: 293 units (75-80 pairs) at his home colony, and 2 sub-adults spotted. Rondeau Park installation is full. 175 pairs collectively. 70-75 pairs of tree swallows. Cliff swallows on their porch. Fed 350 eggs this spring.

Ron Delcourt: Holiday Beach is full with 72 pairs. ERCA - 15 pairs. Big Creek - 15 pairs. Home - 32 pairs.

Dennis Shady: downsized from 72 units to 36. He estimates about 80% occupancy so far.

Fern Bellavance: Is taking care of the new installation at North Side Park, Tilbury, along with Ken: 16 gourds, one 12-room castle, and one 6-room Trio Grandpa. Fern reports 1 pair building plus another pair around.

Marieanne Knapp: Home colony has 21 nests, 8 of which have a total of 16 eggs. She has a gourd hanging on a Shepherd's Hook (several other members have had Martins nest in them). She also has 1 pair of bluebirds nesting.

Al Hamill: Estimates about 50 pairs at his 98-unit home site. The Feed Store housing is full. The Colchester Schoolhouse site doesn't have too many birds yet. A variety of nesting material is being picked up by the martins there - some type of pods (locust?), corn leaves, wheat straw.

Other Comments and discussions:

- Sub-Adults seem to be slow in returning this year.
- There was a good general discussion about feeding. How to flip crickets to get martins started....What kind of food martins will take most readily....How to prepare eggs - a few different methods are used....Seagulls like scrambled eggs and will take over the feeding tray and prevent martins from getting anything.

- John & Paul had at some point put a martin house at the **Chartwell home** on Manning Road in Windsor, apparently at the request of an elderly resident there, who walks out every day to look at the housing. Karen Padbury has recently spoken with the man's son, and they think that a couple of martins have been seen there. There is a plan to potentially bring some people from that residence by bus to view a local colony. Anticipated time is first week of July.
- During the Go-Around, there was a bit of discussion about **signage at our public sites**. Both Karen Padbury and Fern Bellavance mentioned the importance of having it for awareness of the public about our OPMA. We do have signage up at some of our public sites, but member Henry Wolting suggested we obtain some inexpensive QR stickers to add to our existing and future signs. This is a good idea for our many satellite colonies.

Unfortunately, the weather derailed the plan for Ken to guide everyone, as they were leaving, to see the new installation at **North Side park**.



Tree Swallows at home

(Mary Wilson & Jim Sudds)

We are fans of the "**Gilbertson Box**". In our residential area in Leamington, we've had great success with them. We put up 3 each year in our townhome property - 2 in the small back yard, and 1 in the front of our house. We attract 2 pairs of **Tree Swallows** - for some reason one of two in the back yard has never been occupied - maybe that's just one pair too many for that amount of space.

Sparrows don't like them. The deep, narrow cavity doesn't allow them to do their big sloppy weave of a nest. They fuss around and try to build in the spring, but get frustrated and leave.

Tree Swallows like them. TS have raised young in 2 of 3 boxes each year we've put them up.

We like them. They are lightweight, and very easy to peek into. There's not much that can go wrong with them. They are designed to be installed on metal conduit, which is resistant to some climbing predators, and easy to install.

<https://www.thebirdhousechick.com/products/gilbertson-nest-box>

WORKSHOP, anyone?



There are lots of DIY instructions online for the Gilbertson style nest box.



The nest box hangs under the roof on 2 screws which fit into slots in the pipe. With a little squeeze, the box comes off for easy viewing of the contents.

Six nestlings, comfy and dry.



The shepherd hook is a great perch for the TS to watch over their nest box. It isn't far from our front door, and when we enter / exit our house, we can get quite close to them.

Erie Shores Golf Course, Leamington

Update from Mary Wilson & Jim Sudds

Bird Box Trail:

Since its beginning roughly 30 years ago, this trail of approximately 80 boxes has fledged many tree swallows, and the occasional bluebird family. Unfortunately, we are considering shutting it down, at least for a year. Severe predation, for 3 years in a row now, has resulted in a high number of eggs and young being lost to a predator which leaves no visual disturbance to the nest.

We feel we can rule out raccoons and wrens, both of which have been an occasional problem for us over the years. Raccoons leave tell-tale signs (nest material hanging out of the hole...wings/broken eggs on the ground...blood on box...etc.). Wrens can, and do, remove eggs, and even very tiny young, in their quest to monopolize the areas' nest boxes. But we doubt that they're responsible for larger young going missing, particularly over such a large area.

Snakes are the likely culprit. Snakes apparently have the ability to "smell" the air via their flicking tongues. Also, they can remember where they've found food. They're able to climb most poles, and often hunt at night, which is why most of our golfers say "But we've never seen snakes on the golf course!"

Over the years of this trail, the golf course has expanded and added naturalized areas. We now see wild turkeys, many species of birds, and deer. There is enough seclusion and density that we see does with their fawns which were likely born in these areas. So even though we don't see snakes during the day, it is certain they are there.

The plan: Seal off all box entries in fall, after whatever manages to fledge have done so. Leave them closed for a year. Relocate, or remove, boxes that are too close to naturalized areas. See what we can do to add new and better predator guards for the number of boxes we will end up with.

Purple Martin Colony:



We have 3 Gourd Racks (24 gourds each) at the end of the golf course's driving range.

Before switching to gourds, we had 4 Trio castles installed on the tall pole in the picture on the right. It was custom made to accommodate the Trios, and still has the winch, but now serves as a favourite perching site for our martins.

The winches on 2 of the 3 gourd racks are not working this year. They can be cranked down about 1 foot or so from the top, and then the cable goes slack. If anyone else has had a similar problem, please share any ideas or fixes.

The one gourd rack which was able to be checked has a total of 106 eggs / young as of June 26th.

Wishing everyone a happy and productive Purple Martin season!