

OPMA Chatter

Nov. 2026 # 22

ONTARIO PURPLE MARTIN ASSOCIATION ---- (Founded in 2000)
www.ontariopurplemartins.ca .... **https://www.facebook.com/groups/ontariopurplemartinassociation**



Welcome to our new members!

Ryan Hoelke, Eganville
Greg Young, Toronto

FINAL MEETING OF 2026 - OCTOBER 24TH

This meeting was held at Orchard View Golf Course in Ruthven, which has for many years supported a Purple Martin Colony, as well as bird-box trail, on its property. They also offer free use of their meeting room for both our April and October meetings.

Twenty-one people came out to this meeting, which was chaired by our Vice-Chair Ken Winter, in the absence of our Chairperson Paul Hamel. Here's a summary of the discussions.

➔ A supply of Troyer Catalogues was brought to the meeting by Board member Dennis Shady, who invited anyone interested to pick one up, and reminded us that the Harrow Feed Store is the only supplier of Troyer PM Products in our area.

➔ Ken reviewed the **2026 EVENTS** to which the OPMA had been invited :

- John Balga, and assistants gave purple martin **presentations**:

  - May 12th at West Lorne Horticultural Society.
  - June 9th at Tilbury Horticultural Society.

- The following events were **not attended** due to distance, poor weather or not enough people available on the day/s of the event.

  - April - OPMA Booth at Jack Miner's Migration SPRING Festival.
  - June 13 - Annual Amish School Fund in the area of St. Mary's.
  - July 18 (10-3) - OPMA Booth at Colchester Market - Schoolhouse Site.
  - Sept 19-20 - OPMA Booth at Holiday Beach Migration of Hawks.
  - Oct 17-18 - OPMA Booth at Jack Miner's Migration FALL Festival.

- Two other **interesting projects** were shared with the members:

  - One was being conducted by a **Western University** graduate student. The study involved taking swabs from purple martins to see what **antibiotic resistances** they have in their system, to help understand how antibiotics pollute the environment and affect birds' health, as well as assess any potential for infection to humans.

    Several locations were targeted in order to have comparative data in rural versus urban purple martins. The studies took place at two OPMA member colonies in London and Union. We hope to receive a report from this study, to share with everyone, and also will follow-up with the graduate student to see if she might be available to give a presentation at our February meeting.

  - **Ontario Nature Project**: In April 2026, OPMA was contacted to erect a house (to be provided by ONP), which would include an in-nest camera. Their research involved recording nesting habits of the various types of birds that might inhabit the house. They contacted OPMA with the hope that we could identify a suitable landlord and location for them, and also have OPMA monitor and report results. The house and camera would be gifted to OPMA when the project concluded.

    OPMA declined this project, following email correspondence and a zoom meeting, at which we asked for pictures and specs of the house that had already been built. The house wasn't built to current standards (heavy wooden house on a fixed wooden pole, small compartments, 2" round holes, and no individual doors.

➔ **MEMBERSHIP DUES increase to $25**: Ken reminded everyone that **2027 memberships** will increase from $20 to $25 (as mentioned at prior meetings).

➔ **Treasurer AL HAMILL provided updates on these items:**

- **CHARTWELL PURPLE MARTIN HOUSE** (As presented in the previous Chatter #21). The Purple Martin house at Chartwell was a Heath, and Al had modified it to make it more suitable for martins and for monitoring. Martins had been seen in the vicinity, but no-one was certain whether any had taken up residence. Later in the season, high winds brought the pole down and smashed the house.

  There is interest in putting up a new unit of some type. Al will follow up with the Chartwell resident and OPMA member John Huschilt in the New Year. If anyone learns of a unit that might be available, please let us know.

- **Passing of TED CHESKEY**. Ted was a leader in Nature Canada for many years, and their "Save the Swallows" campaign obtained funding to purchase and install purple martin housing in various sites. Our OPMA member John Balga was involved in this campaign and was the collector of the OPMA's colony results via an official N/C form for the time of the campaign.

  Ted and an associate participated with a booth in the OPMA's first Martin-Fest in 2018, and he also was our guest speaker at the OPMA's February 2020 meeting at Colasanti's in Ruthven, which attracted about 60 people from the community. Details of his presentation are documented in the Spring 2020 newsletter and give a glimpse of Ted's knowledge, involvement, and passion for birds and the environment.

  It is on our website:
  https://ontariopurplemartins.ca/ **(…MORE…NEWSLETTERS…Spring 2020).**

  The OPMA has sent a memoriam gift of **$100** to the Bruce Peninsula Bird Observatory (created by Ted 26 years ago), in honour of his significant and long-standing contributions to the birding world.

➔ **The "Go-Around:**

Specific colony results from the go-around aren't listed here, as Ken is collecting the colony data, and it will be sent to everyone when completed.

But interesting topics always surface during our go-arounds, and they are covered here:

- Ron Delcourt has been experimenting for a while with a **cap modification** - cutting out approximately the top half of the gourd caps, filling the space with screening, and placing a canopy over it. The goal is to increase ventilation in the gourd. He was concerned that martins might have been bothered by the increase of light allowed into the gourd, but so far, in his experiment, there was no indication that they were. He will keep us posted on the results as he expands his experiment.

- Fern Bellavance related his experience with sparrows and starlings. Once they had laid a few eggs, he removed the nest, and they never returned. Others reported that doing the same thing didn't work in their case. A couple of other related suggestions were:

  Cathy Thomson has replaced sparrow eggs with small stones roughly the same size and shape. She found that it worked well - the sparrows would keep busy sitting on them for a while, before eventually totally abandoning the nest. (Keeping them busy with fake eggs might avoid the "revenge" they often take on other birds' eggs when their own suddenly disappear.)

  Another suggestion which came from the PMCA forum was to remove the nest and eggs of a HOSP, but put some of the eggs on the porch of house or gourd and crush them and leave them there. Some people on PMCA found that this drove the sparrows away and they never returned. Mary Wilson tried this and it seemed to work at least in some cases.

- Al Hamill reported that he had more dead adult martins than ever before (found when he cleaned out the housing). Many seemed to be "dirty" at their back end, making Al wonder if there was some type of disease process going on.

  At the Harrow Feed Store colony which he monitors, the adult dead were found mostly in the T14 and the aluminum housing. But at his home colony, the adult dead were found mostly in gourds.

- Marianne & Rudy Dyck mentioned that the Trio castle was just too hot for the nestlings - most of their large numbers of dead nestlings were in the aluminum castle.

- Mary Wilson reported that the Erie Shores Golf Course colony couldn't be monitored properly due to the failure of the winch and cable system on 2 out of 3 Gemini Racks, which prevented the racks from being lowered throughout the season. There may be a problem with the "glide buttons" inside the hub.

  She also mentioned the predator problem at the ES Golf Course Tree Swallow Trails. For the last few years, something has been taking the eggs/young without leaving a trace. Raccoons leave lots of telltale signs. It likely is snakes, which (a/c to Google) have an olfactory sense which can lead them to food. And once they've found food sources, they also have some level of memory, so they are able to revisit places where they've found food. In our case, they've been finding it at the top of a metal pole. Snakes leave no sign of their visit - just an empty, undisturbed nest.

  The TS Trail (approximately 75 boxes), is divided into different routes. One route, normally producing 130+ fledglings, reported only 33 this year. We plan to reduce the trail by about 20 boxes, due to these predator problems as well as shortage of volunteers for monitoring. We have several options to experiment with over the winter. Hopefully we'll be able to report better news next year, and these lovely birds will be a common sight again on the golf course.

For the armchair traveler who loves purple martins **!**



New Documentaries And Other Martin-Related Media

https://www.purplemartin.org/martinmedia/

Thank you to everyone who has sent pictures and other interesting information…. your contributions will be shared!

From a Banding Session with Ron Delcourt **"Photos by C Longspur"**



Ron Delcourt putting a 1D aluminum band on Purple Martin chick



Purple Martins around their homes.



Babies and egg in nest.

Lovely end-of-day view at the colony of member Michael Beale

