



ONTARIO PURPLE MARTIN ASSOCIATION
Newsletter September, 2012

Hello to all!

Well once again, we have come to the end of the Martin season. They have all fledged and are now heading back to the Amazon region for the winter. We can take a great deal of satisfaction in knowing that we are doing our part in the preservation of this bird species. Our numbers in Southern Ontario are being maintained in large part, due to your efforts with your own personal colonies. You have to remember that in the rest of Canada their numbers are decreasing and in some areas there are no more martins.

Our club continues to expand. This year we have new members from Walpole Island, Rondeau Park, and Tavistock. We will be putting on a display at the Holiday Beach Conservation area on September 22nd and 23rd. We need some volunteers to help out with the booth. If you can help, please contact Mary, Dennis, or myself and we will schedule you with a date and time. Hope to see you there! In the future, there may be some opportunities to visit Walpole Island, check out their housing, and possibly attend a conference in the Walpole Island area with some very good guest speakers. We will keep you all informed.

I would like to welcome Carol Taves, Rob Cornies and Al Hamill to our Board of Directors. Carol is our new treasurer, Rob will be our new bander, and Al will help us with the running of the club. Contact information for any of our Board members can be found in our newsletters if you have any questions regarding the management of your colony.

I would like to take this opportunity on behalf of our club to wish John Balga and his wife Barb all the best as they prepare to move to Toronto and start a new adventure in their life. John has given 11 years of dedicated service and will continue to be associated with our club. He will maintain the website and I am sure if you email him he will be happy to give advice on your Martin colony. Once again thanks John and we will look forward to seeing you in the near future at some of our meetings.

Paul Hamel

Chairperson

A message from John

I apologize for my lack of contact this summer but, between the stress caused by the extremely hot weather and hawk attacks on my birds and my moving plans to the Toronto area, I have just not had time to write about my experiences this year.

It looked like the year was going to be a good one after the cool conditions in spring finally settled down. The martins fed well during the inclement weather and I managed to feed several dozen eggs to them when they came to the pergola outside my kitchen window or when they approached me in the yard. It seemed that by habit, the martins would hover over me when they needed that extra

protein to get them through the day. If it was a rainy day, they would line up on the pergola until I opened the window and flung scrambled eggs to them. Barb managed to take some excellent video for the first time of the martins being fed out the kitchen window and feeding on the wing in the backyard. I will try to post these on the website but I'll need time to figure out how to downsize the file size to allow for the posting.

In general, my martins did arrive earlier than usual this year, but didn't get busy with pairing up and nest-building. I was a bit worried about potential cold snaps that could cause them to lose those earlier-than-normal eggs, but it appears the birds were a lot smarter than we are and must have been aware of what was coming. The weather proved itself to be "iffy" and the martins delayed many of their normal activities. The majority of them laid and hatched their eggs, raised their young and they got them out of their nests. The later arrivals of sub-adults whose young were not quite ready to leave, had to stay and struggle through the searing temperatures and the hawk which visited three times a day.

Some days the thermometer hit 40 degrees with the humidex factor and to make matters worse, it was also extremely dry. When this very hot temperature occurred it seemed the parents stopped feeding or did not make as many trips to the colony site and the result was that the nestlings quickly dehydrate and their organs started shutting down. On top of that, young, inexperienced parents could not keep pace with the dehydration that their nestlings were experiencing. Either way, the end result was that I found over 25 nestlings either dead or dying and by the time I found the live ones on the ground, they were so dehydrated, my efforts to save them were hopeless. The hawk did not help matters either as his visits saw many young snatched from their porches or from the tops of the houses.

On a brighter note, we were able to band a lot of the nestlings again this year! Thanks to Richard Carr and Rob Cornies we banded 160 nestlings at my site. The three of us were able to band 650 martins throughout our area. Both banders enjoyed the experience and will be banding colonies next year once they are certified by Master Banders, and the Banding Lab. I was able to re-sight ten martins here this year and I await other re-sightings from other colony participants.

The Holiday Beach Public site looked very promising after Dennis and Claude helped raise the castle there in early spring. Over 9 pair visited the site and 8 pair stayed and completed their nests, laid eggs and started feeding their young. My family visited the park on Father's day and we celebrated with a wonderful picnic. The grandson held his first martin and many photos were generated amidst the vocal calls of the martins. What a beautiful celebration for me and my family and the martins. The Tuesday after changed my cheerfulness into sadness as Claude from the banding lab called to tell me that the park had suffered catastrophic wind speeds and trees were down all over. The radio news indicated that the park was closed until further notice and until the cleanup took place. The worst news of all followed that the Castle was down, the martins had disappeared and the eggs and young had not survived. I was about to shed another tear again. Why? Why? Mother Nature's weather has turned goodness into sadness.

Dennis and I made a recovery visit to the site and assessed the damage to the gourds and castle. The house fell on the gourds and crushed the young and some adults but the Trio Castle was really OK except for a few bent perches and doors. The raccoons or scavengers it seemed, managed to raid the house and finish off any living survivors as evidenced by the martin body parts left around the house. Life goes on in this hobby and some things we just can't control. I vowed that before I left this area that this project would not fail and that the house would be returned again before summer's end. Rob, Dennis and myself spent a morning reinstalling the house and adding a second for next year. Thanks guys for your efforts. It will be nice to see martins there next Spring!

As for my next venture, it is being planned. I will be writing that chapter as it unfolds and I do hope to continue with this hobby. It's tough moving to a condominium and not viewing martins. Yet I know that familiar call will cause me to reach out to other martin hobbyists in the Toronto area who have them and hopefully extend our OPMA outreach to this area. A new friend, Sue Dobbin in Niagara Falls awaits a visit and probably a banding session next summer as well as others who would like their martins banded. For now, all I can say is that I will miss my fellow martin friends who have been with us for over ten years and have supported the cause with their dedication and loyalty. The martins have benefited in this area and I am proud to have worked with so many great people over the years in this vicinity. You have put your passion to the test and the fruits of your work have helped many people. Hopefully, our web connection will be a testament to the association's good will and generosity for years to come. Thank you to the Board of Directors, martin association members and to my martin friends for making this a memorable life experience!

Keep the Martins Flying in Ontario!

John Balga

The following members are happy to be of help for all questions / concerns. Also listed are their specific areas of contribution to the OPMA.

John Balga	martinman@hotmail.com	Website
Rob Cornies	519-733-4004.....roba496@gmail.com	Banding
Pauline Dunn.....	519-975-0460.....paulinedunn@hotmail.com.....	Acknowledgement cards: (<i>sympathy, congratulations, etc.</i>)
Al Hamill	519-738-6932.....alhamill70@gmail.com	Creative solutions
Paul Hamel.....	519-738-3476.....kp_hamel@live.ca	Chairperson
Lyle Papps.....	519-354-6404.....	Natural gourd expertise; innovator
Cy Poisson	519-776-9713.....cypoison@hotmail.com	Lending library
Nancy Robson.....	519-326-8557.....nrobson@cogeco.ca	Publicity, advertising
Dennis Shady.....	519-738-4411.....dennisshady@yahoo.ca.....	New member handouts
Carol Taves.....	519-825-7026.....carol@tec-land.com	Finances
Mary Wilson.....	519-326-1710.....helenmwilson@yahoo.com	Newsletters, Cricket orders

Purple Martin Banding 2012

By Rob Cornies



... A bird in the hand is a purple martin !



... What we do for these birds !
Banding at the lake colony of member Joe Manierski

As most of you know, our dear friend John Balga is leaving us to move to Toronto. John announced that he was leaving and a volunteer was needed to take up the banding process. Without a thought as to what was really involved I volunteered, and my journey began. John is an amazing teacher, patient, firm, forgiving, and above all humble. I must admit that an amazing friendship was formed through the many hours we spent together, and for this I will always be grateful.

The banding for 2012 was approximately 2 weeks earlier than normal. The unseasonably nice weather was probably the cause. I remember the first day, (John probably does too) I really did not know how to hold a martin properly; I had the bird upside down, and could not figure out quite what to do. John to the rescue. Patiently John showed me and showed me. Yes, I did finally figure it out, much to my and John's relief, and so to the birds as well.

A trip to the Niagara region was probably one of the highlights of the banding season. Our host was quite a purple martin fanatic. She provided what I will call a bed and breakfast in each of her martin compartments. Mealworms were the fare and according to her they just loved them.

Richard Carr from Walpole Island accompanied John and I on several banding outings. His desire is to band martins and establish a club on the island. Working with Richard was a pleasure, a true "*martinaholic*".

A total of **651** birds were banded this year. I was fortunate enough to band a great portion of them, gaining experience, confidence and knowledge.

To all those members who allowed us to band their birds I would personally like to say thank-you. All of you made me feel so welcome. Purple martin landlords are truly caring and kind people. I may be taking over the banding process for John; however I will never be able to fill his shoes. My wife says that he has created a monster. I must admit, that I am now hooked on banding, and looking forward to the 2013 season.



*.Banding at the home colony of members Al & Anne Hamill
.....with a little horsing around*

Please mark your
calendar!!!!

Our 1st meeting in
2013
will be
February 9th

at Colasanti's
Tropical Gardens,
Ruthven

Remember to visit our own & affiliate websites:

www.essexpurplemartins.ca The website of our club. Both our **CLUB CALENDAR** and our **NEWSLETTERS** are here, as well as photos of various club activities. (Constructed & maintained by John Balga Please contact him for submissions or suggestions)

www.ontariopurplemartins.ca/ontario This site is to facilitate the connecting of purple martin landlords throughout Ontario with the aim of safeguarding the purple martin which is now officially declared "in decline" in Ontario. (Constructed & maintained by John Balga Please contact him for submissions or suggestions)

<http://www.purplemartins.com> - goes to main website of above (**Purple martin Society NA**) which has the ECPMA link. A website that John has been active in, on our behalf, for several years is the Purple Martin Society NA. This website allows us to participate, in our own page, within a discussion forum that is shared with a much broader audience. <http://www.purplemartins.com/RTC/forumdisplay.php?f=14> – goes directly to our page

The Future of the Ontario Purple Martin Association depends on Ontario Affiliates

by John Balga, OPMA

For many years the **Purple Martin Conservation Association (PMCA)** has worked informally in partnership with other organizations to promote the conservation of Purple Martins. These informal relationships between the PMCA and other organizations have been mutually beneficial and have helped to advance the protection and enhancements of Purple Martins - a goal that all groups share. In 2011, the Ontario Purple Martin Association (**OPMA**) became an affiliate of the **PMCA** with the premise that we have similar missions, goals and philosophies.

The Ontario Purple Martin Association (OPMA) believes that part of its mandate is to encourage Purple Martin Affiliates across Ontario. **The Ontario Purple Martin Working Group (OPMWG)**, comprised of members from various locations in Ontario, is now working to get this message out with the hopes of forming other Purple Martin Groups in our province.

The Walpole Island First Nation Purple Martin Project (WIFNPMP) was spear-headed by Susan & Richard Carr in the hopes of attracting purple martins to the island. *It is also their hope to bring others interested in this hobby from the neighboring area to get other colonies going.* They are keenly aware of the benefits of purple martins and are hopeful that others will take up their cause. The purple martins on Walpole Island are in decline and in need of support. This exuberant couple looks forward to their purple martin friends each year as did their ancestors long ago. The First Nation people readily hung gourds on poles to attract these aerial visitors as we do today. Although the practice of hanging gourds really has not changed over the years, more and more plastic gourds are being hung to replace the natural ones. Richard & Susan hope that many of their friends will also manage public sites on the island to bring the interest back.

Lyle Papps, from Charing Cross, Ontario, has a very successful colony and is getting the message out about martins in his area. His neighbors are excited about what is happening. Lyle manages many natural gourd cavities in his back yard and had his own reality show about purple martins on his TV. Lyle documented the birth, growth, and fledging of purple martins using a special camera which goes inside the gourd to capture

the inside scoop of “purple life”, from egg laying to hatching to leaving the nest. Lyle is encouraged by what he sees and he realizes the importance of hosting these neo-tropical visitors each year. They benefit our environment by capturing numerous pesky insects. Lyle would like others in his area to come together to form a small group to address the need for more colonies in the area as well as provide a forum for thoughtful purple martin discussion and reflection.

Phil Carnie and his wife Kathy from Morpeth, Ontario have been successful in their area as well in attracting numerous martins to their housing. Phil is extremely motivated and builds martin houses and poles to attract these visitors. He has also mapped many of the colonies in his area and manages much of the housing at Rondeau Park. Phil is motivated to bring potential interested martin hobbyists together. The Ridgeway Independent News, a local newspaper has highlighted several articles about Phil’s colony as well as the banding that has taken place at his location. Phil is dedicated to the hobby and hopes that others not only in his neighborhood but others in the area can come together even in an informal way to talk about the martins.

Finally, **Dale Huber** from Tavistock, Ontario is trying to attract purple martins to his house with gourds and a T-14. He has reached out to many people with colonies to bring an educational awareness to proper purple martin management techniques to their area. He hopes that he too will be able to host a colony of purple martins on his farm. Dale sees the need to assist the local golf course as well as neighboring colonies to preserve the very few purple martins that are there at the present time. We thank Dale for his efforts and look forward to his future work with the Purple Martins.

Ontario Purple Martin Affiliates are just in their initial development stage but the efforts of the very few have not gone unnoticed. Please encourage others in your area to join forces to get the message out:

Help Preserve Our Martins for the Future!

YOU CAN DO YOUR PART TO HELP OTHERS IN YOUR AREA BY REFERRING THEM TO THE PURPLE MARTIN LANDLORDS WE MENTIONED IN THIS ARTICLE. For further information, please contact us at:

The Ontario Purple Martin Association, www.essexpurplemartins.ca

Randy Holland Nature Photographer:

Again this summer, Randy spent time at Orchard View capturing beautiful images of purple martins and bluebirds. His website is well worth a visit:

www.randysnaturephotography.com



End of Season Housecleaning

By Mary Wilson

It's a nasty job that must be done. Whether it is housing or gourds, used purple martin nests harbour lots of insects, and take some work to remove because they are stuck to the sub-floor, or gourd. Martin accommodations do not need to be "squeaky clean"! Many landlords believe that martins actually like the appearance of a "used" compartment, so a little dirty residue doesn't hurt. The goal is to remove debris which would allow insects to survive through the winter.

In our climate, mites and fleas can definitely survive in old nesting material through the winter. They hide in crevices in housing, underneath gourd lid liners, in between plates on modified Trio doors, etc. If there is a nook and cranny, they will find it.

Here's some tips and tools that I use to make this cleanup job a little less tedious:

Some useful tools



Where critters hide



- A garden claw tool gives you "pry-power", for loosening and clawing nests out.
- An old CD, cut in half, is an excellent curved scraper for the inside of gourds, to scrape the bottom clean after the nest is removed. This works especially well in gourds that have more of a rounded interior, like supergourds.

- A small piece of sample laminate (found where countertops are sold), is a great scraper for houses like Trios. Its small size allows you to get your hand inside the compartment and use the sharp corners of it to clean along the edges.
- A “dish” brush with a long handle. After the debris is loosened, this is very handy to sweep it out.
- A spray bottle with a water / bleach mix. Many landlords use this to spray into crevices, which kills any hidden insects. Our own Dennis Shady swears by this treatment, feeling that it also acts as a deterrent for insects during the next season.

What one landlord says: “I take a spray bottle with a **10 percent bleach solution** with me, and an extra gallon of the mix in a jug. Don't get the mix too strong as it can burn your hands, and eye protection would be wise, and old clothes that you don't care get spotted. I spray down the nest first, then pull out most of it, and re-spray and wipe out with old rags. I hope the **bleach** mixture protects me as I progress. The greatest benefit to the housing may be that it really brightens up the exterior.”

Cleaning Doors, floors, and caps: The little spaces in these items provide good hiding spots for mites.

For instance, in modified Trio doors, there is a space between the additional plate and the original door, and around the hole plug. In gourd caps, mites can congregate underneath the cap liner. Certain types of floors, subfloors, and nest trays also provide nooks and crannies for them to escape into and survive routine cleaning.

I don't even like bringing these items into my house for scrubbing, so here's what I do: I stack the doors vertically in a plastic tub, and then slowly pour boiling water over them so that it runs between where the plates are joined. It is always shocking to me what comes out. After several kettle-fulls, I feel that 99.9% of the bugs are dead, but I have seen several mites even after doing this, so I do not store these items anywhere in the house or garage. They go in an outside shed.

Dunking them in a strong bleach solution also works well.

For gourd caps, remove the liners and clean both the cap and liner, or discard the liner if it is a “seasonal” one.

Happy cleaning !!!!!