



ONTARIO PURPLE MARTIN ASSOCIATION

www.essexpurplemartins.ca

JANUARY 2016

Message from Paul:

Wow! It's a new year and it won't be long before we begin to hear that very recognizable sound of the Purple Martin! I hope everyone had a pleasant beginning to 2016 and that your hopes and aspirations continue into the New Year.

The board has met a couple of times and we continue to look for ways to make the club more relevant for all our members. This year we need to fill three vacancies on the board and are hoping that members will come forward to take on these roles. Also, Lyle Papp's position as vice chair is up for renewal and anyone can stand to be elected to this position. We have formed an election committee made up of the four executives to deal with filling these positions on the board. If you are interested let one of the committee members know and your name will be included on the list. We would like to finalize the list by the first meeting in February and have an election in April if one is needed.

This year we're going to have five general meetings. The first will take place at Gleaners in Leamington on February 20th (directions in this newsletter). Vic Bernyk from Amherstburg will be our special guest speaker and should be a very interesting addition to our meeting. He has a wealth of knowledge about our environment's native plants, and specializes in butterfly gardens. I hope to see you there !

There will be four more meetings to follow, which are detailed in the 2016 calendar in this newsletter. Two of these are member-host meetings (May 28 and June 25). I would like to invite any member to consider hosting one of these. Member-host meetings are an enjoyable way to view others' sites and share ideas. This item will be brought up again at the February meeting so you have plenty of time to think about hosting. Mark your calendars and watch for further information as we approach the meeting dates. Remember, we are always looking for ways to improve our general meetings and make them interesting for the membership. If you have some ideas, let me know and I will try to accommodate your suggestions into one of the meetings.

Richard and Susan Carr will be hosting a [Field Trip to Walpole Island](#) on Saturday July 9th (rain date July 16th.) It will be a unique opportunity to visit a beautiful natural area and have a guided scenic visit, by ferry, to the martin colonies on 2 islands. More detail will be shared at our upcoming meetings, but as we get closer to the date, we will need commitments since transportation will have to be arranged. So mark your calendars for this exciting event !

We've been discussing some other interesting field trip possibilities, and at the April & May meetings we'll share more information, survey the level of interest from our members, and proceed accordingly.

Once again, we'll be participating in the Holiday Beach Hawk Festival. This is a perfect venue to promote the joys of becoming a Purple Martin landlord. The dates for this event are the weekend of September 10th and 11th, and September 17th and 18th. To make this successful, we need volunteers to help with our booth and display. More information will follow as we get closer to these dates.

I'd just like to remind everyone that 2016 dues are payable. You will have several options to pay this year: Aad Ahsmann, our treasurer, will be sending out an email (look for treasureropma@gmail.com) explaining the new online payment method he has been working to set up for us. Alternatively, you can pay at the upcoming meetings in February or April. Our dues are the only income that we have to maintain our club activities. Remember that by being a member in good standing, you have access to a wealth of information. We have five meetings, newsletters, a great website, and you can contact one of us if you need help with your colony. And, it is a way of socializing with people who have a common interest in the Purple Martin !

I need to thank all of our board members who have given a great deal of their time to keep the club viable. For the year 2015, these were Dennis Shady, Richard Carr, Aad Ahsmann (treasurer), John Balga, Lyle Papps (vice chairperson), Marianne Dyck (secretary), Rob Cornies, Al Hamill and Mary Wilson. The board will change in 2016 because Rob Cornies, John Balga and Richard Carr have decided not to continue in their board roles. This has created the three vacancies and we hope to fill them at the meeting in April. I would like to personally thank each one of them for the contribution they have made to the board and club.

I hope to see you at some of our general meetings and I hope that you will continue to be part of an organization that makes its goal to preserve this wonderful little purple bird. You are an important reason why the Purple Martin is able to continue to exist in Southern Ontario. Keep up the good work and maybe one day we will receive the news that the Martin numbers are increasing rather than declining. That's it for now.

Paul Hamel, Chairperson

Exciting things on the horizon ! (from John Balga)

A proposal has been submitted by Nature Canada to the Canadian government to engage the public in the recovery of Purple Martins and other aerial insectivore bird species in Ontario. In partnership with the OPMA (Ontario Purple Martin Association), the PMCA (Purple Martin Conservation Association), York University, the University of Manitoba and the Walpole Island Purple Martin Project Group, they hope to engage local nature groups and community members to raise the profile of the martin and incorporate stewardship projects in all aspects of their proposal throughout Ontario. The OPMA looks forward to working with its partners in this project when it is approved.

CRICKETS: “INSURANCE” for your martins !!!

The OPMA offers “cricket service”: Your order will be taken (\$20.00 pre-paid please), during the February meeting, or thereafter if you contact me, and at the appropriate time (approximately when martins have arrived in northern Ohio), I will submit the bulk order for the club. *Please note: our supplier has a different source for his crickets this year. This will result in a change in our “per-thousand” price. Depending on the volume we order, it will be approximately \$22 dollars, and up to \$25 if we don’t order more than 10,000. We usually order far more than that, so I am fairly certain we’ll only be paying several dollars more per thousand than previous years.* When the order arrives, I will freeze and re-package your crickets. All you need do is pick them up (any price adjustment beyond the \$20 pre-pay can be made at that time) and put them in your freezer.

There is nothing like knowing you can help your birds if bad weather hits. *(The club realizes no profit from this. It is a volunteer service only, to benefit both the martins and landlords.)*

With apologies to our more distant members, this service can be offered only to members who are able to pick up (or have someone pick up) their crickets, as I am not involved in shipping live crickets.

Contact: Mary Wilson helenmwilson@yahoo.com 519-326-1710)

An alternative to crickets for all of us, as described in the December 2014 newsletter, is live mealworms. Carol Taves' experience of using the mealworms was a very successful one. Please see your newsletter (or visit the website to see it) for the contact information.

Resources:

Remember to check out our wonderful website maintained and provided by John Balga, our **website** manager. www.essexpurplemartins.ca

The Feed Store in Harrow now carries many purple martin products. They are located at 2564 County Road 20 East, in Harrow, and can be contacted at 1-519-738-2261.

The Purple Martin Conservation Association (PMCA) is a non-profit organization dedicated to the conservation of Purple Martins through scientific research, state of the art management techniques, and public education. *The PMCA forum does not require sign-up, is totally free, and is a wealth of information from landlords all across N.A.* www.purplemartin.org

2016 MEETINGS and EVENTS

- ◆ All meeting dates are subject to change as necessary. Any changes will be communicated to everyone.
- ◆ We will make reminder emails or phone calls prior to each meeting, but this schedule is for your convenience to print out, or transfer to your calendar.
- ◆ For “**member-host**” meetings, in case of questionable weather, individuals should contact the “host” to confirm if the meeting will be held as scheduled. **It is NOT the responsibility of the “host” to contact everyone.**

9:00 am Feb. 20 Southwestern Ontario Gleaners, 40 Industrial Drive, Leamington ... see below

9:00 am Apr. 16 Orchard View Golf Course, Ruthven

9:30 am April **BLUEBIRD TOUR 1 ... hosted by Don Bissonnette**

To be confirmed.

9:30 am May **BLUEBIRD TOUR 2 ... hosted by Don Bissonnette**

(Don offers two dates to enjoy the bluebird tour. In case of bad weather, either date will be cancelled.) Note start time of 9:30.

9:00 am May 28 “**Member-Host**” Meeting

9:00 am Jun 25 “**Member-Host**” Meeting and BBQ

9:00 am Sep 24 **FINAL 2016 MEETING** - Orchard View Golf Course (to be confirmed)

Gleaners is located at 40 Industrial Drive off Oak Street.

*If coming into Leamington from Hwy 401, take Hwy 77 south (once in Leamington this becomes Erie Street) ...continue at ****

*If coming into Leamington from Windsor, take #3 highway (bypass) to Hwy 77 (Erie Street), turn right onto Erie Street..... continue at ****

**** proceed through town until you reach Oak Street (this is at a stoplight - the old “Heinz” intersection). Turn right onto Oak Street. Look for Industrial Drive on the right, turn right, and look for #40.*

Contact any of the members below with questions and concerns:

John Balga 519-800-2504 .. martinman@hotmail.com..... Website / Banding
Richard Carr 810-706-2344 .. 2009.wipmp@gmail.com Walpole Island / Banding / Geo-Locators
Marianne Dyck ... 519-326-0095 .. rudyandmarianne@gmail.com .. Secretary, member records
Paul Hamel..... 519-738-3476 .. kp_hamel@live.ca Chairperson
Al Hamill 519-738-6932 .. alhamill70@gmail.com Advisor, Lending Library
Lyle Papps..... 519-354-6404 Natural gourd expertise
Nancy Robson.... 519-326-8557 .. nancyrobson@gmail.com.... Media
Dennis Shady 519-738-4411 .. dennisshady@yahoo.ca New member advisor
Aad Ahsmann 519-999-9945 .. AadAhsmann@gmail.com Treasurer, Finances
Mary Wilson..... 519-326-1710 .. helenmwilson@yahoo.com... Newsletters, Cricket orders

Helping martins and barn swallows

OPMA member Les Kummer lives in Windsor. Last summer he approached the Ambassador Golf Course in Windsor and after obtaining permission to erect a purple martin house, purchased a Trio castle. It will probably be placed close to a large pond - perfect martin territory.

Les says: “I am really excited and am looking forward to having a colony of these birds under my care. I hope eventually to entice them to my backyard once the golf course colony is up and running in the next few years. I will be very vigilant in caring for these birds and discouraging sparrows and starlings.”

Golf courses are wonderful locations for purple martins, with many open flyways and usually several large ponds which produce lots of insects. Golfers usually appreciate these efforts, too. Many golf courses are more environmentally aware and responsible than they used to be, and welcome these efforts.

Les also built a barn swallow shelter on his property in 2015!



The shelter is made out of 2 x 10's and measures 4 feet wide by 10 feet long. The inside contains 2 x 10's every two feet to provide more opportunity for more swallows to nest. It stands 9 feet tall. Apparently you can squeeze in more pairs if they can't see each other.



I installed artificial nest cups that I purchased off the internet. They are supposed to attract them.



I did not have any luck the first year but am keeping my fingers crossed for next year.

Thanks for sharing this project, Les !
We wish you luck this season, with both martins and barn swallows, and will look forward to hearing your updates !

Interesting observations about plastic gourds

In July 2015 a US landlord posted this in the PMCA forum and received some useful responses, shown below. I found it very interesting, as I have often had extremely wet nests in our gourds over the years, even though weather conditions did not seem to have been severe enough to cause the problem. This occurred sporadically, in all 3 of our locations. I hope to experiment with some of these fixes If anyone else does, please let's share our findings!

“Question:

About a week ago, landlord Ross Blanchard made a post on one of the facebook forums about wet nests in gourds. Following is a portion of his post.

"One of the biggest sources of moisture is the drain holes. Before you dismiss this, run a simple test. Make sure hanging holes are plugged. Put a tissue in the bottom of the gourd and simulate rain for 5 minutes. Water surface tension on a sphere gets faster on slick gourds. Water sticks to the sphere until it encounters a surface that breaks the surface tension (I.E. drain holes plus water rushing from other sides of the gourd.) It looks like a 1/2 fountain inside the when it's raining hard. With the wick effect on the nest material you have a soaked nest in a matter of hours. A wet nest turns into a breeding ground for the mites and the gourd becomes a steam room in the heat. Gourds that swing free have a real problem when you combine strong wind and hard rain. The wind forces the gourd to hang at an angle and water flows directly into the nest area thru the drain holes. Possible fixes, plus, how I have kept my gourds dry and mite free for the last 3 years:

1. Flooring inserts at least 1/2 in. Helps but wick effect in some cases.
2. Sand paint the whole gourd. Breaks up water surface tension but wick effect in some cases.
3. Plug the drain holes. Works quite well but it makes me nervous. Unique weather in the south could create conditions where you need the water drained.
4. What I do that works:
 - a: Use 4" PVC and cut 1 in. length and glue with LEXEL around drain holes. Works well with gourds that swing free.
 - b: Use top from cottage cheese cup cover and cut the center out and glue with LEXEL around drain holes. Works great on Troyer Horizontal but only lasts 2 years because sun and weather.
 - c: My current favorite. Screening Spline used to keep wire mesh in frames. Make sure it is the rough kind because the water jumps over the smooth. Put a circle of LEXEL glue around drain holes and put your spline materiel on top of glue.
 - d: 1/2 in cable. Works but very hard to install.
 - e: Sphere type gourds with drain holes must be mounted solid."

What he states makes sense to me and I plan on making a modification to my gourds in the off season regarding the bottom drainage holes on my THG's. I have been thinking of possible alternatives to the screen spline and cup covers. My question is, do you think putting a piece of traction tape over the drainage hole and then re-drilling the hole through the traction tape would have the same effect? Any other thoughts as to what might work?

If by traction tape you mean the anti-skid tape with sand on it, then I think it will work well. I had an Excluder gourd up this summer with 1 drain hole in center surrounded by anti-skid tape. No moisture, no nest changes, & 6 fledges. I plan on testing this with more holes next year.

Yes, that is what I meant about the traction tape. But, instead of placing it around each drainage hole, I was going to put the tape over the holes and then make new holes through the tape.

Maybe gluing a piece of nylon mesh screen over the holes would break up the “sheeting” effect and allow the rainwater to fall away from the gourd before it reached the drain holes. The nylon mesh would also leave the drain holes open enough for water to drain out if it collected in the bottom of the gourd as well as allow air to enter the gourd and help dry out the wet nest material.

The problem isn't centrifugal force. It is water surface tension on a slick globe surface. It sticks like glue. Even dew ends up at the bottom of the globe. Uneven drain holes don't have to use the wick effect - water just flows in.”

Where are they now?

A February 3rd check of the PMCA Scout Map revealed that 162 reports have been submitted, the first arrival being Florida, of course, on December 30th. It is always fun to see the “purple wave” swell northward.

Looking back in the archives of the “Scout Arrival Map”, we see the consistency of our birds’ arrival. Many have speculated that supplemental feeding (which has been done for a number of years now) will promote an earlier migration, but it seems that the 12 years of history available from the PMCA does not support this. Here are the arrival reports of adult purple martins:

2015	04-01	Charing Cross	Lyle Papps
2014	03-28	South Woodslee	Terry Whyte
	04-01	Charing Cross	Lyle Papps
2013	04-02	Harrow	Al Hamill
2012	03-29	Forest	Robert Daubs
	03-30	Woodslee	Gilles Breton
2011	04-04	Kingsville	Lynda & Tom Lyman
2010	04-02	Leamington	Trudy Friesen
2009	04-02	Elmer	
	04-02	Kingsville	Russ Banfill
2008	04-02	St.Joachim/Woodslee	John Balga
2007	03-30	Kingsville	Lynda & Tom Lyman
2006	04-01	Kingsville	Lynda & Tom Lyman
2005	03-25	Atwood	
	04-01	Leamington	Mary Wilson / Jim Sudds
2004	04-03	Port Rowan	
	04-08	Kingsville	Lynda & Tom Lyman

SEE YOU IN FEBRUARY !!!!!