



ONTARIO PURPLE MARTIN ASSOCIATION

Newsletter ... July, 2013

www.essexpurplemartins.ca

← The nest of the first pair in the colony of Jacques & Linda Barrette, Tilbury !

Hello fellow martin lovers !

We are now well into the martin season. Nests have been made, eggs laid, and young have been born. The martins are busy doing what they do best - raising their families. Let's hope that we continue to have good weather and lots of food so these martins can be successful fledging their young. We also need to be vigilant and do periodic nest checks to make sure all is well. With care and interest, we can help make the season an enjoyable one for all.

From the initial reports at the last meeting, it looks like most colonies are holding their own and in many cases have increased their numbers from last year. This is really good news. And in fact, we are celebrating along with some of our members who have martins for the first time !!!!!

Congratulations to Alex Smith, Bev Ferguson, and Jacques & Linda Barrette who have martins in their housing for the first time! Alex has one pair with eggs after 10 years of trying and Bev has several pairs after 5 years of trying to attract them. Jacques & Linda have martins after a 14-year wait !!!!! This goes to show that with patience and perseverance good things happen.

Our members will be happy to know that our club continues to grow. We have six meetings a year and even though they act as a social gathering of people with similar interests, we would certainly appreciate receiving any ideas that you may have to keep our meetings interesting.

We don't have a permanent place to meet so we rely on member host meetings and lately the Orchard View Golf Club. I would like to take the opportunity at this time to thank the owners of Orchard View for allowing us the use of their facilities. It is a wonderful place to hold our meetings and it is greatly appreciated by the club. This year Al & Anne Hamill and Cy & Monica Poisson volunteered to host meetings at their homes. Many thanks! Next year, we will again be looking for "member-hosts". If you are interested please let us know.

Last but not least, some of our club members have requested that their martins be banded. Rob Cornies & John Balga have volunteered their time and skill to do this banding for them. This is a very big undertaking and I wish Rob & John all the success carrying out this endeavor. Rob also has been monitoring the colonies at Holiday Beach Conservation Area. Thank you Rob & John for all the work you are doing for the club.

Hoping for continued success this martin season with the prospect of having some excellent results reported in September.

Paul Hamel, Chairperson.

Update from Linda & Jacques Barrette:

We have happy news from long-time members Linda & Jacques Barrette! This couple live in Tilbury and have provided an excellent location for martins. They have a large pond, open flyways, modified housing, and are diligent with S&S control. But, we never know what goes on in a bird's mind, and their housing remained vacant although many birds visited over the years. Now, after a very long wait of 14 years, Linda & Jacques are hosting martins!!! The picture on the 1st page of this newsletter is the founding nest of their colony! They also have a second nest built, but with no eggs as of June 25.

Linda & Jacques also host cliff swallows along the eaves of their barn (shown below).

This is an excerpt from a June 4th update from the Barrettes: *“Cliff swallows also hampered by the cold and lack of rain to make mud. I keep a kids pool with mud for them but not sure if they understand what it is for. It looks like 5 or 6 nests have dead swallows in them again due to the cold snap but get a load of this--59 nests one side and 27 nests the other side of the shed. Even less the ones that have died, this is the most ever.”*

Linda & Jacques sure have something special with such a large colony of cliff swallows.



Welcome to our new members !



*Maureen Wilsack of Beamsville, Ontario
Barb Schwab of Harrow, Ontario
John Ondraska of Amherstburg, Ontario.
Tim O'Hagan of Essex, Ontario.
Jerry McCreedy of Kingsville, Ontario
Manon Chevrier Leblanc of Bainsville, Ontario*

To any of our new landlords who may be afraid to do nest checks.

Don't be. Remember, these birds have flown thousands of miles from Brazil to their homes up here to breed and raise their young. Short of predator problems, they will not easily be deterred from doing so. And your involvement / intervention can sometimes turn a potentially lost nest of young into a successful fledging.

If you have taken your housing down every 5 days or so for a nest check, you probably know the dates of the first / last egg of each nest. If you know this, you can do this calculation:

Date of last egg laid + 16 days = **hatch date** (they start incubating on the morning that the last egg is laid).
Hatch date + 29 days = **fledge date.**

In our area, these numbers are generally quite accurate, so you can sit out on your deck and watch your babies fledge if you have been able to do this calculation. And watching them take their first flight is a treat !!!

It is safe to take your housing down until your oldest nest is 20 days old. If you have been taking it down regularly, your birds are somewhat accustomed to the sound and feeling of the house going up and down, and will not be very alarmed by it. If your oldest nest is 20+ days, you can still, with care, take the housing down to look at the rest of them. Lower it slowly and quietly, and then as soon as the nest is within reach (use a stepstool) put a plug in the entrance way (an old sock or rag). Check all the other nests, (you can even peek into the plugged one to see if all is OK, but unless absolutely necessary, its best not to handle them)..... then raise the housing slowly and quietly, unplugging the nest before it is out of reach. (Or, you can tie a string to the sock / rag, and then use the string to pull out the plug once the housing is completely raised.)

The best time to take your housing down is in the afternoon. Eggs are laid in the morning, so it is best not to disturb them at that time. Then, once the eggs have hatched, morning becomes a heavy feeding time. Around noon, it seems that the nestlings have been well-fed and have settled in to nap-time.

What to look for:

- If there is a **dead nestling**, remove it so it does not foul the nest for the rest of them.
- If you find a **soaked nest**, it needs replacement (see "nest replacement" below). Nestlings sitting in a wet nest can develop foot and leg problems and matted feathers which will prevent proper development.
- If a nest has a **severe mite problem**, it needs replacement (more on mites below).
- **Nestlings are gone.** This occurs for a variety of reasons, which would need assessing:
 - a) sometimes sub-adult martins (those that were born last year and have not mated this year) will hang around your colony and cause a lot of trouble, such as tossing small young out of the nest. Not much can be done about this, other than a "walk-about" under your housing every day to see if there are any young on the ground that can be replaced into the correct nest. Some landlords have reported that putting up a few extra gourds on a separate pole, after the sub-adults have arrived, which the sub-adults can claim for their own, has helped with this problem.
 - b) predators, such as snakes, raccoons, owls, hawks, are all out to get a meal. Certain locations are more likely to have certain types of predators, for instance, in the backyard colony we have in the town of Leamington, we do not have predator guards on our poles and have never experienced losses of nestlings from any of the critters named above. On the other hand, our gourd poles at the Erie Shores Golf Course driving range all have predator guards, since we have lost an entire rack of young due to raccoon attacks. Predator guards which mount on a pole can be purchased, or homemade, stop climbing predators. Gourds with tunnels, or wire mesh around a housing unit, can help to prevent hawk and owl attacks.

Avian Insect Liquidator: This product can be shipped to Canada and claims to be safe even if sprayed on birds. I have seen quite a few positive references to this on the PMCA forum, and it is one I plan to try in future years. **Martin House Protector spray** is available from Natural Insect Control, Stevensville, Ontario. It is used to eradicate the bugs which hide in crevices in housing. **Here is a new one:** This is a recommendation from our member Dennis Shady, who learned it from someone who raised pigeons or cockatiels. Take a standard size empty spray bottle (about 746 ml – like a Windex bottle), and add 2-3 ozs. Listerine (must be original – not the new flavoured varieties). Then add 1 oz. of witch hazel (available at any pharmacy), and fill bottle with water. Dennis sprays this on the nest material, and says it is a great way to control mites. If anyone else tries this, please give us a report !!!!

This is just a small sampling of the things which people are using and experimenting with. The internet is a great resource to find out more about mites and how to control them.



SUBCUTANEOUS EMPHYSEMA

is generally a non-life threatening condition that is caused by "excess accumulation of air under the skin".

According to an article in PMCA UPDATE Vol. 10(1), "Mild forms of the condition seem to be harmless and clear up on their own as the trapped gases are slowly reabsorbed by the bird. In more severe cases, a licensed rehabilitator may need to deflate the bubbles by puncturing them with a sterile needle or aspirating the air out with a sterile syringe, rubbing the area first with a disinfectant. Antibiotics many need to be administered. The balloon may need to be emptied more than once on consecutive days."

"If Purple Martin landlords encounter this condition in a nestling, they should monitor the bird by leaving it in the nest, and if the condition doesn't correct itself in about a week, they should take the bird to a rehabber, or deflate the sac themselves using the above techniques. If the youngster is an otherwise healthy nestling that is being fed, leave it alone and allow it to fledge normally with its siblings. If the inflation has not reabsorbed by fledging time, the nestling may be doomed since the ballooning affect would likely render flying difficult or impossible."

Note from Mary..... It is horrifying to find a bird like this amongst otherwise normal size nestlings and not know what it is, what caused it, or what to do. This happened to me a few years ago ... it looked about as big as this one. I was certain it would be dead on the next check. But it had deflated on its own, and the condition did not re-occur. According to what I have read in the PMCA forum, a few landlords, not having easy access to a rehabber, have deflated these nestlings on their own, using a sterilized needle, and been successful.



Remember that our logo is available from Silver Stitch Embroidery in Windsor, for use on T-shirts or other products. They have a wide variety of clothing and other items available. Check out their website at www.silverstitch.ca

A note from Mary

This newsletter focuses on some of the things we landlords may deal with every season, and hopefully it is helpful to our members who are a little newer to this wonderful hobby as well as a good refresher to the “older landlords”.

As the OPMA grows via our website, we are gaining members who live too far away to participate in our regular meetings, and so their ability to get to know the club, its members and activities, is limited to our newsletters and website. So I would like to encourage all of us to help make the newsletters and website more personal, meaningful, and interesting to all of our members by sharing the experiences, both the good and the bad, which come to every purple martin landlord. Both John Balga (website) and myself (newsletter) would love to receive pictures and stories from all of our members for publication in these venues. We can all learn from each other, and everyone always enjoys hearing about other landlords' experiences !!!!

Our next and final issue of the year will be an opportunity for all of us to share our colony stats and/or pictures. So please, as you clean out your housing this year after the birds have left, pass on your results to John and myself. You can respond to John via the website if you wish..... http://essexpurplemartins.ca/?page_id=4096

Thank you !!

Contact any of the members below with questions and concerns:

John Balga	519-800-2504.....	martinman@hotmail.com	Website / Banding
Rob Cornies	519-733-4004.....	roba496@gmail.com	Bird Banding
Monica Poisson	519-776-9713.....	Acknowledgements (sympathy, congratulations, etc.)
Paul Hamel.....	519-738-3476.....	kp_hamel@live.ca	Chairperson
Al Hamill	519-738-6932.....	alhamill70@gmail.com	Advisor
Lyle Papps.....	519-354-6404.....	Natural gourd expertise
Cy Poisson	519-776-9713.....	cypoison@hotmail.com	Lending library
Nancy Robson.....	519-326-8557.....	nrobson@cogeco.ca	Media
Dennis Shady	519-738-4411.....	dennisshady@yahoo.ca.....	New member advisor
Carol Taves.....	519-825-7026.....	carol@tec-land.com	Treasurer, Finances
Mary Wilson.....	519-326-1710.....	helenmwilson@yahoo.com	Member records, Newsletters, Cricket orders

This is one of 3 Gemini Gourd Racks at the Erie Shores Golf Course colony in Leamington which is maintained by Mary Wilson and Jim Sudds.

In this photo the martins are flocking back to it after we raised it following a nest check.

The martins love the Troyer Vertical gourds. We have 72 of them, and 71 contain a martin nest. Dang sparrow ruined our numbers ☺.

We love the functionality and attractiveness of the Gemini racks.



FINAL 2013 MEETING - Orchard View Golf Course, Ruthven. 9:00 am, Saturday, September 14.