



ONTARIO PURPLE MARTIN ASSOCIATION

www.ontariopurplemartins.ca OR www.essexpurplemartins.ca

SUMMER, 2017

Message from Paul:

It has been awhile since a newsletter has been sent out so a lot has happened during this time. I will detail some of the items in this newsletter submission.

Once again, we had issues with the weather early on in the season. This slowed down the arrival of the birds by about two weeks but they did return and some landlords have reported larger colonies than last year. Some landlords like me are reporting smaller colonies but the Martins are doing well and will produce many newly fledged birds. It is always important to remember that each newly fledged Martin is one more bird added to the survival of the species. So keep up the good work and we should see Martins for many years into the future.

A lot has happened at the Holiday Beach site. We have partnered with HBMO through a memorandum of understanding that lays out the responsibilities for OPMA and HBMO for the site. HBMO will be responsible for monitoring the site since they will do all banding here, and OPMA will continue to own and take care of the housing. Nature Canada donated two T-14s for the site and they were installed in April. Now we have 16 gourds, 1 grandpa, 1 castle and the two new houses mentioned above.

We did have a disaster at the site on May 30th when the gourd rack was toppled over during a very powerful wind and rain storm. Unfortunately all 15 nests were lost but because of the work of our members Al Hamill, Ron Delcourt, Richard Carr and Claude Radley of HBMO, the rack was put back up in two days. Many Martins returned and rebuilt their nests so all was not lost. The last report I saw from Claude indicated that there were 41 pair at the site.

On July 8th Nature Canada along with members from HBMO and OPMA under the direction of Kevin Fraser from the University of Manitoba placed 25 Motis's on five families of Martins. Hopefully, we will start to get some feedback next year on just what these Martins are doing during their stay at Holiday Beach. (See "As published in the Windsor Star" in this newsletter").

Many birds both adult and young have been banded at the Holiday Beach site thanks to Claude Radley and his crew from HBMO. I also am glad to report that Ron Delcourt who is a member of OPMA is learning how to band under the direction of Claude Radley. We have one other bander in our group from Walpole Island and that is Richard Carr. He has been busy banding many birds on the Island. Banding of course is one way we can keep track of the birds for many years.

We had our annual get together at Henry and Elaine Wolting's house in Blenheim on June 24th. We had great weather and great food. All 38 members who attended had a great time socializing and were able to discuss their colonies with other members. I would like to thank the Woltings for being great hosts and all those who brought the food that was enjoyed by everyone.

On July 26th John Balga made a presentation at our site at Colchester Harbour. He was able to present information about the club and the site to members of Essex Blooms. Thank you, John, for representing the club at this event. I might add that Marianne Knapp, John Balga, and Tim O'Hagan monitored the new site at Essex Arena in Essex. It had one pair and from the last report fledged one Martin. The Colchester site had all six compartments filled and it fledged 18. Thanks to Al Hamill for making a final nest check to confirm the numbers.

OPMA will be setting up a booth at the Holiday Beach Hawk Festival on the weekends of September 9th and 10th and September 16th and 17th. We will need volunteers to help out at the booth. If you feel that you would like to help out on one of these days let me know at 519-738-3476 or kp_hamel@live.ca so I can add your name to the list. This list is given to the park so all our volunteers can get in for free. I hope to have the list completed by the end of August so let me know as soon as you can.

Finally, our club continues to maintain a good membership. We are all like-minded people who want to see the Martin continue to thrive in our area. We are here to help those who want to get started in the hobby and to promote the joy of being a landlord. Just remember, we as landlords play a very important role in maintaining the population of the Martin by providing them a place to raise and fledge their young.

See you at our final meeting of the year at: **Orchard View Golf Course, Ruthven
September 30, 2017 9:00 am**

Paul Hamel, Chairperson



Nature Canada, with whom we partner in the conservation efforts of Purple Martins, have a lot of interesting information on their website about these endeavours. Also, they are trying to understand the reasons behind the decline of the Purple Martin, and to that end, our colony results are very helpful to them.

So, again this year we are asking our members to complete the Nature Canada Survey Form regarding their results for 2017. The form can be accessed directly by clicking on this link:

[Purple Martin Landlord Survey \(PDF\)](#)

Welcome to our new members !

*Dick & Fran Segedin, Wheatley, Ont
Casey McKibbon, Kenmore, Ont
Karen Koestler, Leamington, Ont
Bob & Judy Forbes, Forest, Ont
Deb & Carl Kotevich, Harrow, Ont
Helen Bedford, Chatham, Ont*



Spring, 2017

The following paragraph was the opener in an email sent out on May 4, 2017:

“The weather forecast is often wrong, but it seems certain that we are entering a cold and rainy period that our purple martins cannot survive without help. Yesterday, May 3rd, was their last good feeding day here. Beginning today, for the Leamington area: a five-day stretch in which the first 3 are no-feed days, followed by two very marginal days.”

I want to share two responses I received, each telling their own success story! Congratulations to Loretta, and to John. Your birds will remember!

From Loretta Mousseau (Cayuga, Ont)

Thank you for this information. We got our Martins to take crickets! We had to wait until the wind and the rain stopped before we could try feeding. But just misting and not as windy today. Success! Mealworms and scrambled egg are being ignored. I heated up beanbags- magic bag) and stuffed one compartment in each house with the hot packs. I hope the poor birds can dry off and warm up in the adjoining compartments.

From John Balga (Essex, Ont)

Thank you for the crickets – The martins enjoyed them for the first time yesterday morning. Three of them learned the skill from somewhere as they had no problems.....the others not so.

John’s experience supports the idea that our martins may arrive back home already trained to accept food, even if we ourselves haven’t done the training! It seems that these birds are making some evolutionary changes in how they survive, and we get to be part of that – it is exciting!

Mary Wilson



The picture below is of Martins flying up to and clinging to the side of a building to pick off “fishflies”. These flies, to those who don’t live close to a lake and aren’t familiar with them, swarm in late June and this year well into July. Their common name derives from the stench they leave behind as they die. There were a number of Martins exhibiting this behaviour over a several-day period, and I found it quite interesting. This building is several hundred yards from our (Mary & Jim’s) old colony on Danforth Avenue in Leamington, and those birds were all trained in supplemental feeding. Is this possibly another learned survival adaptation?

Some people think that Martins don’t eat them – but any of us who live in fishfly territory have probably seen the adults come in looking like they’ve grown a full beard, due to all of the legs and tails sticking out of their beaks!



Manitoba Purple Martin Club’s founder receives the Manitoba Premier’s Award for Volunteerism

(excerpts from the [Winnipeg Free Press](#) May, 2017)

ERNIE DIDUR is passionate about purple martins. He became so fascinated by the swallows, that he and a few fellow purple martin enthusiasts founded the Manitoba Purple Martin Club in 1980. He has served as the club’s president since 1982. Didur, 77, first noticed the birds in the late 1970s when two purple martins tried to nest in a two-holed birdhouse in his yard. He enlarged the entrance holes to the birdhouse and the purple martins stayed. “I didn’t know what the heck these birds were, so I started researching,” says DidurI found out that they were purple martins, that they go to Brazil each year and that they eat mosquitoes. I thought, geez, these birds are beneficial to humans.”

Since 1982, Didur and the club have erected six purple martin towers in Manitoba. Each tower contains 20-plus apartment-style purple martin houses. They also erected 160 purple martin houses throughout the province at schools, museums, hospitals and cemeteries, and more than 90 per cent of the 16-room, castle-style houses were placed at seniors homes.

Didur organizes an annual picnic for club members each July, as well as a Grey Cup raffle that serves as the club’s biggest fundraiser. He also writes a quarterly newsletter that includes news and tips about purple martins, as well as news about the club’s 75 members. Didur’s years of work earned him the Premier’s Volunteer Service Award at the 34th annual Volunteer Awards last month. Didur says the recognition was unexpected. For him, one of the best parts of being involved in the club is receiving feedback from residents of the seniors’ homes where the club puts up birdhouses. “The thanks we get in letters coming back from them is better than money,” he says.

(What one man has done for Martins – inspiring!)

Devastation at Holiday Beach *(Al Hamill)*



On Sunday evening, May 28th, the gourd rack at HBMO blew over. Nothing could be done Sunday night. All nests and eggs were ruined but the rack and gourds were all intact.

On Monday morning, Claude (HBMO) acquired the necessary approval to put the rack back up. A new hole was dug, cement mixed and by a little after noon a new main post was put in place.

On Tuesday morning, the repaired rack was put in place. Within 5 minutes of re-establishing the gourd rack, Martins were already in the gourds checking things out.

Many thanks to our OPMA members Richard Carr, Ron Delcourt, Al Hamill, and anyone else who assisted but whose name may have been missed. Thanks also to HBMO and Claude for their assistance.

A GREAT RECOVERY was accomplished!

Message from Mary:

I sincerely apologize for the lateness of this “first” newsletter of 2017. Thank you for your understanding as I dealt this spring with the extended illness and eventual loss of a lady who was like a mom to me. Life is now at a “new normal”, and I am getting back on schedule. I hope you all have had a wonderful PM season, and look forward to catching up with everyone on September 30th.

Purple Martin Project lands at Holiday Beach

As published in the Windsor Star



Mary Caton

Published on: July 12, 2017

mcaton@postmedia.com

Photo at left:

Nature Canada team leader Kevin Fraser and Marine Morel, a summer intern from France, place tracking devices on Purple Martins at Holiday Beach July 8, 2017.

Photo courtesy of Nina Radley WINDSOR STAR

About 25 purple martins from a colony at Holiday Beach are now sporting tiny lightweight backpacks as part of a large North American study into the species' migration habits. The trackers were placed on the birds last weekend by a team of experts led by Kevin Fraser, an assistant professor from the University of Manitoba and an expert on songbird migration.

Nature Canada launched the Purple Martin Project in 2014 as part of an international effort to understand the reasons behind their significant population decline.

Fraser has been studying the issue longer than that.

The trackers deployed at Holiday Beach are relatively new technology using automated radio telemetry. The backpack sends a signal every 10 seconds that's recorded by a network of transmission towers located along the shorelines of the Great Lakes.

"Purple martins are declining steeply like a lot of other swallows and we're losing them for reasons we don't understand," Fraser said. Fraser and the others hope to learn more about where the martins go to roost and prepare for the 10,000-mile winter migration to South America.

"Do they use one marsh, or 20, that will be all new information we'll get," he said. "This will be our first look into what space they need. It's sort of a new piece of the puzzle."

Fraser's team also tagged martins at Port Bruce and on Amherst Island near Kingston.

The backpacks weight just 0.67 grams. They're designed so the harness frays and unravels allowing the pack to eventually fall off. The battery on each pack lasts 75 days.

An inspection team will return next spring to ensure that no bird is still carrying a pack.

Holiday Beach has about five purple martin houses. The team installed temporary trap doors on the individual nest holes of several, holding them open with fishing line that runs down to the ground like a spider's web.

When all the birds had crawled into the nest to sleep with their young at night, the lines were snipped and the trap doors closed. The researchers along with a number of local volunteers return at dawn to lower the houses and remove the adults to be measured and tagged.

As aerial insectivores, purple martins feed exclusively on flying insects and their demise would cause ripples across the food chain according to the Purple Martin Conservation Association.



Kevin placing baby with motis back in the nest box

Contact any of the members below with questions:

Board Members:

Paul Hamel 519-738-3476kp_hamel@live.caChairperson
 Lyle Papps..... 519-354-6404Vice-Chair, Natural gourds
 Al Hamill 519-738-6932alhamill70@gmail.com.....Treasurer, Finances
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 Don BisonnetteAdvisor
 Audrey Festeryga...Advisor
 John Balga..... 519-800-2504martinman@hotmail.com.....Advisor, Website

Volunteers:

Fern Bellavance.....Lending Library
 Nancy Robson 519-326-8557nancyrobson@gmail.comMedia
 Carolyn ReckerGoodwill Ambassador

Resources:

OPMA website: www.ontariopurplemartins.ca OR 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

Our BBQ and Potluck Meeting – June 24th



For the 2nd year in a row, our members Henry & Elaine Wolting of Blenheim offered their home for our meeting.

They have a wonderful site, with an indoor area for the potluck “spread”, two ponds, and an impressive array of Martin housing.

The weather was lovely, and the food delicious. Thank you to all who brought a contribution to the table!

Henry lowered his “round house”, and we got a look at some nests with young of various ages.

Thank you,
Henry & Elaine!



