



# Camrose Plans Annual Wildlife Conservation Festival

CAMROSE, Alberta - Great things happen when a community unites to achieve a common goal. In Camrose Wildlife and Stewardship Society's (CWSS) case, a volunteer-based environmental group, that achievement is the preservation the Purple Martin, a highly-friendly and beautiful species of swallow.

"Researchers are in the process of determining why this species is in such large decline," says Glen Hvenegaard, chairperson for CWSS. "The Purple Martin eats insects while flying, which leads to speculation of a wide range of causes including climate change and pesticides used on their primary food source. We're working with researchers to develop conservation programs."

Part of this work is CWSS's sixth-annual Camrose Purple Martin Festival, which will be held on June 21 at the Stony Creek Centre. With support from the Alberta Conservation Association and Ross Agri,

the day-long event includes key-note speakers, children's activities and field trips, all in the spirit of wildlife conservation. "We currently have 150 pairs of Purple Martins in our human-provided homes, a population that has grown 20-fold since 2002," says Hvenegaard. "Developing engagement is a longterm process. It requires commitment and passion, and we're pleased to encourage our community to be a part of the solution."

CWSS's environmental commitment extends year-round with a wide-range of community programming and initiatives. In 2002, alongside their city government, the group developed the Camrose Wildlife and Greenspace Stewardship Project, a series of environmental activities that promote the enhanced management of greenspace and wildlife in the Camrose area. The project, which has transformed how the city approaches their planning, was recently recognized as an Emerald Awards Finalist in the Community Group or Not-for-Profit category.

"It's affirming to know that an agency like the Emerald Awards sees our work as worthwhile," says Hvenegaard. "It's a real pat on the back. We hope it brings more awareness to our cause."

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*Tom and Evva Tomaszewski demonstrating a Purple Martin nest box for participants in the Camrose Purple Martin Festival*

The Emerald Awards, a uniquely-Albertan award presented by the Alberta Emerald Foundation, celebrate and recognize environmental stewardship in the province. Recipients of the 24th Annual Emerald Awards will be announced June 4 at the Citadel Theatre in Edmonton.

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