

Chaetura

SUMMER 2009

Driftwood Wildlife Association

Volume 14



A Tribute to Althea Sherman

For years the neighbors around National, Iowa, talked of the Chimney Swifts' Tower that was originally built there by Althea Sherman and removed in the early 1960's. In 2006, a group of local residents got together to find the original tower and request its return to National. That request was denied.

The group, Friends of the Sherman Swift Tower (FSST), opted to build a historically accurate replica of the Tower. The replica would provide a place for Chimney Swifts to nest, and would also be suitable for educational tours.

The mission of the Friends of the Sherman Swift Tower is to preserve the memory of Althea Sherman and her remarkable family, to build a replica of the 1915 Chimney Swifts' Tower, and educate people about the Chimney Swift.

Althea Sherman and her sister, Dr. E. Amelia Sherman are remembered by local people with respect and affection. Their involvement in the community was widespread and their impact is still felt by many. There was widespread support for the project and funds were raised to build the replica. The exterior of the tower was set in place just yards from Althea's final resting place at the National Cemetery along Highway 52, six miles north of Garnavillo, Iowa, in the fall of 2008, and the interior was completed in the spring of 2009. Many dedicated volunteers assisted with donations of materials, time and resources.

The dedication of the replica was held on June 6, 2009. Ninety hardy

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Photos courtesy of Deanna Krambeer

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souls turned out in the wind, cold and rain for the dedication. Adults who visited the Sherman sisters and bird tower as children shared their memories with the crowd. Others had fond memories of playing in the tower as children; it was obvious the Shermans and the tower hold a special place in the lives of many.

The chimney in the tower was not completed in time to attract swifts, but it is hoped the local swift population will nest in the chimney next year. In the meantime, the tower is open the first Saturday afternoon of the month for tours led by volunteers. Next year, when the swifts begin nesting, the tower will be closed to visitors. Tours for people will be held in the spring and fall, when no disturbance to the swifts will occur. There is an informational sign featuring original artwork by Althea Sherman at the site, and we are working on other interpretive media.

For more information, contact FSST, PO Box 24, St. Olaf, Iowa 52072.

Deanna Krambeer

The following is from *Chimney Swifts: America's Mysterious Birds Above the Fireplace* by Paul and Georgean Kyle, 2005, Texas A&M University Press:

Althea Rosina Sherman was one of the most diligent and persistent students of Chimney Swift nesting behavior of the 20th century. Her extremely meticulous observations began when she was 65 years old. Her watchfulness spanned 16 years (1918 - 1934) and concluded only when her age and health prevented her from continuing. Fred J. Pierce reported: "Her day-to-day observations of Chimney Swifts filled two notebooks—a total of 400 pages and approximately 91,000 words written in longhand". When her book *Birds of an Iowa Dooryard* was edited by Mr. Pierce and published posthumously in 1952, the third chapter was entitled "The Home Life of the Chimney Swift." She begins that chapter by explaining that she was fascinated and impressed by a paper written in 1899 by Mary F. Day of New Jersey and published in *Bird Lore*. Ms. Day had apparently used a hand-held mirror inserted into a stovepipe hole of a chimney to observe and record the nest building activities of a pair of Chimney Swifts. However, Miss Sherman notes:

"... many things were left unseen by her which better facilities for viewing might have revealed. Some of these things I am now able to describe."

In the next paragraph it becomes immediately apparent why Miss Sherman was able to make such detailed and accurate observations that few have surpassed to this day:

"Many years ago I planned a building which was not built until 1915. For lack of a better name, it is called the Chimney Swifts' tower. Its dimensions are 9 feet square and 28 feet to the top of the chimney. The artificial chimney is 2 feet square, and runs down the center of the tower to a depth of 14 feet; the chimney was built of pine flooring with the rough sides of the boards turned within. A door opens into the chimney and a stationary ladder may be climbed for closing and opening the top of the chimney in fall and spring, respectively. Auger-holes serve as peepholes on two sides, while on the other two sides are windows. The frames of these windows are not vertical but are in two planes which meet at an obtuse angle. Into this space which juts into the chimney one's head can be introduced, and through the glass a view to the bottom or to the top of the chimney may be obtained without unduly frightening the birds."

Ms. Sherman's tower was the inspiration for the first towers built on what is now the Travis Audubon Society's Chaetura Canyon Bird Sanctuary and Chimney Swift Observatory. The acceptance of those two original towers by nesting swifts inspired the Driftwood Wildlife Association's North American Chimney Swift Nest Site Research Project. Data from the project resulted in the tower designs described in our two books *Chimney Swifts* and *Chimney Swift Towers* as well as the many hundreds of Chimney Swift towers that have been constructed all across North America over the past 20+ years as a result of Althea's ingenuity.

Georgean and Paul Kyle, Editors



Report from Travis Audubon's Chaetura Canyon Bird Sanctuary

*For a virtual hike through Chaetura Canyon
go to www.ChimneySwifts.org
and click on the "Chaetura Canyon Bird Sanctuary" link*

Chaetura Canyon is an eight acre bird sanctuary owned by the Travis Audubon Society in Central Texas that is managed by Sanctuary Stewards Georgean and Paul Kyle. Research and educational efforts on behalf of Chimney Swifts have been conducted on this property since 1989. Sixteen structures constructed specifically for Chimney Swift nesting and roosting are available for swift habitation. Eight towers are constructed of wood; the other eight are constructed of concrete block. Thirteen structures were utilized by swifts in 2008, seven of the wooden and six of the concrete block.

A total of 71 eggs were produced by the 13 swift pairs. Fifty-two of those eggs hatched. Three nestlings less than ten days of age expired. The remaining 49 nestlings fledged.

2008 was the fourth driest year in 150 years of recorded history for the area. The yearly rainfall of 20.29 inches was the least since the drought of the 1950's.

The first swift arrived on March 20; the last bird was sighted on October 14. Chimney Swifts were present at Chaetura Canyon for 208 days.

CHIMNEY SWIFT PRODUCTIVITY AT CHAETURA CANYON – 2008

	Tower	# Eggs Laid	# Eggs Hatch	# Young Fledged
Wooden:	North Observation	5	5	5
	South Observation	5	5	5
	Prism	5	3	1
	West Field	6	3	2
	12' Demonstration	4	4	4
	Garden (Marlene)	12	9	9
	Workshop	7	2	2
Concrete:	South Pool	4	3	3
	Castle	4	2	2
	Castle Companion	6	5	5
	Castle Gate	4	3	3
	S.W. Fence Corner	5	5	5
	Driveway	4	3	3
	Totals	71	52	49

Here and there 1.0



*Photo courtesy of
Michael & Jaime Postolan*

Glenham, NY

Our Tower was built 24" X 24" with an 18 foot chamber standing 21' overall. This year we start construction on our new home here. The Tower will go exactly where the old chimney once stood. The old house will fall to demolition this fall after migration of the swifts.

July 12, 2008: All four eggs have hatched and the nestlings are doing well. What an experience!

Michael & Jaime Postolan

Marble Falls, TX

I just completed my chimney swift tower, and I am looking forward to having some renters. Last year my neighbors had a roost of chimney swifts during the fall migration in their stone chimney. I estimated 50 to a 100 birds roosting at night. What a site. They are going to leave the chimney open.

Fred Zagst



Photo courtesy of Mozart Dedeaux

Moss Point, MS

We got our second swift tower up and it is very "natural". We have had a pair of swifts in the tower for the last week or so.

*Mozart Mark Dedeaux
Education Coordinator
Pascagoula River Audubon Center*

Dallas, TX

I just finished building our first tower here using your book as a guide. I was able to build and finish it in about 35 hours. I can probably reduce that next time as I will somewhat know what I'm doing. The finished tower looks great.

Gary Lawrence



Photo courtesy of Jerry Davis

Southern Illinois

Two years ago, I erected a swift tower, made from a large hollow log. Chimney swifts have raised young there both of the past two years, and are building again this year. I watch the pair enter the log each evening at dusk.

I purchased your book, and constructed a tower per your specifications, except I mounted it on old power poles. So far, I've not seen swifts use the new structure, although I see several swifts flying around in the sky late in the day. The two houses are 100 feet apart, with the log house being next to my barn.

Jerry W. Davis, DVM

Bayside, TX

Saw 5 swift's flying over my property close to 8:00 PM tonight, then I saw two enter the tower I made last fall. They did not come out, probably for the night. Looks like the tower I made worked and they are moving in.

John Koenig

Here and there 1.1



Photo Courtesy of David Matthews

Austin, TX

Here is a picture of the finished tower. This is a wonderful gift from the Travis Audubon Society's Urban Habitat Committee to Small Middle School. We are anxiously awaiting occupants.

David Matthews

Austin, TX

We were excited to discover 8 swifts using our swift tower as a roost. Tonight was the first time we confirmed use of the tower (built 3 years ago). Dana happened to notice swifts overhead at dusk, and when we came out to watch, they began to drop into the tower rather than our chimney (which is used for nesting each year). We are very excited - good news.

*Mark Wilson
Dana Kuykendall*



*Photo courtesy of
Denice & Michael Dan*

Waynesboro, VA

We built a Chimney Swift tower at our mountain house near Waynesboro, Virginia and are still waiting for the spring arrival of our flock.

Denice & Michael Dan

Holt, MO

Our two towers are used from the time the swifts arrive until they migrate in Oct. We have up to 300 some years using them at migration time and at least 70 in the Spring when they arrive until most find nesting places. Our towers are the most used bird houses we have!!!

Both of the swift pairs in the towers attached to the barn laid six eggs each. All twelve eggs hatched and all of the nestlings fledged. All was well this year!

Joyce Rosson



Photo courtesy of Joan Singh

Austin, TX

This is the recently completed Chimney Swift tower at Convict Hill Quarry. Ben Reyes and Alfredo Gonzales are the crew leaders. Ben did most of the carpentry, and Alfredo egged him on. We are working on displays of the quarry history and the story behind the volunteers. Allison Hardy is working on a map, also. Austin Parks Foundation paid for the materials with a grant for the neighborhood. I am very pleased with the finished product!

*Joan Singh
Austin Parks and Recreation
Garrison Park*

Maryland Heights, MO

I just wanted to let the association know that the City of Maryland Heights has erected four towers within our parks this year. We have not seen any swifts using the tower as of yet but know that they will come.

*Mary L. Vaughan
Director of Parks and Recreation*

Here and there 1.2



*Photos courtesy of
M.E. And Fred Lewis*

Homer, LA.

We now have three towers. The first one was completed two years ago. The two new ones were completed this spring in time for Spring migration. Birds are going in each tower daily, but no nest to this date. Will keep you posted.

M E and Fred Lewis



Photo courtesy of John Weikel

Beaumont, TX

The photo shows my recent four foot addition to my chimney after hurricane Ike. The top entrance is a battery box with the bottom removed and the gables are also open for passage or peeping out. There is one and one half inches of gap between the walls and siding, top to bottom, for air flow cooling.



Kansas City, MO

We have completed our Chimney Swift tower – thanks to the help of your books.

Mary and Donald Arney



Lago Vista, TX

We recently completed an accessible trail from our parking lot to a photo blind site at the Balcones Canyonlands National Wildlife Refuge. I would like to move the Chimney Swift tower next to the sidewalk so more people can read about Chimney Swifts. We hope to lift it with our front end loader or fork lift.

*Deborah Holle
Fish and Wildlife Service*

Editors' Note: The tower was braced to the surrounding kiosk with 2 x 4s. The outside of the kiosk was sheathed with 1/2" plywood attached with screws before the move. The entire structure was then lifted and moved to the new site pictured in the photo above. The site is about 100 yards from the original location.

Here and there 1.3



Photo courtesy of Jim Ash

Long Island, NY

Two years ago we at the South Fork Natural History Museum in Bridgehampton, Long Island, New York installed a Chimney Swift tower on a barn that we have on our property. To date, we have been unable to attract nesting swifts. I have a suspicion that the Northern Mocking Bird that seems to be perpetually perched on top of the tower might be a factor.

*Jim Ash
Executive Director*

Editors' Note: It is unlikely that the Northern Mockingbird would be a deterrent to Chimney Swifts. It is actually not unusual for a tower to remain unoccupied for several years -- particularly in rural areas. Some of the towers we have installed have taken as long as five years to attract Chimney Swifts.



Photo by Paul Kyle

Austin, TX

After nearly five years, the original Kiosk Tower at Great Hills Park hosted a family of swifts for the third year. Inspired by the belated success, a second tower was constructed at this neighborhood park in 2008 by Eagle Scout candidate Areen Pitaktong.



Photo by Paul Kyle



Photo courtesy of Rich Merritt

New York, NY

I am pleased to report that we are installing three Chimney Swift towers in three State Parks in New York City this month. We are using the 12' wooden tower model as described in the Kyle & Kyle "Chimney Swift Towers" book. We plan to pour the concrete bases this week and erect the towers next week to ensure the towers are in place before the return of the Swifts. Next year we plan to install three more towers and will have towers in all five boroughs of the city. At that time we plan to produce interpretive panels to accompany the towers. Attached is a photo of our first completed tower.

I have given your informational pdf to New York State Parks that plan to copy and distribute it at the three parks with the towers. We are also preparing a "What is that Structure?" flyer that is customized for the parks audience and has information about the towers and swifts biology in general.

*Rich Merritt
Audubon New York*

Here and there 1.4



Photos courtesy of Ray Emmons

Holly Springs, MS

Ray Emmons built the first Chimney Swift tower at Strawberry Plains Audubon Center in Holly Springs, MS. They have requested that he construct another tower. Ray modified the tower foundation and shared his construction technique.

Here are photos of the foundation using the 8" diameter cardboard concrete tubes. The hole was dug 24" x 24" x 24". I felt it was easier to dig one large hole and backfill than dig 4 - 8" ones. I temporarily spaced and leveled the tubes in the hole and set the tower legs of the first section into the tubes. The 4 - 1 1/2" angle irons were 6' each and the 2 - 8" diameter 4' tubes were cut in two.

After the tower legs were placed in the tubes I inserted 6" pieces of 3/8" rebar into previous drilled holes in angle iron legs. Two per leg. I then leveled the tower and secured it in place and also made sure the tubes were still level and centered around each leg. I put about 2" of 1" crushed rock at the bottom of each tube for an underpinning. It took about 4 1/2 80 lb - bags of concrete for the Strawberry Plains tower and 5 bags for the one at my home. I'm guessing the difference was in the size of the 8" tubes. They come in slightly different diameter so they can fit inside one another for storage and shipping. Next week I'll pour the 4' x 4' x 3 1/2" slab.

The second two photos show the final stages of the tower foundation. If I do another tower with the 8" cardboard tubes I'll probably cut the tubes to 20" in length or increase the angle iron a few inches to give more of a clearance between bottom of tower and slab. I ended up with only 19" clearance.

I used 8 - 80 lbs bags of concrete for the 3 1/2" slab. Altogether there was almost a 40% savings on the concrete used. For me, the best part was being able to divide the concrete mixing into two days.

Ray Emmons

Editors' Note: We have had several folks ask about using tube forms around the legs rather than pouring the slab. We have always discouraged it because soil between the tubes would allow grass to grow under the tower between the tower legs and provide ways for ants to gain access to the nest chamber if not constantly maintained. Ray's thinner slab serves the same purpose as the thicker one -- brilliant! Of course here in Central Texas, digging down 24" through cretaceous limestone is not really an option, so we will continue to use the thicker slabs. We envy those of you who live where there is actual soil!

Here and there 1.5



Photos courtesy of Edward C. Peña



Knoxville, TN

I just finished building a Chimney Swift tower as my Eagle Scout Project. The tower is located at the Knoxville Zoo and was built with the help of friends and volunteers from Troop 141.

*Edward C. Peña / Boy Scouts of America Troop 141 /
Ebenezer United Methodist Church*

New Life for Older Towers



Photo by Georgan Kyle

Many of the first towers built were sided with wood - typically T1-11. While this material is still the preferred choice for inside, there are now better products available to sheath the outside. Hardi ® products are now our favorite. It is durable, holds the paint well, does not weather and is slick enough to eliminate the need for a predator guard around the top of the towers.

We prefer the 1/4" smooth soffit that comes in 4' x 8' sheets, but it also comes in a variety of thickness and widths. The only drawback is that you will need a special blade designed to cut this material which is actually a concrete product.

When installed over existing siding and corner trim boards, an extra air space is created which helps insulate the towers from extreme temperatures - cold and hot.

Once the siding is installed, we cover the corners with 2" x 2" metal flashing attached with sheet metal screws - making the tower slick from top to bottom and safe from climbing predators.

“A Swift Night Out!”

A SWIFT NIGHT OUT is a continent-wide effort to raise awareness about and encourage interest in Chimney Swifts and Vaux's Swifts. The project has become a favorite late summer event for professional and amateur birdwatchers alike.

As summer draws to a close and the swifts have finished raising their young, these fascinating aerial acrobats begin to congregate in communal roosts prior to their migration in the fall. Some roosts may consist of an extended family group of a half a dozen birds or so, but the larger sites can host hundreds or even thousands of swifts! We encourage you to involve your local Audubon chapters, bird clubs, scout groups and neighbors in this exhilarating spectacle.

Here is how it works: Keep your eyes to the skies at dusk in late July and watch for areas where swifts are feeding. Look for a tall shaft, chimney or similar structure to locate where Chimney Swifts (central to east coast) or Vaux's Swift (Pacific coast) go to roost in your area.

This year, on one night over the weekend of **August 7, 8, 9, and / or September 11, 12, 13** observe the roost starting about 30 minutes before dusk and estimate the number of swifts that enter. When you have your number, email us at:

DWA@austin.rr.com

Decline of Bird Species Signals a Warning

(joint release from USFWS, Audubon, TNC, Cornell Lab of Ornithology, American Bird Conservancy)

(WASHINGTON, D.C. – March 19, 2009) Secretary of the Interior Ken Salazar today announced the release of the first ever *U.S. State of the Birds* report. Based on a new analysis of 40 years of data, the report was developed by a partnership among the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, the U.S. Geological Survey, state government wildlife agencies and non-governmental organizations. The report documents the decline of bird populations in many habitats due to habitat loss, invasive species and other factors. At the same time, it provides heartening examples of how sustained habitat conservation and other environmental efforts can reverse the decline of many bird species.

The report can be viewed at: **www.stateofthebirds.org**



Photo by Lydia Middendorf

Keep It Simple - Keep It Safe!

As more and more Chimney Swift towers go up all across North America, there is a tendency by some to want to embellish the towers with art of different types. Graphics can add to the pleasing appearance of a tower, but keep in mind that the towers are primarily habitat for the swifts. Things to consider when decorating a Chimney Swift Tower include:

- Keep colors light to reflect heat: Dark colors can cause over-heating
- Avoid three-dimensional art: objects that protrude act as ladders for predators
- Never include moving or loose parts that can cause noise that will frighten the swifts
- Always include a predator guard around the top (not the bottom): only towers that are completely slick are safe without predator guards

SWALLOWS - MARTINS - SWIFTS WORLDWIDE

This website encourages communication among professional and amateur alike in the study of all species of swallows, martins and swifts worldwide. Questions and discussions concerning the amount of calcium in swift diets and the calcium required for the formation of eggs has been recurring over the years. The following posts based on the European swift Apus apus may help shed light on the uniqueness of the swift family.

<http://tech.groups.yahoo.com/group/Swallows-Martins-Swifts-Worldwide/>

**A link to Swallows-Martins-Swifts-Worldwide can be found on our web site at
www.ChimneySwifts.org**

Vaux's Swifts

New publication available:

FURTHER DECLINE OF VAUX'S SWIFTS IN NORTHEASTERN OREGON: A NEST BOX STUDY

Evelyn L. Bull, U.S. Forest Service, PNW Research Station, La Grande, OR 97850 ebull@fs.fed.us
Charles T. Collins, Department of Biological Sciences, California State University, Long Beach, CA 90840

Vaux's Happening

Larry Schwitters from Washington State shared information on a unique Audubon project.

"The Vaux's Happening is an Audubon and community citizen science project attempting to locate the chimneys in Washington State that are used as group "communal" roosts, during migration. We also want to count how many birds are using which chimneys when."

"Vaux's Happening was successful behind my wildest dreams. We counted over 183,000 swifts going into 15 different chimneys across the state. They showed up in mid April and we continued counting at two sites until well into June. I've put a web site together. A work in progress. http://web.mac.com/l.schwitters/Vauxs_Happening/"

Larry Schwitters
Project Coordinator
Vaux's Happening

Are You a Member of the Driftwood Wildlife Association?

If not, please join our Chimney Swift Conservation efforts!

Dues and contributions help:

- ***maintain the ChimneySwifts.org website***
- ***publish the newsletter, Chaetura***
- ***produce and distribute educational information***

If you are a Member, please renew ASAP

Visit the web site and click on "Membership" for information and categories of support...

Adaptations to a Lack of Chimneys?

In the 1950's Dr. Richard Fischer was able to write his thesis "Breeding Biology of the Chimney Swift" by observing swifts nesting in buildings rather than chimneys. We still hear of a few cases now and again, but last year we had two reported cases of Chimney Swifts nesting outdoors — sheltered, but in the open. Our usual response is that the birds are Barn Swallows which are commonly mistaken for Chimney Swifts. However, when renowned wildlife photographer and naturalist Greg W. Lasley sent us the following email, we did not doubt that he had found swifts nesting in the open:

Greetings from the Bass Buster Inn which is on Lake Sam Rayburn near Jasper, Texas. There is a pair of Chimney Swifts nesting on an outside wall at the motel, back in a dark hallway. The motel owner says the birds have nested in this same spot for 10 years. He constructed a cardboard platform under the nest (which you can see in the images) in order to catch any youngsters which fall from the nest. The nest is about 7 feet off the ground level. In the shot you can see the nest just above the yellow cardboard platform. Note there is a light in the ceiling just above the nest which stays on all night. All the shots you see were taken about noon today, Saturday, June 14. There are 6 babies in the nest which are about a week old right now.

Just at dusk this evening I got a few frames of the young swifts being fed. Three adults roost for the night on the wall near the nest.

Greg W. Lasley



Photos by Greg W. Lasley

You can see Greg's entire photo array of this unusual documentation and his many other fine photos at his web site:

Greg Lasley Nature Photography
www.greglasley.net

The following week we received an email and photos from Laurie Walker in Sugar Land, Texas who discovered a pair of swifts nesting on the brick wall of her home. The alcove area is protected on three sides and over head. Laurie continued to send photos as the nestlings progressed, and she reported that the swifts had returned to nest again this year .



And then there were 4!!! I guess the 4th one was hiding. Kind of noisy at our house but it has been enjoyable. I imagine they will be leaving us and we can hose down our porch which is a speckled color now. We were told by our home owner association that we needed to power wash our sidewalk next to our house. I told her about our visitors and gained a reprieve.

They are getting louder everyday and are starting to hang out of the nest. I hope you will add Sugar Land as a reported nesting area to your website. We feel so blessed to have been chosen.



The nest fell this morning and the 4 young birds are huddled together on the brick wall. I noticed they are fluttering around a bit in the alcove as if to try out their wings. Parents are around somewhere but don't see much of them since the birds have gotten their feathers. Noticed the other night the parents had their wings covering some of the birds.

I guess they will be leaving soon just like our kids did when they left for UT and UTD. At least we don't have to pay tuition on these kiddos.



Thought you would be interested in knowing that ALL 6 birds continue to return back to the wall each night. They now are spaced apart instead of the cluster formation. I have noticed some of the birds return alone during the day. When there were high winds and rain 4 of them returned.

Laurie Walker

*Photos courtesy of
Laurie Walker*



SWEEPS CORNER

We are proud first-time homeowners and have been delighted to discover that our chimney is housing swifts. Our home inspector told us that we need to get a flue installed in both of our chimneys for safety reasons. The one for the fireplace is already capped and has no birds, the one that vents the water heater and furnace is open to the sky and houses our guests. Even though we would wait until the birds leave, at a minimum, to have the flue installed, we are worried that it will prevent them from returning in future years. Can you offer any guidance on just how dangerous a house without a flue liner really is? It seems to me that a fireplace chimney would be of more concern than one simply venting a furnace and water heater, but I'm no expert. We would love to continue providing a shelter for the birds year after year but I don't want to risk the safety of our home. Also, if we do not have a flue installed, should we expect to have the chimney cleaned yearly to remove bird droppings etc?

Thanks in advance for any advice you can offer, Steve

My name is Paul Hempel. I have been a professional chimney sweep for 30 years and the Kyles and I share a love of Chimney Swifts and work together whenever we can. I will try to answer your questions.

Most local and state codes, as well as national standards, do call for a flue liner in a flue serving a gas furnace and water heater. There are many reasons they are recommended.

First and most importantly to contain the carbon monoxide and other combustion byproducts so they don't leak into your living space through gaps in the mortar and brickwork. Secondly to protect the brick and mortar from the combustion byproducts since they can be quite acidic and will often damage the chimney structure from the inside. And lastly because furnaces and water heaters, especially the newer models, do vent a lot of water from the combustion process into your chimney. This water is again acidic and will attack the bricks and mortar, and in extreme cases can soak through and damage adjacent plaster and interior surfaces.

The liners are generally small metal tubes and require chimney caps to complete their installation. Left uncovered they are death traps for wildlife and if you do have them installed, caps would be best for you and for the local bird and animal population.

That said, a large percentage of the gas flues I see here in the Midwest are unlined and do vent their appliances and house chimney swifts with few problems. If the chimney is relatively new, say less than 30 or 40 years, and the brick and mortar are sound and hard, that's a real plus. Also the older furnaces tend to put enough heat into the chimney that condensation is not such a big problem. The newer ones however will generally cause problems and also won't run at the proper efficiency without a properly sized liner.

If you have an older furnace, and the chimney is not lined, rather than spend the money to line the chimney many homeowners find that upgrading the furnace to a 90+ efficient model that vents through separate plastic pipes rather than the chimney is the most cost effective solution. With the price of energy where it's at, a more efficient furnace will be saving you money within a few years. Changing the water heater out to electric, rather than spending the money for a proper liner just for it, also makes sense in many ways. This approach will save you money over time and also allow you to continue having your swifts around.

I would suggest you hire a reputable local sweep that is "swift friendly" to look over the situation and offer some recommendations. Involving your local furnace man would also be a good idea. A few minutes spent at <http://www.csia.org>, the site for the Chimney Safety Institute of America, should also help you to make a good decision.

I hope this at least gives you a few things to think about, and thanks for your concern for the Chimney Swifts. They do make grand and entertaining house guests.

Paul Hempel, www.BrushesandBrooms.com

School Incinerators: Important Roost Sites

Each year, nesting and roosting sites utilized by Chimney Swifts are being demolished to accommodate new construction. In the past, this has occurred without much public awareness of the consequences to the swifts. As the plight of swifts has become more apparent, individuals have become very active in attempting to save structures, especially those found on school campuses. The large chimney stacks found at school incinerators are exceptional roosting habitat for swifts and their preservation opens venues for education of the students and community. Last years issue of Chaetura highlighted the efforts in Houston, Texas that led to the protection of a large stack at Pershing Middle School. Individuals have made a difference in preserving additional nesting and roosting structures.

"Save the Swifts" / Bloomington IN

I am a city council member in Bloomington IN and we are losing a tall brick chimney to new school construction. It is used by a great number of swifts and the neighbors want to keep the habitat. There is a desire to build a new chimney in a better site on the school property.

We have fundraising efforts planned for the chimney and we have some city money committed to help. The timeline to build the chimney is next summer or fall with completion before the birds return in the spring of 2010.

We plan to build a 38 foot tall chimney measuring 5 feet by 5 feet at the base. Is our chimney height too much? Is there any information that you can give me to help build support for the project in the community?

Chris Sturbaum

The dimensions of your planned chimney are not too large at all. There are so many large roost sites of this size and larger being demolished each year that your structure will be of significant importance to migrating Chimney Swifts.

Chimney Swifts are in decline throughout their breeding range. Their fate truly relies on conservation efforts now. The chimney being proposed for your community would not only be a wise conservation move, it could be a wonderful educational opportunity for the school and model for other similar situations.

General information about Chimney Swifts is available on our web site. Please see the "Chimney Swift Information Handout" link. You can download the document and use it as a basis for educating your community about these fascinating and beneficial birds.

You should also take a look at the Robie Tufts Nature Center in Wolfville, Nova Scotia. It may give you some ideas about how to incorporate additional educational features into the new chimney: http://www.suite101.com/view_image.cfm/197108

Yours is a very innovative and important project for Chimney Swift conservation, and it has the potential for setting the standard for future continent-wide efforts.

The old incinerator chimney at Zilker Elementary in Austin, TX is on a free-standing, locked utility building well away from the school building. What needed to be done was to cover the opening where the furnace doors had once been to prevent the birds from entering the utility building. The work was completed in January to close off the opening (it only took about an hour), and it is now actually much more secure than it was before. Kim McKnight is working with the school principal and the local AFD fire station to remove the screen cover from the chimney.

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We are all thrilled about the progress of our Chimney Swift tower. The principal has been an enthusiastic supporter along with our park committee. Lt. Kevin Fees from the local fire house crew has agreed to take off the wire mesh around the chimney. Now, it's up to the chimney swifts to just find the tower attractive for roosting. I am also looking into a similar project in San Antonio only this time it's a fire station that is being rehabilitated and turned into architectural studios by the Architecture Dept at UTSA. The chimney looks perfect and the professor in charge of the project was amenable to learning more. I am hopeful that we can continue to find more opportunities for conversion of chimneys to roosts.

Kim McKnight

Bonnie Bradshaw, Vice President of WildCare Wildlife Rehabilitation in the Dallas/Fort Worth area of Texas focused on the preservation of the old furnace chimney at Richland High School in North Richland Hills which is scheduled for demolition. She reported that: "The Birdville school district plans to destroy an old boiler stack inhabited by Chimney Swifts. The stack is on the edge of what will be a parking lot for the new high school. The stack easily could be preserved, but instead the school district recently installed a cap on it to prevent chimney swifts from entering." Lobbying efforts brought the following reply from the school district.

"After further investigation, Birdville ISD has located and uncovered a chimney at Holiday Heights Elementary. Since this chimney is less than half a mile from Richland, the district feels it will meet the nesting needs of the chimney swifts as they return from migrating south for the winter. Though the chimney at Richland High School will not be able to be preserved, BISD is taking steps to provide another suitable nesting site for the chimney swifts."

The following letter was submitted toward the cause by the Driftwood Wildlife Association:

It sounds like the Birdville ISD is trying to do the right thing by opening the chimney at Holiday Heights -- still is would be a terrible blow to the conservation of this declining species if the existing roost at Richland were to be destroyed. If they would open all of the capped chimneys in the school district, it could have a significant positive impact on the swifts. The swifts not only need good communal roost sites, but also individual sites in which to nest and rear their young.

There are many old unused incinerator chimney attached to schools all over the country. A wonderful community conservation project would be to inventory all of the chimneys in an ISD, and determine whether or not they are open. The ones that are already open could be monitored as part of the annual continent-wide "A Swift Night Out" project. The ones that are closed off could be opened for the swifts to use and for the schools and students to add to their community's list of "Chimney Swift Habitat". The Birdville ISD could take the lead and make a very positive national name for themselves.

Embracing the conservation of Chimney Swifts is something we should all try to do - simply because it is inexpensive and easy to do. It does not require a lot of money to buy up large tracts of land. It does not require restoring damaged forests or wetlands. The perfect habitat for Chimney Swifts is already all around us. All we have to do is properly maintain our own residential chimneys and make accessible large commercial chimneys and air shafts that serve no contemporary purpose. The rewards will include improved flying insect control, and sustaining biological diversity in our environment.

A final post from the school district:

"We are concerned about the birds and any harm that our project might cause them. We want to do what we can for them. I have given instructions to our Building and Grounds Department to open all available chimneys in the district. Though most of our campuses do not have chimneys, those that we have will be open."

Canadian Update

I am a member of the Kawartha Field Naturalists, a volunteer group and club, based in Fenelon Falls, Ontario, Canada. We are centered in the Kawartha Lakes vacation area, approximately 180 kms north east of Toronto. When our Provincial Government updated our Species at Risk Act and Chimney Swifts were added to our Federal list of Species at Risk in April 2007, we decided to follow your building plans to install Chimney Swift Towers in our vacation communities, to help promote community education and awareness of one of over 40 species at risk, found along our nationally historic Trent-Severn Waterway. To date, our club has installed 5 towers in three communities in the Kawartha Lakes Region, and we have partnered with the Peterborough Field Naturalists and Parks Canada, to install an additional 4 towers within the next month, at two of the lock stations, as well as the Peterborough Zoo and a large Seniors' complex.

Judy Kennedy

Attached is a photo of a masonry-style Chimney Swift towers constructed in Manitoba this year. The photo was taken in Portage la Prairie and was built by Gilbert Labossiere (standing next to tower) on behalf of the Manitoba Chimney Swift Initiative (MCSI).

Mike Quigley



Photo courtesy Mike Quigley

As you know, Chimney Swifts were classified as Threatened in Canada in the latest round of COSEWIC reviews. As such, they now fall under my mandate for research - this exemplifies a statement I saw in one of your newsletters that their classification is a "good news / bad news" situation.

This year, I will be initiating an ambitious research program on Chimney Swifts in southern Ontario. As part of our research, we will be constructing over 25 of the towers for which you have so ingeniously developed the plans.

I would like to know if you have any suggestions on reducing the cost of the towers. I saw that 8' towers seem to work - is that true? What is your experience with shorter (and thus cheaper!) towers?

Joseph J. Nocera
Research Scientist (Species at Risk)
Ontario Ministry of Natural Resources

Thanks very much for your update on Chimney Swift conservation efforts in Canada. We are obviously very pleased with the prospect of that many more towers being made available!

As for cost, the designs and dimensions already make the best economical use of readily available materials -- that has been an integral part of our research. However, we have been very pleased with the acceptance of the 8' structures by nesting swifts. We have even witnessed a fall roost of more than 50 birds in one of our 8' towers. As you say, making the nesting chamber 8' tall does save considerable cost, plus they are easier to install and maintain.

Another factor in cutting the cost is the quantity you are planning to build and install. We have learned from our own construction efforts that making multiple towers at the same time saves a great deal of time. Once you set up to make the individual parts, it is very cost effective to cut all of the parts for several. You may also be able to get some kind of quantity price break on the materials (e.g. 25 towers will require 33 sheets of T1-11 for the nesting chambers, 50 sheets of Hardi siding for the exterior sheathing, etc.)

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I am attempting to put in place a chimneys swift program in Atlantic Canada. I have received a bit of funding and been able to put in place one tower. I am working on other proposals because a lot of Naturalists in my region want to have more towers in the Acadian Peninsula.

Right now the snows have fallen on the region and we will finish the exterior of the tower this winter to match the house. Winter is a big problem for this project since we have to change the base of the tower and set it 3 feet deep in the soil to be sure the ice does not move the base.

Lewnanny Richardson



*Photo courtesy of
Lewnanny Richardson*

The Bert Miller Nature Club of Fort Erie has just recently put up a Tower here. We are excited with this project and hope that we have a nesting pair next year. I first came upon the idea of the Tower two years ago after watching nesting Swifts fly over our Town Ridgeway and all at once dive full blast into an old chimney. I had read about this in the Stokes Guide to Bird Behavior.

I came across a web sight from the East Coast of Canada that talked about constructing the Towers. As a Blue Bird nest box maker and monitor this really caught my interest. I brought it up at one of our executive meetings and the idea got wings. We approached a developer in the area that wanted to off-set some of the bad press he was going through. We convinced him to donate the funds and build the Tower. Last Sunday I went to a Grande opening of one of his new housing subdivisions. He had a flyer made up with the Swift Tower on the front of it and he was asking the residents to donate to our Club and he would match dollar for dollar. We hope that we can raise enough to put up several other towers.

Robert Eberly
Vice President, The Bert Miller Fort Erie Nature Club.

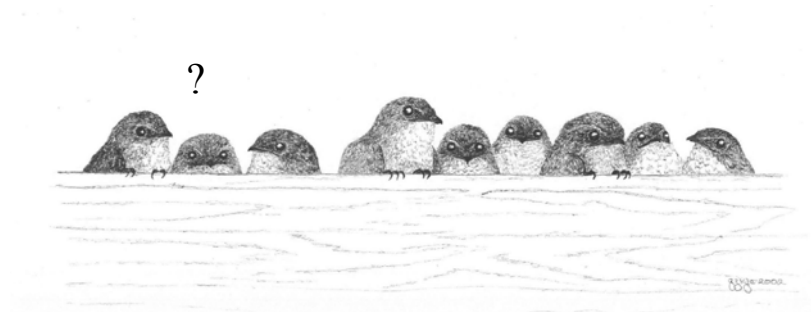
Chaetura Volume 11, 2006 was cited in the following publication:

The Wilson Journal of Ornithology 120(4):784-792, 2008
**IMPACT OF HURRICANE WILMA ON MIGRATING BIRDS: THE
CASE OF THE CHIMNEY SWIFT**

Mark Dionne; Céline Maurice; Jean Gauthier and François Shaffer

ABSTRACT. - We documented the effects of hurricane Wilma (2005) on Chimney Swift (*Chaetura pelagica*) using data from the Quebec Chimney Swift Survey Program and observations of swift mortality during migration. Hurricane Wilma developed in the Caribbean and followed the eastern coast of North America, moving over areas used extensively by migrating birds. Thousands of birds and, among them, Chimney Swifts, were caught and carried by the storm as far as Atlantic Canada and Western Europe. At least 727 swifts were reported dead. Chimney Swift numbers in the province of Quebec, Canada, declined significantly the following year, suggesting adverse consequences of the hurricane on this population over a large area. Roost counts declined by an average of 62%; the total Chimney Swift population decreased by approximately 50%. These results suggest that hurricanes can reduce the breeding population size of some migratory bird species. *Received 20 August 2007. Accepted 30 January 2008.*

QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS...



I live in Clemmons, NC and just moved into a new home and thought I had bats in my chimney, but a friend told me they were Chimney Swifts. Will they be able to safely leave my chimney once the season ends? I do not use my fireplace and do not want to have them removed if they are safe there. I do enjoy their chirping at night. They are quite vocal. Is there anything I should do or know in regard to their habitat in my chimney? Should I call a local wild life expert in? I will probably cap my chimney once they are out. I am considering a Chimney Swift tower for next season as shown on your website.

Eileen Severs
Clemmons, NC

There is no need to call in a wildlife expert. Chimney Swifts have been nesting successfully in chimneys for over 200 years. However, there are some things you can do to make the season easier and safer for you and your Chimney Swifts. Please go to the "Is There Chattering in Your Chimney?" link on our web site for some suggestions.

Even the best tower is not as good as a protected chimney with sympathetic homeowners like you, and we hope you will continue to let the swifts stay. Towers make great additional habitat, so if you are serious about building one, please consider the book "Chimney Swift Towers: New Habitat for America's Mysterious Birds". It has step by step plans and complete material lists for several different types of successful towers.

I have had the chimney swifts nest in my chimney for 3 summers. We enjoy their company throughout June. It gets very noisy in early July like the sound of rattlesnakes then they seem to abruptly leave about this time. Have they gone to roost with the babies with other swifts?

Nancy Jenkins
Biscoe, NC (central rural NC)

Your observations are correct. After the baby Chimney Swift fledge, the family will quite often fly off to roost with other swifts -- usually in a larger site like an industrial chimney or airshaft. However, there are some families that stay together in the nest chimney until fall migration. It is unknown why the behavior varies from family to family.

I'm interested in finding a chimney swift roost. I host purple martins and have been looking for a martin roost for a couple of weeks now. Several weeks ago I noticed some "funny looking martins" flying around my house at dusk and soon found out what they were - chimney swifts! Every evening there are dozens and dozens of them flying around. I know *what* to look for, so my question is *where* I should look.

Veronica
Edinburg, TX

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The swifts tend to circle low around their roost prior to entering at dusk which is about 30 minutes before the official sunset time. So look for lots of swifts, flying low in a circular pattern. They use boiler stacks, industrial chimneys and airshafts, school chimneys and even residential chimneys.

We have chimney swifts that use our residence masonry fireplace every year. After they leave we have the fireplace cleaned and are advised to install a chimney cap because the weather is damaging the masonry. We love to watch the birds every year and we are wildlife conscience and can't bring ourselves to destroy their home permanently. Is there a compromise? Can we install a chimney cap without the screen so they can still use our chimney during the summer? There are other residences in our neighborhood that could do the same thing if it is possible as they have caps with screens to prevent their use currently.

Andrew

There are many chimneys that are capped yet allow access for the swifts. It is the best of both worlds: the masonry is protected as are the water-soluble swift nests. The criteria is that the opening of the flue itself not be restricted in any way and that two opposite sides of the cap provide openings of at least 12" x 12".

Many of the most commonly used caps do not meet these criteria since they have interior bracing and do not stand tall enough above the opening of the chimney. You may need to shop around, but alternatives are available. Another option is to have a cap custom fabricated. A really nice design that we have seen in some parts of the country looks like the back of a Conestoga wagon. Another design is pictured. Mortared bricks are installed on all four corners with a flat concrete slab cap placed on top.



Photo by Paul Kyle

You may want to work with your chimney cleaning service to install a cap in the fall after the swifts have migrated, and then remove it when your chimney is cleaned in March before the swifts return. This will ensure that your chimney is protected during the winter months and still available to the swifts during their nesting season.

Maybe you can help explain why my swifts did not return this year. They have been in the old house chimney for years. For some unknown reason they did not return. And the mosquito problem is not good. They really helped with that problem to the point of never thinking about the mosquitoes. If you could advise how I might get the birds back I would truly appreciate it. Really miss seeing them fly around the house.

Jim Miller
Leoma, TN

We have been getting similar reports from all over North America. Swift pairs are very loyal to their nesting structure and the same pair returns each year to the same site. The offspring also return to the area in which they were born to search for nesting sites of their own. Many hazards face the swifts during their migration and there is little information about Chimney Swifts during their stay in South America. They obviously are affected by environmental changes there. It is quite probable that the swift family that called your chimney "home" perished.

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The most proactive thing to do is exactly what you are doing already -- keeping your chimney open for the swifts to use. With any luck, another swift pair will discover your chimney soon.

Do we know the approximate number of chimney swifts who nest in the U.S. each year?

Karen

We do not. We do know that the total number of Chimney Swifts has declined by nearly 50% since the 1960s. This is based on the information collected and published by the national Breeding Bird Survey. In Canada, the number of Chimney Swifts has been estimated by some sources to have declined by more than 90%. Some provinces have listed Chimney Swifts as an endangered species. This means that they are in real danger of becoming extinct in those locations.

I read that they build ONE NEST per chimney? If that is the case, where do the other 200+ birds which I see enter the chimneys each night from May through August raise their young?

Bill Kepley

That is the case. There has never been a documented case of multiple active nests in any structure. The additional birds in the chimney do not have young. They are non-breeding adults relegated to a communal roost because they were unable to find a suitable place to raise a family. Summer roosts are a relatively new phenomenon (within the past 20 years). It is a strong indicator of how much trouble Chimney Swifts are having. Later in the season young Chimney Swifts that have fledged from other chimneys will also join the roost.

I'd like to build a chimney for swifts in my back yard. In fact, I think I'd like to build several. I'm on a half-acre but it's got mature 50 year old trees along all the fencerows. Do Chimney Swifts have the same sort of clearance requirements that Purple Martins do? By that I mean do they prefer to not have any trees taller than their nest around and do they need a 60' clearance area around the chimneys so that they can swoop in?

Dan Doughty
Kansas City, MO

Swifts do not need the same clearance as martins, and there can be trees that are taller than the tower near by. Basically you just need to keep the towers at least ten feet away from anything that is close enough for potential predators like squirrels, raccoons and cats from being able to jump to the top of the tower. Multiple towers need to be spaced at least 12' apart.

We have been having chimney swifts for many years in our chimney. All of the documented information I have read regarding these birds do not include the courting sounds during the night. The first time we heard this was very alarming and kept us wondering what was this noise? It starts off with a boom or deep thunder sound, low frequency, then the others birds in the chimney sound off with a low cheep. Have you experienced this sound? Please advise.

Gary M. Chartier
Belle Chasse, LA

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The "booming" sound you hear is not a courtship sound, but rather the result of aggression. The sound is made by a bird pushing off from the wall of the chimney and snapping its wings very quickly. It has also been referred to as "thundering and/or clapping". The nesting pair will make the sound to show their possession of the site if another swift gets too close to the active nest.

Although there will only be one active nest in any chimney, it has become common over the past 20 years for non-breeding birds to form roosts in chimneys or towers with a nesting pair. The nest will be in the lower portion of the structure while the non-breeding birds roost closer to the top. A bird from the roost dropping lower can trigger the booming. The booming may also occur if a predator (raccoon, snake, person, etc.) enters the site or disturbs the nesting pair.

I built a swift tower several years ago and it has been a great success. My tower is approximately 24 feet tall and 2 feet in diameter. We always get one nesting pair and maybe a half a dozen orbiting about in the courtship phase but prior to and after the nesting period we do not get the numbers seen at a roost site. Is there anything we can do to promote our tower as a roost site? I remember many years ago watching large numbers using a chimney and thought that was pretty neat. We live in Minnesota. Also, what type of camera do you recommend for use inside the towers?

Jim & Debbie Morrison
Sapsucker Farms

There is really nothing you can do to "encourage" a roost. Although your tower is certainly large enough to support a roost, much of it has to do with the temperament of the swifts that are using your tower. Some nesting pairs are more aggressive than others and will dissuade additional birds from taking up residence. As your nesting swifts produce more and more offspring, those young birds will continue to return to their natal tower each year. The chances are good (but not certain) that after a few years a roost may build.

As for cameras: There are many models on the market that will work well. The most important thing to remember is to NOT use cameras with IR emitters. The ones that are available to the public use a frequency of light that is visible to the swifts. Installing such a device will most likely frighten your swifts from the tower.

The most useful and versatile cameras that we have found are the small "bullet" or "lipstick" cameras. There are a number of them suited for exterior use as long as they are not exposed to direct sunlight. The company we use is called Supercircuits (www.supercircuits.com). The cameras we have used have all been under \$200 including power supplies, microphone and cables. What you should do is go to their site and pick the highest resolution and lowest light sensitivity in the price range you can afford. Black and white cameras are less expensive and always provide brighter images in low light than color. Chimney Swifts are not colorful birds, so that works out well. If you have questions, you can call and speak to a sales rep. They are typically very knowledgeable and helpful.

Mounting your camera in the very top of the tower pointing down is the best option for a free-standing tower. There is no way to predict where swifts will build their nest. If you try to install a camera after nest construction has begun, you will likely cause the birds to abandon the tower.

OBSERVATIONS

Tonight we counted 181 chimney swifts go into the old rice dryer in Dayton. An interesting side note, after the swifts began going in there was a big raccoon that came over the ledge and sat in the opening for 4-5 minutes then went back up over the ledge and disappeared.

Barbara Tilton
Liberty County, TX

I found a Chimney Swift nest in a natural cavity in Wood Co. this past May. It was in a massive oak in the Sabine River bottoms. A giant limb broke off sometime ago in this live tree at about 50-60' up and the birds were going in and out repeatedly. Of course I could not view the nest itself but I assumed the constant morning activity was nest-related (i.e., feeding nestlings).

Cliff Schackelford
Nacogdoches, TX

For years we have had as many as 200 to 300 swifts at this time of year going into an unused chimney on a school/church next door to us. This occurs just before they leave to migrate. This year, from spring on, the most we have seen is 30.

Jeannie Draves
Milwaukee Wisconsin

At 7:25 PM this evening (Sept. 7) my wife and I were taking a walk north on Gray Ave in Webster Groves and noticed many (500+) Swifts circling over the Bristol School. At 7:30 they started going into the south chimney on the school and by 7:45 PM they were all in for the night. They maintained a large circle flying clockwise over the school as a few at a time would drop down into the chimney. Some of them chased off a crow that came nearby but then rejoined the circle. We will check on them again tomorrow evening. This is the first time we had noticed this event.

We arrived at the Bristol School on Gray Ave in Webster Groves at 7:20 PM on Sept. 8 and the Swifts were gathering in large numbers, probably more than last night. A thunderstorm was approaching from the west and seemed to cause them to fly more erratically, sometimes clockwise over the school and then counterclockwise. Two raptors tried to take a meal from the gathering swifts, one looked like a small falcon that went right into the flock and then was chased off by a group of the swifts. The second raptor looked more like a Coopers hawk and stayed above the flock of swifts. The swifts were all into the south chimney by 7:35 PM. The entire flock went into the chimney much faster than last night.

Marv and Karen Staloch
Webster Groves, St. Louis County, MO

CHIMNEY TIME-SHARING REPORTS

We have lived in our home on Lake Athens (in east TX) 16 years. We have a brick chimney which chimney swifts took up residence in the first year our house was built. We did not know what the sounds were at first-I wondered if there was a rattlesnake den under the house. At some point, realized it was chimney swifts and have loved sharing our home with them all these years. Now we must downsize and move and quite honestly the hardest part of leaving this place is my concern for the swifts. I am quite certain that whoever buys this place will have no place in their heart to share this house with any wild creature. I will certainly try to educate them.

Sara Carlson

I just wanted you to know we have a swift family in the chimney again. This is the 4th year in a row they have nested here. The babies started "singing" about a week ago. I can't see the nest well enough to see how many babies they have but their "feeding songs" are very rambunctious. Glad to know that either the same pair is nesting here or at least others feel safe enough to nest here. I look forward to this time every year now hoping they will come back.

Tracy L Coulter
Charlotte, NC

We just moved into an older home in Helotes, Texas at the beginning of June. Over the last several days, we have heard quite a bit of chirping from our full masonry fireplace, and then one of the birds was in our fireplace a couple of evenings ago.

I did some research and found your site and determined we are the proud landlords of Chimney Swifts. We will have our chimney cleaned in the fall and then again in March before they arrive, to ensure they have a better shot at survival. We will also make sure we install the foam rubber, so they have a safe place to land, just in case.

Thank you for your informative site. We look forward to welcoming a flock back next year.

Wendy H. Stack

My name is Connie Mundell, and I found your conservation site during a 4:00 AM Google session. Why was I up at 4:00 AM? Well, I was once again rescuing the overly curious (or clumsy!) swift that slipped through the flue and was fluttering around my living room.

I live in Grapevine, Texas and this is my first close up encounter with chimney swifts. Earlier this year, a storm unceremoniously removed my chimney cap, and my landlord hadn't gotten around to replacing it before I started hearing some kind of birds singing (loudly!) on top of the chimney this spring. A few weeks ago, I started hearing the distinct twittering of babies, and figured that I wouldn't be replacing my cap any time soon. While it has been kind of annoying (those suckers get loud as they get older!) because my living room napping has been on hiatus, it has been pretty cool too. The "WHOOSH" sound that happens when the adult arrives with lunch right before the babies start hollering makes me wish I had a glass chimney, just to see the whole thing in action. I'm not capping the chimney till late this fall, and even then, I may take it off again next spring as I appreciate how beneficial these little guys are and don't mind providing a home...as long as they stay out of the house itself. I'm even willing to give up couch napping during the summer.

Connie "Sleepy" Mundell

(Continued from page 24)

We heard noises in our chimney, called the chimney sweep and he informed us that, probably, we had chimney swifts in our chimney, to be patient and they would be hatching and flying away. We became interested in these birds and have seen them entering our chimney in the evening and the chattering is getting louder.

We had never heard of this bird, we find them fascinating that they come from the Amazon and are hoping they return next year, since our chimney is not covered and therefore was a haven for them to build their nest.

We have a summer cottage at Lakeside, Ohio and just wanted to let you know we are very intrigued with their habits, etc.

Helen Grimmer
Lakeside, OH

We have a very large old house with five chimneys. I am delighted to say that we also have chimney swifts staying. Likely about three thousand of these absolutely adorable birds.

Elizabeth McDonald
Eastman, GA

We were visiting Butler, Missouri in May and saw swifts entering the old chimney of my husband's family's nursery (5/11/08, about 7:30 p.m.). The swifts have evidently roosted there for years. The nursery is no longer in operation. I would guess there were between 250-300 swifts on the two nights we watched. One night was during a terrific wind storm.

Nancy Miller
Viola, Idaho

Chimney Swifts showed up yesterday to try out our newly uncapped chimney. If you have a chimney that was capped for no good reason, and it has either brick or a clay tiled flue with exposed mortar, uncap it and you might have friendly chattering for the next few months. I am sorry to say it has taken me many years to get around to taking the cap off. Now I may go door to door to persuade the neighbors to open their homes to these delightful birds.

Jane Tillman
NW Hills, Austin

This is great news for Jane and for the Chimney Swifts. When you do uncap your masonry chimney, be sure to close the damper to keep the swifts from inadvertently ending up inside the house -- something neither you nor the swifts want to happen!

If you are new Chimney Swift landlords, there is some helpful information at www.chimneyswifts.org Just click on the "Is There Chattering in Your Chimney?" link.

2008 ANNUAL REPORT

Driftwood Wildlife Association

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*A volunteer organization
dedicated to promoting
research
and
providing community education
in the areas of
wildlife rehabilitation,
and avian natural history.*

Officers:

Don Connell.....President

Georgian Kyle.....Secretary

Paul Kyle.....Treasurer

Editors for ***Chaetura***
Georgian and Paul Kyle

Research and Rehabilitation

Although DWA is no longer involved in “hands-on” wildlife rehabilitation, our various publications continue to be useful to rehabilitators throughout North America. A list of these may be found on the “Publications” page of our web site.

Education

Our two web sites were well-visited again in 2008 with more than 20,000 visits, and continue to be our most efficient way of disseminating educational information. In addition to the useful material posted on the sites, we also offer several PDF downloads and an order form for hard copies of conservation and rehabilitation publications.



*A fall class investigates two of the 16 towers at Chaetura Canyon
during a Chimney Swift Tower Workshop
for the Travis Audubon Society
Photo by Georgean Kyle*

In addition to several presentations away from Austin, we continue to work with the Education Committee of the Travis Audubon Society at Chaetura Canyon to provide workshops on a variety of conservation and habitat issues. For more information, please visit the TAS web site at www.TravisAudubon.org

With Appreciation

We wish to express our thanks to the many members, supporters and contributors who have helped make the Driftwood Wildlife Association a nationally recognized conservation organization. We welcome your comments on past and current projects as well as suggestions for the future.

SUPPORTING MEMBERS AND RESEARCH ASSOCIATES

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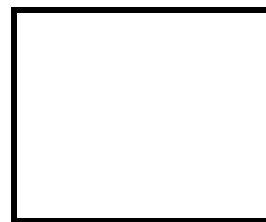
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