

Chaetura

SPRING 2001

Driftwood Wildlife Association

Volume 6 Issue 1



In the first part of the 20th century, architects inadvertently created a multitude of Chimney Swift habitats. Air shafts in multi-storied urban buildings provided structures which aided Chimney Swifts in their range expansion westward across North America. So common were these air shafts that in places such as Kent State University, researchers like Dr. Ralph Dexter were able to spend their entire lives researching the nesting and roosting behavior of Chimney Swifts.

With the advent of central air conditioning, air shafts are no longer an integral part of building construction. However, there are many "architectural features" currently used in modern construction that could (with minor modifications) be made accessible and very useful to Chimney Swifts.

As the population of our urban avian insectivores decreases, we look to modern architects to consider the needs of wildlife in their designs.

Paul Kyle, Editor

Boy Scouts Build Chimney Swift Tower In National Wildlife Refuge

In August 2000, Boy Scout Michael Doolin from Troop 346 constructed a Chimney Swift tower for his Eagle Scout project. The tower was constructed next to the hummingbird/butterfly garden behind the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service's Big Branch Marsh NWR visitor center in Lacombe, LA. The tower was built over 2 Saturdays with help from about 20 Boy Scouts and 3 adults. It stands about 15-feet-high.

Michael slightly modified plans created by Paul and Georgan Kyle in 1997. All wood was cut prior to the workdays. All wood was stained, the site was prepped and the angle iron legs were set on the first workday. The concrete was delivered between workdays. On the second work day the 3 sections were constructed and installed, insulation was put in place, and a small roof was added. Additionally, a door was created near the bottom for viewing by visitors. A handheld mirror will be used to view the inside of the tower. The door can be locked during the breeding season.

All materials for the project were donated by a variety of groups including Home Depot, Capital Steel, the Northshore Bird Club, the Covington Bird Club, Pontchartrain Hardware, and LaFarge Concrete. The total project cost was about \$300.

This project works well with the theme of the visitor center, which is creating backyard habitat for wildlife. The garden that is adjacent to the tower was installed in 1999 and houses only plants native to Louisiana. The visitor center itself is an old house that has two chimneys that are known to be used as Chimney Swift roost sites. We do not know if any birds have nested there. If this new tower is successful we will most likely install a second tower in the future.

Virginia Rettig

Virginia Rettig is the Refuge Operations Specialist for the Bayou Sauvage National Wildlife Refuge near Slidell, Louisiana. This is the first Chimney Swift Tower to be built in a National Wildlife Refuge.



Report From Chaetura Canyon

THE CASTLE

Chimney Swifts arrived clandestinely in 2000. They avoided our eyes and ears to the sky only revealing themselves by their overnight droppings in the Castle. Our routine mid-morning inspection showed evidence of roosting birds from the evening of March 21. Two individuals were observed entering the tower on the following evening. By April 15, the nightly registry rose to 64 swifts. Additional birds continued to join the flock with the total reaching 97 on May 5. Nest construction was well underway by May 7 with overnight roosting activity beginning to diminish. By May 14, three eggs had been laid and only two birds were in residence. Numerous birds attempted to roost but insistent chipping and defensive wing clapping from the mated pair dissuaded them.

The first of the five eggs laid hatched on June 3. Midmorning on June 5, 3 human

juveniles new to the neighborhood climbed the property fence and attempted to open the Castle door. Six to nine year old boys are not very subtle and were quickly discovered. They were given an intense education about Chimney Swifts and then escorted back to their own yard. The swifts recovered from the disturbance and four nestlings successfully fledged.

A roosting flock began to congregate on June 20 when 16 birds entered at dusk. By July 4, 52 swifts were chipping inside the Castle. At nightfall, a steady barrage of fireworks began to build to a crescendo within the neighborhood. The tower birds flushed in seconds and circled above the canyon. Only 12 individuals were observed returning to the structure in the darkening sky.

The fall roosting flock returned by mid July and reached a total high of 63 individuals. The mean temperature during evening observations from August through mid September

was 87°F with an unbelievable high of 108°F on September 5 at 7:30 P.M. The last three swifts were observed entering the Castle on September 20 leaving the last accumulation of scat and molted feathers as evidence of their summer habitation.

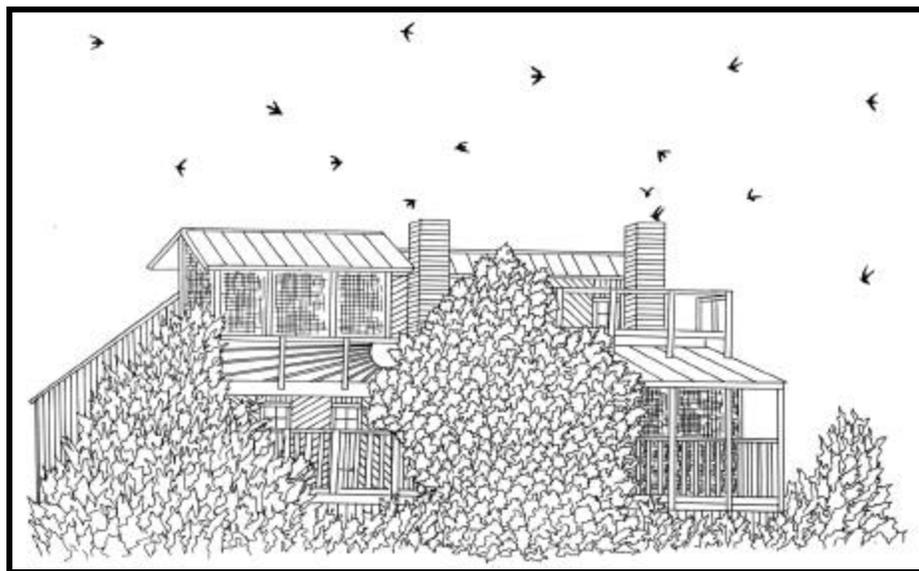
NORTH TOWER

A scientific modification was made on all of the swift towers on the station prior to the birds return. Each structure was fitted with an indoor-outdoor thermometer that would enable a comparison in interior temperature variations of the structures. This addition required installing a probe inside the nesting chambers. Care was taken to position the probes as discreetly as possible. However, the swifts returning to the North Tower took great exception to the change in their home. The pair noisily discussed their displeasure while also wing clapping and giving the apparatus the “evil-eye”. One bird actually grasped the probe with its foot. The pair gradually accepted the change and claimed the tower on April 17. That evening, one bird began a vocalization that we refer to as “singing”. The sound is a quiet, monotonous vocalization of “me-me-me...”. Until this instance, we had only documented “singing” in juvenile birds.

The pair produced five eggs. Four eggs hatched, but only two birds survived to fledge on July 5.

A roosting flock began to assemble in mid August. Infrared lights allowed after dark

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observations within the tower. We discovered that swifts remain very restless and continue to fly within the tower well past sunset.

Beginning in September, the fourteen to nineteen nightly visitors increased to 37. The birds then began roosting higher in the tower above camera view. Following a cold frontal passage on September 24, the high number of 72 swifts began to disperse. Subsequent cold fronts in the following weeks blew the birds south with the last single individual lingering until the morning of October 22.

SOUTH TOWER

One bird took up residence in the South Tower on March 24. Surprisingly, the mate did not arrive until ten days later. The pair was the same two birds that nested in this tower in 1999. One was a South Tower nestling in 1999 while the other was a North Tower parent in 1998.

The first nest stick was glued to the west wall on April 25 and the first egg was laid on May 6. Their six eggs hatched, however, two hatchlings expired. One was found dead on the tower floor, the other was dead in the nest. Half of its eggshell was stuck on the top of its head, which probably made it impossible for the nestling to feed. The four remaining nestlings were banded and fledged on July 4.

The parents continued to enter the tower during the daylight hours following the fledging of their young. They were often observed on or below the nest and occasionally entered the tower with a stick in their bill. Unfortunately, their attempts to repair the nest damaged by their offspring failed and a second brood was not

produced.

Between seven and eleven birds returned to roost each evening until October 16 when the last bird was observed.

NORTH AND SOUTH POOL TOWERS

A pair of swifts returned to the North Pool Tower on April 16. Five eggs were laid but 1 rolled over the edge. The nest holding the remaining four nestlings began to sag following successive June thunderstorms but did not fall from the tower wall. By July 12 no birds were in residence. An inspection of the tower revealed a mummified twelve-day-old nestling in the misshapen nest.

The South Pool Tower remained unoccupied throughout the season.

THE PRISM

Modifications were again made to the Prism Tower. In addition to the probe for the thermometer, an access door was cut, rigid insulation and white vinyl siding and trim were installed over the existing siding.

A pair of swifts was in residence on April 16 and was occasionally joined by two or three additional birds in the evening. The entire clutch of five eggs hatched and the young were banded. The family returned to the tower until mid August at which time they probably joined the growing roost in the North Tower.

GARDEN TOWER

This 11" x 11" x 8' tower was modified for the New Year. An access door was cut; rigid insulation and hardboard siding were installed as well as a top and a

thermometer.

Chimney Swifts inspected the structure both inside and outside but did not occupy this tower.

EAST AND WEST FIELD TOWERS

The goal of the Nest Site Research Project continues to be the creation of a small, affordable and safe nesting structure for Chimney Swifts. Swifts continue to use structures at least 11" x 11" x 8', however, these towers often fail to provide conditions suitable for the successful fledging of offspring. The Prism, which is a triangular tower 22" on each side and 8 tall, has been very successful, however, construction of this design is a bit of a challenge. Our newest attempt is an 8' tower with inside dimensions of 14 5/8" x 14 5/8". Two towers of this size were constructed 10 feet apart. One tower (East) was fitted with rigid insulation between the inside and outside walls. The West Tower contained only an air space. Both towers were painted white for the highest possibility of reflecting heat. A cap was installed on the top with an 6" x 11" access hole cut into the north edge to prevent deep penetration by the suns rays.

Both towers attracted swifts and "test" sticks were found glued inside each structure on June 4. The East Tower was soon abandoned but construction continued in the West Tower. Three eggs were in the nest on June 25, however, on July 2 only 1 adult was observed entering the tower. No diurnal brooding was evident and the tower was abandoned by July 13. The interior of the tower was inspected on August 27. Broken eggshell and mummified hatchlings were discovered at that time.

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FENCE TOWER

We are in the process of fencing the perimeter of the property encompassing the canyon. Our hope is to install swift towers every 60 feet along the east and west sections which are bordered by pavement. These towers will be constructed of cinderblock or other masonry products. The first of these towers was begun on May 20 with the pouring of a concrete pad. 16" x 16" x 8" x 2" pilasters were dry stacked onto the pad and monitored for interior temperature variations. By April 15, it was determined that the pilasters offered no moderation from the ambient temperature and were removed. Pre-construction involved using 8" x 4" x 16" cinderblocks and topped with a unique pyramid shaped concrete block top with a triangular opening on the north side. The 10 ½' tall structure was completed on July 8 but failed to attract residents. This tower is 26 feet from the castle.

CONCLUSIONS, SUPPOSITIONS AND SPECULATIONS

Five pair of Swifts fledged 18 offspring in 2000. The South Tower mates showed an inclination toward a second nesting attempt. Their four fledglings caused considerable damage to the front edge of the nest during their in tower flight training. Although we did observe the adults return with nest sticks and attempt to fasten them to the edge, no repair was evident.

The discovery of dead hatchlings in the West Field Tower was disturbing. The adults had abandoned the site within a week of

laying the eggs. Incubation normally requires 21 days of brooding by alternating adults. We assumed that the embryos would fail to develop without parental care. Apparently the exceptional central Texas summer heat provided the warmth needed for development and the hatchlings entered a parentless world.

Additional data will be required to answer many of our questions concerning temperature variations within our test towers. However, at this time we are definitely recommending that all wooden structures incorporate insulation as opposed to an air space between the inside and outside surfaces. A moderation of only a degree or two during daytime high temperatures can render the success or failure of a nesting attempt.

For many years we have wondered what happens in a Chimney Swift roost at night. In 2000, Mel Rinn designed and built an infrared light source for us to use in the towers. Our unaided human eyes could not detect the light source, but the black and white cameras that we use could "see" the light. We were able to observe and record images on the TV monitor that were illuminated by the infrared source. However, we had no idea if the swifts would be able to see the light, and we felt considerable trepidation about using the device for the first time. Fortunately, the swifts were apparently unable to detect the infrared and we were able to observe them without disturbing them. We should be able to add considerably to our knowledge about nocturnal Chimney Swift behavior with this important new tool.

At the Driftwood Bird Banding Station, Chimney Swift

towers have been constructed on all four corners of a large pole barn that serves as a rainwater collection system and pavilion where groups are assembled to observe the bird banding. In all the years the barn had been there, no swifts had ever been observed flying under the structure -- although it is quite tall and completely open on all sides. This changed one year when we captured a swift from one of the towers before dawn for Rick and Nora Bowers to photograph. Their technique is to place a bird in a 2' x 2' x 2' box with appropriate habitat. In this set up they can control the lighting and take some remarkable photographs of birds. While the swift was being photographed, it made no sounds that we could hear. However, other swifts made several passes under the roof where the photography was taking place. We wondered if it was more than coincidence and that perhaps the swift in the box was emitting some sound we were unable to detect. Since bats use sounds in frequency ranges that are beyond our audible range, we conveyed this observation to Mark Kiser of Bat Conservation International. Mark graciously agreed to bring his "bat detector" out to the Twin Towers for a listen. What he found was that in addition to the audible sounds that the Chimney Swifts made as they prepared to go to roost, they were also emitting sounds that were out of our human range of hearing. He suggested that we repeat the experiment at a later date with more sensitive equipment and even conduct a computer analysis. We look forward to their assistance with this interesting project in 2001.

Chimney Swifts were on or over the station for 216 days in 2000.



PROFESSIONAL CHIMNEY SWEEPS LEND A HELPING HAND WITH CHIMNEY SWIFT CONSERVATION

Last year, at one of our quarterly meetings in Greenville SC, the SC Chimney Sweep Guild had a seminar dealing with chimney swifts. It covered basics about the life cycle and habits of the birds and what we should do when they are encountered in the chimneys of our customers. We learned just how these birds were protected by law and what we could do to further protect them. The final part of the seminar was the actual construction of a nesting tower using the plans from The Driftwood Wildlife Association. We assembled the four panels that would make up the tower. The plan was to transport these panels to another location in Laurens County, assemble them and erect the tower. This final step was done this summer. We got it up a little late for the first generation but maybe we will get some swifts for the second batch of the summer.

This has been just another step in the education process that has taken place through not only our state guild but also through The National Chimney Sweep Guild and The Chimney Safety Institute of America. Many of us when new in the business acted out of ignorance and removed swifts from chimneys at the request of our customers. I am not aware of any sweeps in our state guild who still do this. When homeowners call with birds in their chimney, we take the opportunity to educate them with the facts about chimney swifts and why they cannot be removed from the chimney. The response is almost always a positive one.

Ron Brigman
President, SC Chimney Sweep Guild

Just wanted to pop in and let you know we got another swift article published in **Sweeping**, the (National Chimney Sweeping Guild) magazine. It focuses on the Migratory Bird Treaty Act and the ramifications of breaking the law. It did generate some pretty good discussion and we seem to have gotten some more converts. Most are getting company policy in place to leave them (the swifts) alone.

Paul Hemple
Brushes and Brooms

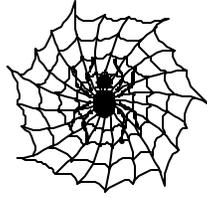
I read an article in SWEEPING magazine, written by the National Chimney Sweeping Guild and visited your site from a link on their site. What a marvelous experience! What wonderful birds and getting even more interesting the more that I learn. If I were you I would feel like "mission accomplished." You set out to educate a chimney sweep/human and it worked. Thanks!

Renee Espeland,
Chimney Cricket Family Chimney Sweeps in Des Moines Iowa.

Editor's Note: Remember that EVERY chimney needs to be professionally cleaned every year for the safety of the homeowner as well as for the safety of your Chimney Swifts. When choosing a professional sweep to service your fireplace and chimney, consider a member of the National Chimney Sweeping Guild. This organization actively promotes Chimney Swift conservation among their membership. And remember: NEVER hire a company that advertises "Bird Removal".



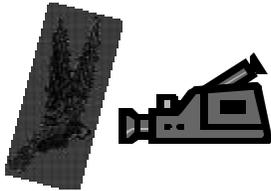
ON THE WEB



REPORT YOUR SPRING CHIMNEY SWIFT SIGHTINGS

For the third year we will be posting and mapping first spring Chimney Swift sightings all across North America. You can follow these sightings as we update the map on the DWA web site. Contact us with your first spring sightings!

Email: DWA@concentric.net
Phone: (512) 266-3861



CHIMNEY SWIFT WEB CAM

For the past 3 years we have been using surveillance cameras to monitor and record the Chimney Swift activity in the Twin Towers at the Mansfield Dam Bird Banding Station. We have recorded remarkable and previously unknown behavior such as aggressive defense of the nest tower by nesting pairs — against other swifts! This will be the second year you can join us in our observations via our new

DWA Chimney Swift Web Cam

The web cam will provide a live feed in real time beginning May 1 and will be active from dawn until dusk (approximately 7:00 am through 8:00 pm CDT). In the event of thunderstorms in our area, it will be shut down.

Visit the Driftwood Wildlife Association web site at
[Http://www.concentric.net/~Dwa](http://www.concentric.net/~Dwa)
and “bookmark” the Chimney Swift web cam now!

PUBLICATIONS

We wish to express our gratitude to the many organizations that have helped spread the message of Chimney Swift conservation in 2000 through their newsletters and other publications. Among those are the Humane Society of the United States, the National Chimney Sweeping Guild, the Travis Audubon Society (Austin, TX), and Diane Winn and Marc Payne of Avian Haven in Freedom, Maine.

Special thanks go out to Ken Kostka, the forum administrator for the Purple Martin Conservation Association. Ken wrote a wonderful article entitled “Meet the Chimney Swift” for **Purple Martin Update**, volume 9 (4), 2000.

We also would like to thank Shannon Davies, editor of **Texas Birds** (the Texas Ornithological Association magazine) for her article, “Research Notes: The North American Chimney Swift Nest Site Research Project”. The article appeared in the Spring—Summer 2000 issue: volume 2, number 1.

PARTNERS IN FLIGHT AWARD

In March of 2000, Georgan and Paul Kyle were awarded the 1999 national Partners in Flight Award for Public Awareness for their work with the North American Chimney Swift Nest Site Research Project. They were presented their award in Chicago, Illinois by the deputy Secretary of the Interior.

Here and there...

Lockhart , TX

A 12' tower built on the McRee farm attracted a nesting pair of swifts. Three of the five eggs hatched, unfortunately , extreme summer heat claimed the nestlings. Rigid insulation and an additional layer of exterior siding have been installed for the 2001 season.

The McRee home chimney also hosted a pair of nesting swifts. Two of the four nestlings fledged aided by Carlas efforts. The four nestlings had fallen into a nearly inaccessible fan / exhaust system incorporated into the chimney. The two living nestlings were placed into a basket and lowered back into the chimney where the adult swifts resumed parental care.

Waterford, VA

Nicole Hamilton reports that their home was constructed with a chimney that is happily time-shared with swifts. A successful nest occurred in 1999 but the chimney was sadly quiet in 2000.

Dublin, TX

Mrs. M. C. Grauke has enjoyed the sounds of nesting swifts in her fireplace chimney every year since 1964. She was regularly observing seven swifts at her home well into August.

Hodgen, OK

The fifth year of successful nesting was reported by Ron Krupa. His home chimney was occupied by a pair of swifts that produced two broods.

Blanco, TX

Anne Holt attached a 12' T1-11 tower to the east side of a shed on her 600 acre ranch in 1997. The dry conditions in 2000 allowed a successful nesting. Previous nesting attempts had failed due to heavy spring rainfall. A rain baffle is planned for this tower.

Austin, TX

One of the two kiosk style towers built at the Hornsby Bend Wastewater Treatment Plant hosted a swift family. The second tower was not occupied.

Abita Springs, LA

The first nesting attempt in Olga and Walter Clifton's tower began in late May. The breeding pair and their three juveniles were still in residence in mid October.

Springer, OK

Torrential rains again foiled the nesting attempt in the larger of Jack Freeman's two towers even after a modification to the top of the structure to protect the interior. A nest in the smaller tower had also fallen. Swifts did not pursue secondary nest construction.

Freedom, ME

Diane Winn and Marc Payne, wild bird rehabilitators of Avian Haven incorporated a tower into one of their new outdoor aviaries. The truly unique octagonal flight cage boasts a T1-11 "chimney" rising through the center of the structure.

Leander, TX

Our computer and electronics guru Mel Rinn and his wife Pat are adding an imaginatively designed tower to their Hill Country property. Mel constructed a 12' tower from 16"x 16" x 8" x 2" cinder block pilasters. He is adding a layer of rigid insulation, hand poured concrete blocks and a native rock facade to the exterior surface. Upon completion, the tower will have the appearance of an historic chimney standing sentinel over an extinct homestead.



Rosson Tower # 2 goes up

Holt, MO

The Rosson family is very dedicated to the conservation of swifts. Joyce provides rehabilitation service to displaced birds and monitors their brick chimney which housed two successful broods and a fall roost of 50 to 60 swifts. The wooden tower that Bill constructed again attracted a nesting pair. A second tower is near completion. Both wooden towers are fitted with surveillance

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cameras. Joyce is also monitoring the towers for temperature variations.

Goochland, VA

Joyce Stancil was introduced to Swifts when three nestlings fell into her fireplace. She carefully replaced the young birds and derived pleasure in hearing the renewed begging calls as the family was reunited. She educated a friend about swifts resulting in yet another chimney being protected as a nest site.

Fort Smith, AR

Superintendent Bill Black of the Fort Smith National Historic Site is concerned about swift habitat. All of the chimneys on the historic building had to be sealed to protect the structure. Bill reported a minimum of forty birds using the chimneys prior to the remodeling. A cinder block tower will be built onto a maintenance building to provide alternate habitat for returning swift.

Jonestown, TX

The derelict concrete cistern behind the realty office continues to be an important roosting structure. Chuck Sexton counted 1574 birds diving into the opening within 10 minutes on October 16.

Worthington, OH

Carol Landis observed approximately 400 swifts entering a chimney at her school. The phenomenon peaked this science teachers interest into educating herself and her students about these remarkable birds. Carol states that "Anything that eats insects is a good thing, as far as I'm concerned.

We have an organic garden on the school grounds, and I am trying to help students consider other alternatives to pesticides and herbicides."



Fledgling swifts in Paul Jastram's "picnic table" tower

Carters Lake, GA

Park ranger Paul Jastram again reports successful nesting in the two towers constructed from recycled picnic tables. Nine nestlings were observed on July 26.

Mason County, TX

Predator guards and top opening reducers were added to 2 wooden towers attached to a cabin on the Calcite Ranch. Based on inspection of the droppings and egg shells in the bottom of the northern tower, it was deduced that there was a successful nest.

Leander, TX

The tower at the Travis Audubon Society Baker Sanctuary was again successful. This was another Boy Scout project.

Driftwood, TX

Ann and Don Connell's 4 water barn towers were showing their age and considerable water damage, so they opted to demolish and rebuild the 32" x 32" x 24' structures last November. The new towers are fitted with caps that reduce the top openings to 16" x 16". This should reduce the amount of rain and sun light that reach the bottom area of the towers where the Chimney Swifts nest.

The Connells also have the only "mini tower" that has not been adversely effected by heat. It is mounted 3 stories high where it apparently catches enough breeze to keep it cool in the brutal Texas summers. This 11" x 11" x 8' structure was one of the first experimental towers installed by the Chimney Swift Nest Site Research Project in 1995 and has had a successful nest every year. It also underwent a face lift with a new outer skin and new coat of stain.

Finally at Driftwood, an old cistern was recycled into a Chimney Swift Tower. The covered, round 8' diameter, 12' tall fiberglass structure has a 24" man hole (swift hole?) offset to the north on top. It was moved to an open field where the renovation took place. A door was cut in the side for human access and fitted with hinges and a latch. Holes were drilled in the bottom to let the rain water drain out. Metal lathe was screwed to the inside from the bottom to 7' high. Concrete stucco was applied to the lathe, and that was sealed with a latex based masonry sealer. 20 years ago, when the cistern was new, swifts nested in it when the cover was inadvertently left off. It is hoped that it will attract a sizeable roost as well as a nesting pair.

HIGH ART in Willis, TX



Pat and Lloy Weaver's artful tower

"We have finished two towers. We are especially proud of the painted tower. It is located next to our main gate located on SH150 near New Waverly TX. The second tower is in our front yard. We have had several inquiries about it already and our hope is that it will spark some interest by others to build one." -- Lloy & Pat Weaver

Galveston, TX

"In early 2000, Alice Ann O'Donell and I combined our resources and built a Chimney Swift Tower at her "Bird Ranch" on Settegast Road, west of Galveston, TX. I am pleased to report that the tower was a success. Fae Humphrey reported that swifts were nesting in the tower and apparently raised 4 fledglings. Later in the year when I removed the bottom inspection plate, I found

the expected bird droppings and 4 hatched egg shells. On visual inspection there was the expected single nest glued to the side. Success." — Gordon Nunn

Gordon has designed a tower based on the NSRP specifications. However, he has made some interesting modifications that make the tower easy for amateurs to assemble and even move if necessary. If you would like to learn more about his design, you can contact Gordon at glunn@aol.com.

Pine Mountain, GA

LuAnn Craighton reports that Chimney Swifts returned to one of their towers for the second year since they were erected in Callaway Gardens. The second tower remained uninhabited.

Please send us your Chimney Swift Tower results so that we may share them with our other Research Associates.

E-mail: DWA@concentric.net

Phone: (512) 266-3861

or mail to:

Driftwood Wildlife Association
1206 West 38th, Suite 1105
Austin, TX 78705

WHAT'S IN A NAME?

When we were deciding on a name for our newsletter, we settled on **CHAETURA** from the scientific name for Chimney Swifts: *Chaetura pelagica*. *Chaetura* meaning "spine-tailed" and *pelagica* meaning "of the sea".

The spine-tailed name is appropriately descriptive because of the exposed spines on the tips of the tail feathers. However, the reference to the sea is based in legend rather than in fact.

It was once believed that when Chimney Swifts were no longer seen in the skies that they had plunged into the sea and burrowed into the mud. There they slept through the winter months. When the weather warmed, they would emerge to once again fill the skies.

It is now known that Chimney Swifts migrate to South America, but it was not until 1944 that their winter home was discovered. To answer the mystery, a large scale Chimney Swift banding effort was begun in the 1930's. By 1943, nearly 375,000 Chimney Swifts had been banded in the United States and southern Canada.

On May 23, 1944, the American Embassy in Lima, Peru reported that 13 bird bands had been recovered from indigenous people who had killed the birds — possibly for food. The bands were from swifts that had been banded in Tennessee, Ontario, Connecticut, Illinois, Georgia and Alabama. The oldest of the bands had accompanied the bird on 8 round-trip migrations.



CORPORATE CONSERVATION

The Lower Colorado River Authority (LCRA) manages the Highland Lakes and much of the surrounding properties in Central Texas. In addition to regulating lake levels and supplying power from their hydro-electric dams, the LCRA has taken an active role in wildlife conservation and education.

One of the properties owned and managed by the LCRA was to be the headquarters for a lignite coal mine in Fayette County. When plans for the mine did not materialize, the 100 acre site was converted into the **Cooper Farm Natural Science Laboratory**. The facility includes a 1 mile nature trail on which trees and shrubs are



labeled for easy identification by visitors. Bat houses, Bluebird boxes, Purple Martin Houses, wildlife feed plots, a green house for propagating native plants and a spacious community hall compliment the property.

In the summer of 2000, LCRA biologist Melanie Pavlas secured funding for the construction of a Chimney Swift Kiosk Tower at Cooper Farm. With the help of Melanie and Cooper Farm manager Lee Fritsch (Lee lifted and mixed all 1520 pounds of concrete), construction was completed in late February 2001, and has generated considerable interest in additional towers for other LCRA properties.

KIOSK CHIMNEY SWIFT TOWER

2000 was the first year's trial for the kiosk tower design, and the results were good. The roof and outer panels seemed to help keep the 12' towers cooler than the more basic free-standing design. In high traffic areas the design provided protection from curious visitors. One of the 2 towers constructed at the Hornsby Bend Wastewater Treatment Plant near Austin, TX was occupied by Chimney Swifts. The residents successfully nested and fledged 4 babies.

Since the towers were constructed and then publicized in last year's newsletter, there has been a great deal of interest in the design.

Several Boy Scouts are considering constructing kiosk towers as their Eagle Scout



Hornsby Bend Kiosk Tower

projects. Some folks just like the look of the tower and are planning to add the kiosk to their existing tower.

Melynda Hickman with the Oklahoma Department of Wildlife Conservation has obtained funding for construction of one of these towers as part of their urban wetlands project.

In Austin, 2 neighborhood associations expressed interest in placing towers in their neighborhood parks. One was completed in early March — just in time for the swifts to return.

First draft plans for this tower are available for a nominal fee. Contact us for more information.



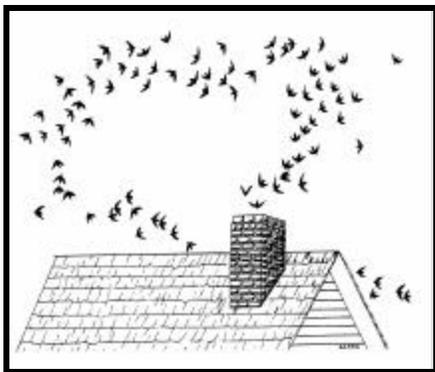
Email to the Editor

SLIDE
PROGRAM
AVAILABLE



I have chimney swifts in my chimney and they have been extremely annoying--they are so loud!! I don't want anything done to the birds; I plan to wait them out. Can you tell me what time of year they might fly away? I live in Northern Illinois.

*Thank you,
Annette Miller-Crone*



Annette,

Thank you for your tolerance of the noise in your chimney. The loud sounds you are hearing are the baby Chimney Swifts begging for food from the parents when they return with a mouth full of flying insect pests. Usually by the time the babies are really loud, they are only 10 to 14 days from fledging and being able to care for themselves. After they fledge, you will still continue to hear softer noises of their wings as they fly up and down the chimney and "chipping" as they communicate with one another. However, there will soon be no more of the loud begging calls which you are now hearing.

There are a couple of things you can do to make the noise less for you and make things safer for the swifts. First, make certain that your damper is closed all the way. If you do not have a damper or if the damper will not close all the way, wedge a piece of foam rubber up into the chimney just above the fireplace. This will lessen the noise and make certain that the swifts stay above the damper and out of your house (which they will only enter by accident). Secondly, you can pack your fireplace with building insulation to further lessen the "dinner sounds" of the Chimney Swifts.

Chimney Swifts are very beneficial insect eating birds which rely completely on chimneys such as yours for nesting and roosting. Their numbers are declining due to a lack of appropriate sites, so your tolerance is an important conservation action.

Although the loud noises you are hearing will soon be over, Chimney Swifts will probably still be in your part of North America through the end of September.

Best Regards,
Paul

Thank you so much for your fast and informational response!! I have to tell you, I don't feel quite so annoyed by the noise now that I've read your letter and considered the bigger picture.

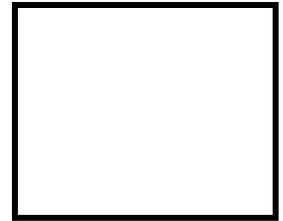
Annette Miller-Crone

In 2000 we took our 1 hour slide presentation and lecture to various birding, nature and continuing educational groups. If we cannot come to your organization in person, we can provide you with an abbreviated, 50-slide presentation complete with a printed narrative to guide you through your own presentation about Chimney Swifts and the North American Chimney Swift Nest Site Research Project. The program includes close ups of nestling, fledgling and adult Chimney Swifts. There are also slides of several of the tower designs which have proved successful. The program is available for rent or purchase. Several of our Associates have used the program and received rave reviews! For more information contact Paul or Georgan Kyle by phone or fax at (512) 266-3861 or by e-mail at DWA@concentric.net.



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Visit the Driftwood Wildlife Association
web site at:
<http://www.concentric.net/~Dwa>

In addition to learning more about the North American
Chimney Swift Nest Site Research Project, you can:

- ◇ track the spring movements of Chimney Swifts
- ◇ follow bird banding in Central Texas
- ◇ learn about wildlife rehabilitation
- ◇ download past issues of **Chaetura**
- ◇ order publications from Driftwood
- ◇ learn more about Membership in DWA

You can even watch a movie of the Twin Towers Swift roost!

Send your e-mail to DWA@concentric.net

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