Chaetura

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The conservation of avian species can be difficult and expensive. In most cases it involves the acquisition of large tracts of land as habitat for breeding and foraging. For example, a single pair of some passerines require an area the size of several football fields in order to raise a single brood of young — and size is not the only factor. The habitat must contain the appropriate insect life and vegetation to provide food and cover. Likely as not, the necessary real estate may also be desirable to humans, which makes the acquisition expensive and beyond the financial means of most individuals.

However, because Chimney Swift habitat is open sky, their conservation is within the capabilities of most of us. All the swifts need is a square foot or two in which to raise their young and roost at night — and a little tolerance on our part.

Paul Kyle, Editor

Vaux's Swifts Continue to Use Nest Boxes

By Evelyn L. Bull, Research Wildlife Biologist
Pacific Northwest Research Station, La Grande, OR

The shortage of natural nesting habitat in the form of hollow standing trees in the Pacific Northwest was the impetus behind a study looking at the feasibility of putting up nest boxes for Vaux's swifts. A decrease in the number of large-diameter, hollow trees that this species uses for nesting has resulted from a history of harvesting mature stands where the oldest trees were removed, in addition to more recent insect outbreaks and tree diseases that killed many of the oldest trees.

Originally 12 nest boxes of three sizes were put in trees in 1996 to see if Vaux's swifts would even use next boxes. Within 2 years, swifts had nested in three of the nest boxes. The boxes that were used most often were made of rough-cut lumber and were about a foot square and 12 feet in depth. Once we ascertained that swifts would use the boxes, we put up an additional 100 boxes to determine how successful the swifts were in nesting.

Each year from 1999 through 2001, there have been 12 to 17 swift nests constructed in the nest boxes. Nest success in the boxes has ranged from 31% to 67%. There is some concern regarding the low nest success, particularly for a cavity-nesting species, although nest success in natural situations (i.e., hollow trees) is unknown. A potential problem with nest boxes may be overheating where the temperatures may become lethal for embryos. We are investigating this situation with Hobo data loggers that will record the air temperature inside the box at 1-hour intervals. Lethal temperatures for embryos of the domestic fowl are about 104° to 108°F, although the lethal temperatures are unknown for swifts.

Another potential problem with nest boxes is their visibility and the fact that predators may develop a search image for the boxes. Natural cavities in hollow trees are less visible and more abundant than boxes. A mammalian predator would spend more time searching for cavities in trees than one that was checking nest boxes.

None the less, nest boxes do provide nesting habitat for Vaux's swifts. In addition, they provide an opportunity to determine nest success and brood size that were previously largely unknown due to inaccessibility of hollow trees. Further research will continue to monitor nest success, fledgling numbers, and the influence of external temperature and predation.

Vaux's Swift Nest Box Installation
Photo by Evelyn Bull

Report From Chaetura Canyon

Chimney Swift research at the Mansfield Dam Station began in earnest in 1989 with the construction of two large wooden towers. These towers are constructed with inside walls of Textured 1-11 siding with the grooves running horizontally. They measure approximately 18" x 18" inside, stand 22' tall and are an integral part of our home. They have viewing ports on the second story of the house where we are able to relatively easily monitor the home life of the swifts. We have come to call these the "Twin Towers" in past issues of the Annual Report. However, in view of the events of September 11, 2001, we will refer to these towers as the "**Observation Towers**" from this point on. When detailing our observations they are referred to as the "**North Tower**" and the "**South Tower**". There are currently 12 towers on the station. Following are brief descriptions of the other ten:

The Castle

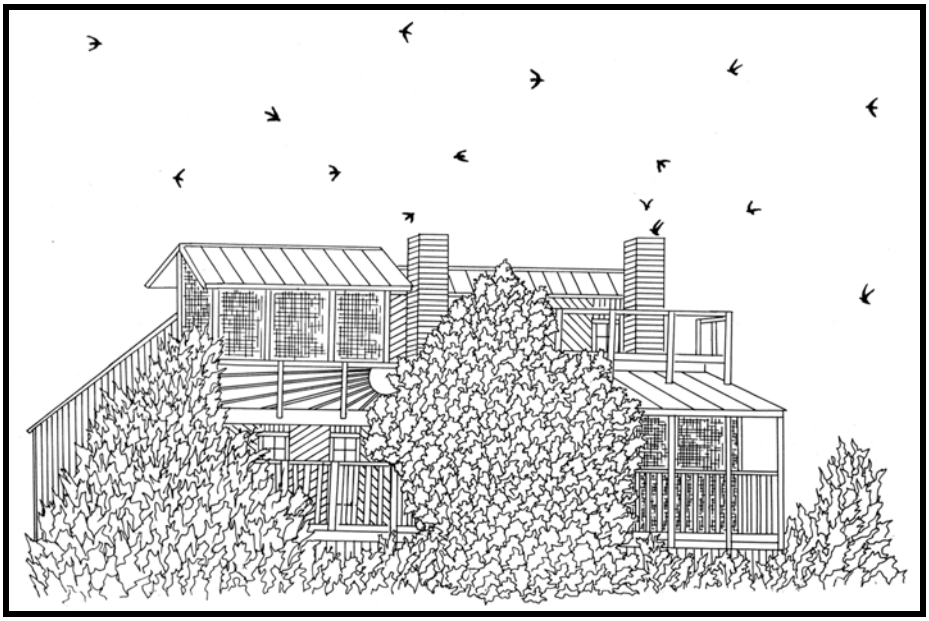
The Castle is a cinder block tower with 8" thick walls. It measures 32" x 32" inside, stands 12' tall and is set on a 5' x 5' x 10" concrete slab. The top opening is reduced to 16" x 16" and located on the north edge to reduce the amount of sunlight that enters the tower. It was completed in 1994.

The Garden Tower is a wooden tower with inside walls of Textured 1-11 siding with the grooves running horizontally. It measures 11" x 11" inside, measures 8' tall and stands on 2' tall angle steel legs set in a 3'x 3' x 6" concrete slab. The top opening is reduced to 11" x 5" and located on the north side. It was originally a single-walled tower. However, due to problems with over-heating, a second skin with an insulated space was installed in 2000.

The Prism is a wooden tower with inside walls of Textured 1-11 siding with the grooves running horizontally. It is a three-sided structure measuring 22" x 22" x 22" inside, 8' tall and stands on 2' tall pipe legs set in a 3'x 3' x 6" concrete slab. The top opening is reduced to a triangular opening measuring 9" x 9" x 9" in the northwestern corner. It has a ¾" airspace with a 1/8" hardboard skin and ½" rigid insulation covered by vinyl siding.

The Field Towers are 8' towers with inside dimensions of 14 5/8" x 14 5/8" located 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 ability to deflect heat. A cap was installed on the top with a 6" x 11" access hole cut into the north edge to prevent deep penetration by the sun's rays. This year the top entrance holes of both

(Continued on page 3)



The North and South Observation Towers of Chaetura Canyon

(Continued from page 2)
towers were fitted with "collars". These 8" tall extensions were intended to further limit the amount of sunlight that is able to enter the towers – keeping them cooler.

The Pool Towers

The Pool Towers both stand on a single concrete slab measuring 80" x 24" and 6" thick. The tower is constructed of 4" x 16" x 8" blocks. There are four blocks per layer with ends overlapping creating towers measuring 20" on the outside with an 12" inside diameter that stand 10' 2" tall. The towers are only 26" apart.

The Fence Towers: 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. In 2001 we completed the second and third of these towers. Each is set on a 3' x 3' x 6" steel-reinforced concrete slab. They are constructed of 8" x 4" x 16" cinderblock. The towers measure 20" x 20" outside and have an inside diameter of 12". The towers stand 10 ½' tall.

2001 HIGHLIGHTS

Chimney Swifts returned to the canyon on March 21 in 2001. Once again, the birds chose the Castle Tower as a spring roosting site.

Nest construction was begun in seven of the twelve available structures. The amorous pairs produced a total of 36 eggs with 29 successfully hatching (80%). Our expectations were very high for the exceptional number of swift progeny, but the season quickly dashed our optimism. We learned that it was unwise to count your hatchlings before they fledge. Three of the seven nests failed completely. Only 10 nestlings of the 29 hatchlings survived to fledge (28%). Of the 19 hatchlings that expired, 18 were less than seven days old. Only the pair in the smallest structure was successful in fledging their entire clutch of four eggs. They were also the only pair not to attempt a second brood.

The six-second brood attempts produced 22 eggs with 18 hatching (81%) and 13 fledging (59%). The overall loses included the common incidents of unhatched eggs, fallen eggs and nestlings, possible parasitism by cimex, environmental pathogens and two unexpected tragedies.

The first occurred in early June inside a small cinderblock tower. Two dead nestlings, two broken eggs and an unhatched egg were found on the tower floor along with a large egg (52.5 x 41 mm). The color and size of the large egg closely resembled that of a Wood Duck. We do not know if a duck entered the structure, laid the egg and then exited or simply deposited the egg from the top of the tower. The result of this bizarre occurrence was the total failure of the swift brood and the loss of a potential Wood Duck. The mated swifts immediately began a second clutch of four eggs and fledged three.

The second tragedy took place in the Castle, our largest cinderblock structure. In our efforts to design and build appropriate nesting habitat for Chimney Swifts, we attempt to anticipate potential access for predators. Smooth stucco was applied to the outside of the structure to prevent mammals and snakes from climbing the tower, screening was installed over ventilation holes to prevent snake access, the door was hung to overlap an interior framework to give added protection and was also fitted with a lock. Regrettably, we failed to anticipate the brutality of six summers of central Texas heat. The door had warped by about a half of an inch across the top arch. This was more than enough space to allow a two-foot long rat snake to squeeze inside and dine upon the three hatchlings and the brooding adult. The snake was relocated and repairs were completed to the door. However, the 83 roosting swifts and the surviving parent abandoned the site.

None of the Fence Towers have been occupied to date.

Hand-held Chimney Swift

TOWER DESIGN UPDATES

Gordon Nunn of Galveston, Texas modified the T1-11 Tower in 2000 by omitting the angle iron legs and constructing the tower using 14 foot treated 2 x 4. The T1-11 panels were attached to the four-inch side of the 2x4 leaving a 1 1/2" airspace between the inside and outside surface. He completes construction and the exterior finish work before standing the entire structure and stabilizing it along a fence line. He reported… "It took three of us about six hours to put up a tower together. With the help of a pickup truck and several additional hands, it took about half an hour to stand the tower. This is good news." We wholeheartedly agree! Gordon has continued to construct towers. One was installed at the Texas City Prairie Preserve and another at the main entrance to the High Island Audubon Sanctuary east of Houston on the Gulf Coast. Both locations are destinations for birders and should spark additional conservation efforts.

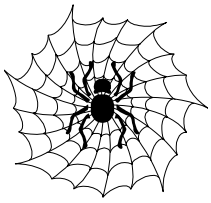
Research Associates in the far north have expressed concern about temperatures being too cool inside the wooden towers we recommend. Since we are "southerners", our primary concern has been about over heating. The physical requirements of the nesting Swifts remain the same regardless of where they nest geographically. In cooler climates additional insulation between the inside and outside walls, painting the outside of the structure a dark color as well as reducing the number of ventilation holes in the bottom would help to modify the interior temperature. We also recommend a top covering with a reduced size access hole for all towers. This would reduce exposure from excess sun, wind, rain, etc… Another consideration for northern climates would be the construction of masonry structures. Masonry would provide more thermal mass and would help moderate interior temperatures.

Textured one eleven (T1-11) is available in two thicknesses: 3/8" and 5/8". Several associates have inquired about the necessity for using the thicker material. We specify 5/8" T1-11 for several reasons. The overall texture of the 5/8" material is generally "rougher" than the 3/8" and the grooves are deeper - which is helpful to the birds. Finally, because the material inside the tower is left " unfinished", the 5/8" material tends to hold up to the elements and retain its texture much better than the thinner product.

Finally, we have tried for several years to build an 8' tower that would remain cool enough during the brutal southern summers for the young swifts to survive. In 2001, we believe we made a major breakthrough. The tops of our 8' towers have already been stopped down to an opening of 7" x 11". Last year we installed an 8" tall collar or extension box over the openings. This further limited the amount of sunlight that was able to reach the interior of the shorter towers — resulting in cooler nest chamber temperatures. One of our most exposed towers managed to fledge young with this modification in spite of record high summer temperatures. We are now in the process of retrofitting all of our towers with these collars and recommend that our southern Research Associates do the same with their towers if overheating or heavy rainfall has been responsible for nest failures in past seasons.

Tower top extension collar keeps towers cooler by limiting sunlight that enters tower

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 4 years we have been using surveillance cameras to monitor and record the Chimney Swift activity in the Observation 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 third 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 1st and will be active from dawn until dusk (approximately 7:00 am through 8:00 pm CDT). We continue to monitor after dark using infrared illumination, but the image is currently too dim to broadcast. 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
and "bookmark" the Chimney Swift web cam now!

PUBLICATIONS

We wish to express our gratitude to the many individuals that have helped spread the message of Chimney Swift conservation by providing articles for publication and providing links to the DWA website. Among those in 2001 were:

"Swifts in Your Chimney" by Jim Gilliam in SNEWS: The Chimney Sweeping Newsmagazine.

"What's Cheeping in Your Chimney?" by Norman Murray: Missouri Conservationist magazine.

"From Negligence to Nesting" by Rodney Gibbs in People and Parks: a newsletter for the Austin Parks Foundation.

"About Chimney Swifts" a reprint of DWA information in Habitat Works: a newsletter of the Chesapeake Wildlife Heritage.

"A Swift Passage" by Linell Smith: The Sun a Baltimore, MD newspaper.

"Seeking Swift Information" by Marcia Davis for The Knoxville News-Sentinel: a newspaper of Knoxville, TN.

"Monitoring the Travels of the Chimney Swift" by YuLee Larner for The Daily Newsleader: a newspaper of Staunton, VA.

"Swift Watch in Hampton" by Carol Schreter and Alice Greely-Nelson for Chip Notes: a newsletter of the Baltimore Bird Club.

And John Kelly for numerous updates concerning Chimney Swifts in Signal Smoke: the newsletter for Travis Audubon Society in Austin, TX.

Here and there...

Ridgelea Park Tower
And butterfly / hummingbird garden

Austin, TX

Kathleen Jenkins observed a Chimney Swift entering the newly constructed kiosk tower on Shoal Creek. This Ridgelea Park tower was the first to be erected in a City of Austin park. The tower was funded by the Driftwood Wildlife Association and the Austin Parks Foundation. It was completed on April 4 and was surrounded by a hummingbird / butterfly garden. Investigation of the tower in the fall revealed that three swifts fledged.

Belton, TX

Walt Brown wrote: "About this time last year I thought some cicadas had taken up residence in our chimney. Then, in January, you presented a program about Chimney Swifts to Twin Lakes Audubon. Well…the "cicadas" are back, but, as you have guessed, they are Chimney Swifts. Thanks for alerting us to the Swifts."

Mason County, TX

One of the two towers at Calcite Ranch hosted a successful nest for the third year.

Old Homestead Tower
Photo by Mel Rinn

Leander, TX

Mel and Pat Rinn built a tower from 16" x 16" cinderblock pilasters. Mel insulated the column with rigid, foil-backed insulation. He then covered it with a layer of natural limestone. The exposed pilasters were then covered with a layer of stucco. The resulting site resembled an old Texas homestead ruins. Chimney Swifts readily accepted this unique structure as a nesting site.

Holt, MO

Joyce and Bill Rosson recorded unusual behavior in their swift towers. Their video surveillance cameras allowed them to watch a swift pair in one tower complete a nest, abandon it and then construct a new nest six inches below the first. Joyce reports, "A lot of rain hit the first nest. I think they decided it was not a good spot! The second nest was built exactly where nests had been attached the previous two years. The swifts laid six eggs, three hatched, lived and flew. The swifts had a six day interval between the laying of the first and the second egg." The birds in their new wooden tower had "sticks all over the place, even in the corner!"

Eggs in Picnic Table Tower
Photo by Paul Jasttrom

Carters Lake, GA

Paul Jastrom had mixed results with his two towers. The nest in one was washed from the wall by heavy rainfall. The swifts were halfway to completion of a second nest when another heavy rainfall dislodged it. The second tower held six eggs. The eggs hatched and the young fledged on July 19.

Easley, SC

Dale Thompson reported "we have Swifts in our chimney as of April 20. We are in the second year of our new home and have a large brick chimney. For the second year in a row they are back. At first we thought about them as a nuisance. After reading about them a little we no longer want to cap the chimney, but offer them a long term place to raise their young."

Austin, TX

Swifts nested in the kiosk tower at the Center For Environmental Studies building at Hornsby Bend but the tower at the settling ponds was ignored for the third year.

More Here and there...

The Old Cistern at Driftwood

Driftwood, TX

Ann and Don Connell's four reconstructed water barn towers were all occupied. A pair of swifts graciously accepted the old water cistern, which had been converted into a Swift structure last year by applying a 6' tall layer of stucco to the inside of the structure. The family continued to roost there through the fall. This is an example of recycling at its best!

Old Cistern Nest

Installing insulation and a second skin on the Mc5 tower near Lockhart, TX

Lockhart, TX

After adding a layer of rigid, foil-backed insulation and a second skin, Carla Mcree reports that the "Mc5" Tower was successful for 2001…with 5 eggs total, 3 hatchlings and 3 fledged. The addition of insulation and second skin was in response to the failed nesting attempt in 2001 during the continuing Texas drought and resulting intense summer heat. The Mc5 chimney was also a success. Although the nest fell when the young were a few days old, the adults were able to continue to feed the two surviving young.

Blanco, TX

Anne Holt completed a rain baffle for her 12' tower. Swifts roosted in the structure but there was no nesting activity.

Cooper Farm Kiosk Tower

Ledbetter, TX

Lee Fritsch and Melanie Pavlas monitored the kiosk tower at Cooper Farms Natural Science Laboratory. The pair of swifts that moved in and raised three young built a very unique nest. Swifts most frequently construct their nest at the center of the chosen wall of a chimney or nesting tower. Occasionally, a "test" stick will be glued close to or in a corner, but this was the first nest we have seen that was completely built at the intersection of two walls.

Cooper Farm Kiosk Tower Nest
Photo by Melanie Pavlas

Even More Here and there...

Jim Morrison's Barn Tower
Photo by Jim Morrison

Mora, MN

Jim Morrison built a tower onto his barn that measured 24" x 24" and stands 20'. Jim sided his tower with metal siding—eliminating the need for a predator guard around the top. A temperature gauge is located 6' from the bottom. The tower was finished in the late fall of 2001, and Jim is looking forward to the coming season .

Leander, TX

Marcie and John Wilcox, stewards at the Travis Audubon Society Baker Sanctuary, report: "For the third year in a row, Chimney Swifts have occupied the tower here at the sanctuary. We first noticed the swifts on April 11, when they swooped low over the tower." The 12' wooden Chimney Swift Tower was constructed as an Eagle Scout project.

Slidell, LA

Nancy Walters at Big Branch Marsh National Wildlife Refuge reported no activity in their 19' tower in 2001.

Well integrated Chimney Swift Tower
Photo by Tom Peterson

Ashville, NC

Susan and Tom Peterson have a fireplace chimney and a tower attached to their house for nesting Swifts. They also have bears visit their back yard, a predator that most of us in more urban areas will thankfully never encounter. Tom constructed a T1-11 Tower using 2 x 4s onto the side of his house. "After cutting a hole through the eaves, I attached two 16 foot 2 x 4s securely to the side of the house. Instead of the stackable 4-sided box approach, I made stackable 3-sided boxes. The fourth side was open. I insulated next to the house and attached the T1-11 for that wall directly to the 2 x 4. Two sides of the three-sided boxes were long enough to overlap the vertical 2 x 4s. So I just screwed the 3 sided box onto the 2 x 4s, put the next section above it and went on up." Swifts approved of Tom's design and promptly moved in.

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

SLIDE PROGRAM AVAILABLE

In 2001 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 Georgean Kyle by phone or fax at (512) 266-3861 or by e-mail at DWA@concentric.net.

OBSERVATIONS OF SWIFT BEHAVIOR

As more folks become aware of the Chimney Swifts, observations of this remarkable species are shared. Here are a few of the insights reported over the last year.

David Arbour of De Queen, AR. "...was surveying for Swainson's Warblers on July 9 for the forest service in Caney Creek bottoms in southeast McCurtain County. I was walking along a creek when a bird flushed out of a tree next to me. I looked back to where it had flushed and found a large dead tree that was broken off about 25 feet up and was hollow inside. The surrounding habitat was fairly dense bottomland hardwood forest. Evidently some Swifts still prefer the old ways!"

LuAnn Craighton reported in September "...many swifts flying high in the sky around Pine Mountain, Georgia this past weekend. Just a trivia note to report…we hosted a hot air balloon festival this weekend at Callaway Gardens. During one of the flights I watched a flock of fifty plus swifts surround a balloon and "follow it" darting and diving right next to the surface of the balloon for several minutes. It was an interesting sight!"

Tom Clark lives in a rural area near Birmingham, AL: "Recently I observed a flock of about 100 Swifts which appeared to be feeding both on the wing and occasionally latching onto small branches and leaves of some oak trees about 30-40 feet in the air. They would cling to the branch momentarily, and then drop off….Their behavior was not that of actually perching of course, but latching long enough to pick up a tasty snack and move on. But this was the first time I have ever observed a Chimney Swift even touch a tree limb or leaf. They did also appear to be feeding on the wing in the vicinity near the trees….Have you ever observed such behavior before?" We have observed this behavior and it is entirely possible that the birds are plucking small insects from the tips of oak branches. It is well documented that warblers feed on larval insects located at the terminal growth of the leaves. It is also possible that hatchling year birds are practicing their approach to the tips of small branches for the purpose of breaking them for nesting material. We have also observed a single Swift actually roost on a leaf of a Sycamore tree for the evening. Do some birds roost this way on their wintering grounds?

Tee Tarlton lives in Abita Springs, LA. On June 15, a second brood was in the nest in the household chimney. "This is the second nest this year—The parents and juveniles from the first nest play in the sky above us all day." This is remarkable considering that the swifts at the latitude in Austin, TX were only halfway toward the fledging of their first brood!

In March, Don Jackson was sitting in his home in Rockport, TX adjacent to the bay and thunderstorms were active all about. "I just looked out the window and noticed a very large number of Chimney Swifts flying in funnel like formation and trying to land anywhere they could including the sides of houses and the walls of chimneys. We have what appears to be a small fall-out at this time due to the weather. I have never seen swifts do as these have before (so many, so low, and so compacted)."

On the same day John Arvin reported that "American Birds 36:5 (Spring migration report for 1982) has an amazing photo of a small segment of a column of thousands of Chimney Swifts clustered on the lee side of a large tree in Sarita, Kenedy County, Texas on 27 March, 1982. Conditions that day were much as they were today and yesterday; unseasonable cold and rainy conditions with strong north winds. I drove from Austin to the Valley today and found Chimney Swifts and swallows of several species in a state of distress, flying low over the road very much in harm's way from passing cars. I suspect that somewhere in South Texas tonight a similar situation of severely stressed Chimney Swifts clustered on the side of a tree or building to escape the cold rain could be observed."

Stressed Chimney Swifts
Courtesy of John Arvin

A Swift Night Out

On August 30, 2001 we sent the following email to our list of Research Associates:

Greetings,

The Chimney Swift nesting season has drawn to a close, and the roosting flocks have begun to congregate. This year we are going to try to raise awareness of Chimney Swifts and Vaux's Swifts by holding our first annual A Swift Night Out. John Connors, a Research Associate with the North Carolina Museum of Natural Sciences in Raleigh presented the idea earlier this year, and we think it has great potential for spreading the message of Chimney Swift conservation.

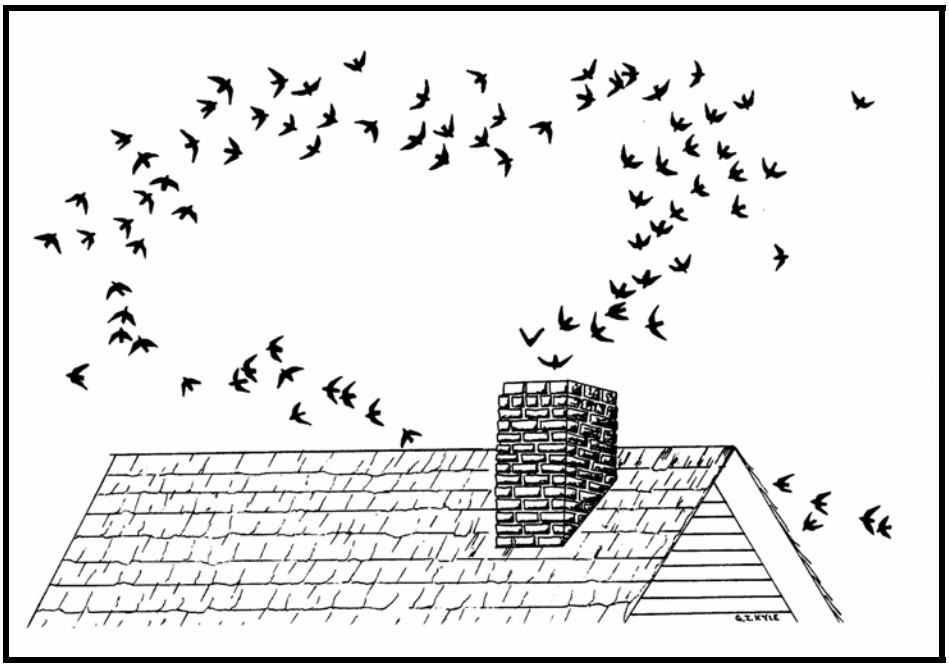
We propose that over the next week you locate a Chimney Swift or Vaux's Swift roost in your area. A roost is a location where swifts gather at dusk to spend the night. Then on one night over the weekend of September 8, 9, 10, you observe the roost at dusk and estimate the number of swifts that enter. When you have your number, contact us with your results. We will set up a page on our web site to compile the results as they come in. You may send in your results by email, fax, phone or regular mail - we will continue to update the results through the end of September.

When reporting your results please include: number of swifts counted, time, date, location (address, city, state/province) and broad description of the site, e.g. school, warehouse, residence, Chimney Swift Tower, etc. Weather conditions may also be reported.

If you are a member of a local bird club, outdoor group, Audubon chapter or any other organization that might be interested in participating, please ask them to pass this information along to their membership.

The message was picked up and forwarded by numerous groups all across North America. For a first year effort we were very pleased by the level of interest and response. For a complete report of the response, visit our web page at <**http://www.concentric.net/~Dwa>.** Our thanks go out to John Connors for suggesting the project. We look forward to an even greater response in 2002.

A Swift Night Out had the added benefit of alerting us to another Chimney Swift monitoring effort. The College of William and Mary in Virginia has set up a website to register Chimney Swift roost sites. The site is called **SWIFT WATCH**. If you know of an active roost, we encourage you to check out their site at <**http://www.swiftwatch.org**>.

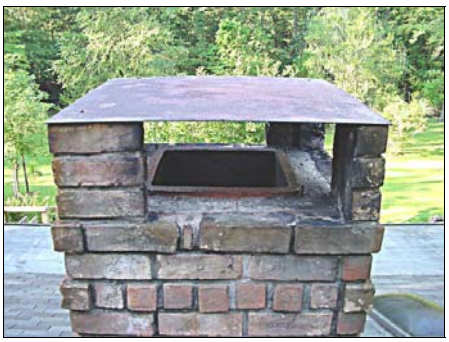


Email to the Editor

I have swifts in my chimney. Would it be okay to place a cap with open sides on the chimney to keep the rain out? - Cindi Rosenthal

It is possible to put a cap on a chimney that will still allow the swifts to enter. The swifts need to be able to fly straight through under the cap if they are going to be able to adapt to the change. - *PDK*

Editor's Note: Tee Tarlton in Albita Springs, LA has an open-sided cap on her chimney (11 1/2" opening). Not only does she have nesting swifts, but she also had a sizeable roost in the late summer.



Capped chimney that is still accessible to Chimney Swifts
Photo by Tee Tarlton

Which birds get the best spots once inside the chimney—the first in or the last in? - Jessie Traband

Once a suitable roost is discovered by Chimney Swifts, they will continue to use it for generations unless disturbed or displaced. While some roosts are inhabited all year, most will increase in size during fall migration. You are correct that only one nest is built in any site each year, and that fall flocks probably consists of mainly local birds at the end of the breeding season. However, as fall migration gets under way, birds from other regions will join the flock.

As far as the best spot, most Chimney Swifts prefer the middle of the flock. The first one in definitely picks the favorite spot. However, while observing Chimney Swifts in our towers at night using infrared lighting, we have learned that no swift stays in one spot for very long. We have also seen individual swifts land in the middle of the flock and push the others to the side. Contrary to some published information, Chimney Swifts do not roost in multiple layers. They simply cannot stand to have another swift clinging to their back and will squeal with displeasure when landed on by one of their roost mates. *PDK*

I have an established Purple Martin Colony at my home, and there are many swifts in the area...Are there any problems with having the two (species) nesting in close proximity? - Jeff Webster

There is no conflict between Chimney Swifts and Purple Martins. Many of our associates have both species nesting in close proximity. Swifts and martins eat some of the same insects. However, Chimney Swifts generally feed on smaller prey than Purple Martins. Also, martins tend to be early feeders that are "early to bed" while Chimney Swifts are late risers and late feeders. - *PDK*

Tower Plans Now Available

For several years we have provided general information on how to build Chimney Swift Towers. Finally, after 19 years of experimentation, we are pleased to announce that we have a detailed set of plans available for our most successful design to date. This 20 page booklet includes a material list, tower design basics and several detailed drawings to facilitate construction of a free-standing 12' tower. The publication also includes instructions and working drawings for our very popular and successful Kiosk Tower.

While supplies last, a free copy of this very useful conservation publication will be available to all new and renewing Research Associates. To receive your copy, fill out and return the enclosed membership form today.

Chaetura

DRIFTWOOD WILDLIFE ASSOCIATION
1206 West 38th, Suite 1105
Austin, Texas 78705

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
- ◊ learn about wildlife rehabilitation
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