VAUX’S HAPPENING -SWIFT NIGHT OUT-SATURDAY SEPTEMBER 10, 2011

A one day snapshot of the NA migratory population of Vaux’ Swift. Taken by nearly 100 volunteers at communal roost sites, in 5 states and British Columbia. This involved 47 different chimney structures and 1 tree, documenting 60,117 VASW.

British Columbia

Vancouver Island

Cumberland-Old School

David and Adel Routeledge had an exciting spring and summer showing off wave after wave of swifts evading a Merlin on their way into this modest chimney. It was one of the most significant shelters for the species in the northbound migration with a one-day high of 4660. They got the community of 1000 interested and involved and treated the bricks to a nice new tuck-pointing. The swifts returned this warmth and kindness by not using the site at all in the southbound migration.

Idaho

Moscow down town

Terry Gray has been with the Vaux’s Happening project since the beginning and at least one of his last years new site discoveries has been torn down, but there will be no large Vaux’s flock sleeping in Moscow that goes undetected.

Montana

Hamilton Fire Hall

Not much going on for little swifts in the fire hall this migration, but Kate Stone had a big score when she documented a Black Swift nest site on Gash Creek.

Washington

Sumas Old Customs House

Washington’s oldest roost site continues to be looked after by Canadian citizen Steve Howard. Unfortunately Steve also knows the pain of Swift abandonment in the southbound migration. What’s happening? Old Northern State is happening.

Sedro-Woolley-Old Northern State Hospital

What once was perhaps the grandest of all swift roost sites had been all but abandoned by the swifts. Last year Susan Madsen saw to it that the large access door at the bottom was sealed shut and the swifts immediately returned by the thousands. Skagit Audubon President Tim Manns has put together a team to get almost daily observations for the entire southbound event. This cement monster is sucking in all the swifts in the area, with 10,000 to 15,000 roosting swifts the evening norm. September 22 saw 20,000 plus. This site is currently up for sale.

Monroe-Frank Wagner Elementary

Washington State’s flagship roost site has apparently been beaten up on by Old Northern State. Judy Alles again put together a team for everyday observations. But

Wagner, which is usually good for 200,000 roostings in the southbound, will be lucky to document half that. The Monroe community celebration was the same day as Driftwood’s swift night out and enough birds showed up to entertain and amaze the thousand plus humans on the lawn. There are two surveillance cameras in and at the chimney opening. When everything is working you can see live streaming at http://wdfw.wa.gov/wildwatch/vauxcam/video\_outside.html

Since April the chimney opening has been surrounded by crow pokers, which have made it difficult for Bad Bill and his gang to get fresh meat. Video clips at <http://www.vauxhappening.org/Vauxs_Happening/Vauxs_Happening_Home.html>

Monroe- School District Admin. Building

When the Cooper’s Hawk scares the swifts away from the elementary school they will often seek shelter here. Six thousand of them pulled that trick for the 2010 Swift Night Out. Now the crow pokers seem to have knocked the hawk off her game

and when 163 of them checked in this year, Paula Duncan was ready for them.

Selleck-Old School House

Vaux’s Happening has had continual observations each evening for the last 8 migrations at Selleck. Sadly, we lost out star observer to pancreatic cancer last year. Bob Stallcop recorded 17,591 swifts at Selleck, the largest total of all sites during the 2010 NA wide Swift Night Out. We miss you Bob. We are also missing a whole lot of birds this migration. We are blaming that on Northern State and JBLM.

Olympia/Tacoma-JBLM (Joint Base Lewis McChord)

It’s a big stack on military property. Burney Huff wins this migration’s MVP award for putting together the team that’s not going to miss an evening’s observation until the birds are gone. The local Cooper’s Hawk must have choked on one too many swifts and this brick beauty has been packing them in since late August. It may be that this is the first stop for the swifts after leaving Old Northern State.

Olympia residences

If anyone can find that significant roost site on Stevens street it’s going to be Whittier Johnson. It just hasn’t happened yet.

Ellensburg-Old Hospital

Bobcat Jan Demorest has stuck with us since the beginning, involving more and more Eburgers in their quest for the highly coveted Eastern Washington’s Top Gun roost site award. Looks like they are going to get it too. Things have not been going well for their competing neighbor to the south.

Yakima-Herald News

Richard Repp discovered it and several other sites in the area. He then organized the Yakers into a swift counting machine that was the envy of all Eastern Washington. But things have not gone well here in 2011, which leaves Richard searching for a way to return to the happy days of tiny birds speckling the evening sky over downtown Yakima. Probably can’t blame this one on Old Northern State.

Camas-Tavern

Joan Durgin has also been with Vaux’s Happening for four years. She raises the Vaux’s in her residential chimney and then sends them off to hang out with a lot of their bird friends down at the Tavern. It’s been a bad year for the Tavern. Maybe we can blame Northern State and especially JBLM.

OREGON

Rainier-Carpet One

Actually the birds preferred the Old Hall across the street this migration. Darrel Whipple has been in charge of the swifts in this corner of the world and has seen the roosting population go from thousands to hundreds. We are blaming Northern State and especially JBLM for pigging all the swifts.

Tillamook-Wilson School

Pat Kehr made this the surprise super star of the last migration with evening counts as high as 6000. For whatever reason Pat has not seen a feather this September.

Portland-Chapman Elementary School

This is the most famous of all roost sites. You can spend most of the day just going through all the Chapman YouTubes. Portland Audubon has had to invest considerable time and energy into human crowd control. They may still have a ways to go as this how not to impress your first date story shows. [http://www.komoauto repairnews.com/news/local/129846838.html](http://www.komonews.com/news/local/129846838.html)

Predators have hit Chapman hard and scare the swifts off to other smaller locations in the area. Audubon’s Mary Coolidge is the one who tracks them down.

Portland-Mt. Tabor Court Apartments

Mary nailed 1200 of the little beasts here on Swift Night Out. Mary says this is only the second year they have used this site.

Portland/Kenton-Mackin’s Auto Body

This roost site has been going off and on for over 40 years. About a thousand Vaux’s decided it was better to spend September 10 at the body shop rather than have the Peregrine chasing their bodies into the Cooper’s Hawk over at Chapman.

Portland-Duniway Elementary School

While there have been years when the swifts were willing to take their late summer chances roosting inside this active chimney, 2011 was not one of them. Thanks to Mary Coolidge for keeping the observations going.

Oregon City-Not the High School

COUNTERPUNCH editor Jeffrey St Clair has been keeping track of the Oregon City swifts for several years. For the last few years the birds have been hanging out at a rather ugly downtown chimney. This year the swifts decided to go back to school.

Well almost, they fly around the high school chimney then go to bed in the smaller chimney across the street. Numbers have been way down. STOP THE PRESSES!

September 24, 2011 The swifts returned to the high school for the first time in at least three years.

Mt. Angel-High School

John Thomas also added this new to Vaux’s Happening site to the ODFW SwiftWatch 2000 project. It’s a large structure with modest swift numbers. Next migration look for John to discover the long lost Silverton site.

Lebanon – Hotel

Kaynor Heineck continues to look after the Vaux’s Swifts of Lebanon. They had a better north than southbound this year, but the locals always enjoy the show. Watch this amazing video clip of Kaynor performing with her pet swift a year ago.

http://www.katu.com/outdoors/featured/102585124.html?tab=video

Corvallis-City of many sites.

Lots of potential and historic roost sites available for the swifts in the hometown of OSU. Mary Garrard has helped bring back Vaux’s magic to Beaver land with her discovery of a new high traffic chimney at the Frat House.

Eugene-Smith Family Books

Oregon Vaux’s Happening coordinator Nicole Nielsen-Pincus has had her hands full trying to keep track of the swifts in Duck land. Agate Hall on the OU campus has been the traditional big number site but heavy predation will often drive the swifts elsewhere. Last year it was the old hospital, which is hooked up. This year Nicole tracked them down to the back of the bookstore. I’m sure a Cooper’s Hawk will also discover that location soon. Nicole has also decided that the rule of physics that says you can only be in one place at one time is indeed valid. She needs some help other than Lane County Audubon President Maeve Sowles.

Roseburg-UACT

Umpqua Valley Audubon has a new president and Diana Wales thought she could bring some excitement to the chapter and community with the swifts. Playing the old Old Northern State close the clean out trick, the swifts responded by showing up day after day by the thousand plus. Diana has seen to it that Roseburgers are aware of this spectacle in their back yard, and the area around the Arts Center old pottery shed chimney is very spectator friendly. For all this and more we are pleased to announce Diana Wales as the winner of our VAUX’S HAPPENING NORTHBOUND 2011 TOTALLY NEW GUY MVG award. Watch your mail box closely Dianna.

Bend-Old Library and Christmas Presence

There continues to be a lot of swift interest in this lovely central Oregon city. They

came up with a second roost site a little ways away from the traditional Christmas presence chimney. See image at <http://www.vauxhappening.org/Vauxs_Happening/Chimneys.html>

Kim Boddie, Judy Meredith, Mary Ann Kruse and many more spent lots of evenings seeing who could count the most birds. I believe their top count has been 500.

Medford-Edenvale Winery

This is getting real close to the California Border. Next time you are in the area and looking for a cool place to get hitched this could be the place for you. Jamie Stevens did the 328 total observation for the Klamath Bird Observatory.

Lakeview-Flynn’s Furniture

Not to be confused with Lakeshore, Lakeside, Lakewood or Lake Oswego, this community of 2474 on the southern border of central Oregon may be a Vaux’s shortcut to the Blue Mountains, but its looking like its not a short cut from the Blues. Kate Yates is still looking for her first September Vaux’s.

California

Humboldt-Redwood Snag

That’s right, this is a tree. John Hunter is in contact with one Ralph Burcher who almost observes the bark off this tree. High counts are pushing 3000.

Arcata

Not much residential swift roosting going on in the far NW corner of the state but John Hunter continues to be on the hunt for the birds.

Healdsburg-Rio Lindo Academy

Vaux’s Happening and the Vaux’s Swifts are fortunate to have Brad Benson living on campus with them. Brad has been counting the birds and greeting the humanoid visitors in near record numbers this migration. The chimney base is down slope and the top is not much higher than eye level on the upper street, so no warbler neck here. Brad has also recorded enough data to more than suggest that the swifts don’t much plan on spending the night here in the northbound migration.

Want to see what it looks like inside this chimney? Brads got a great image of that.

<http://www.vauxhappening.org/Vauxs_Happening/Data.html>

SF North Bay-McNear Brick

Last year Berkeley’s Rusty Scalf discovered this big number roost site with three separate nice, big, old, brick smoke stacks. He soon discovered that he gets a more accurate count when he’s actually watching the chimney that the swifts are going into. We are pushing for more local involvement in monitoring this site, as it’s difficult for Rusty to find time to go there every evening. Then there’s that toll bridge, and if he takes the wrong exit he can end up in San Quentin.

Los Angeles-Chester Williams

Right in the heart of downtown LA is the 84 year old Chester Williams building with this huge chimney sticking up in back. A few years ago the swifts started making this their evening accommodations. Jeff Chapman, Center Director of the Audubon Center at Debs Park, has been busy spreading the word that if you are walking down Broadway near sunset, look up and you might see something really cool. September 11 there were about 7000 of the little birds. Two weeks later the number was double. A link to that predator filled event here.

http://www.surfbirds.com/birdingmail/Mail/LACoBirds/1027920

San Diego

On Sept 9 Christopher Adler found the city barren of any obvious Vaux’s Swifts and there have been no positive reports since.