

Chimney Swift

Chaetura pelagica

STATUS	Threatened 	Threatened 
Threatened 	Endangered 	Not Listed 



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Species Description

The Chimney Swift is a small bird (12-14 cm) with dark brown plumage, and a pale throat. It has a long, thin body, with long, narrow, pointed wings that project beyond the short spiny tail when folded. It has a quick jerky flight and a chittering call. All ages and sexes are similar in appearance.



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Observations by Maritime SwiftWatch volunteers provide an estimate of at least 1500 swifts in NB and NS. Winters in the Amazon River drainage basin in South America.



Habitat

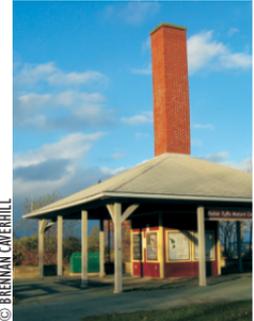
Before Europeans arrived in North America, Chimney Swifts used giant hollow trees for nesting sites. They still use this habitat today but also use chimneys and other human-built habitat in urban and rural areas. Being aerial foragers, they typically concentrate in places where insects are abundant, such as near lakes and wetlands.



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Swift roost in Wolfville, NS

Chimney Swifts can be seen from late April through September foraging high in the sky during the day and at roosting sites at dusk and dawn.

May	May-June	May-July	June-Aug	July-Aug	Aug-Sept
					
Return to Atlantic Canada	Congregate at known roosts	Pairs look for nest site	Lay eggs and raise young	Return to roost sites	Migrate south

From May to September AVOID 1) using fireplace, 2) sweeping chimneys, 3) chimney repairs

Similar Species

Note: Swallows in Atlantic Canada have a whitish breast, and smoother flight pattern than the Chimney Swift.

For further info on living with swifts view *"The Chimney Swift: Coming to a Chimney Near You"* factsheet: www.sararegistry.gc.ca/involved/education/default_e.cfm

Cliff Swallow:
Similar size (13 cm); blue back, brown wings and tail, white belly and forehead; tiny black bill.



Bank Swallow:
Similar size (12 cm); brown back, white belly; narrow brown band on breast.



Barn Swallow:
Similar size (13 cm); blue back, brown face, buff belly; longer pointed tail.



Interesting Points

- Pairs are monogamous, and mate for life.
- The Canadian population has declined by more than 95% since the 1970s.
- One bird can eat over 1000 insects per day.
- They can not take off if they are on the ground!

Threats to Survival

- Reduction in habitat for roosting and nesting in forests (old, big trees) and urban landscapes (removal or capping of brick chimneys).
- Reduction in prey insect populations.
- Severe weather events, including hurricanes during migration.

How You Can Help

Join Maritimes SwiftWatch and monitor a roost or nest site near you. Foresters: leave big dead and dying trees standing. Homeowners: keep your chimney open rather than capping or lining it. Avoid sweeping your chimney and lighting fires from May to September to prevent harm to nesting or roosting swifts. Nests are small, do not pose a nuisance or a danger to homeowners, and can be removed after September. Use non-toxic alternatives to pesticides.

Contacts, Information, Sighting Reports & Stewardship Opportunities

Contact: Environment Canada (506) 364-5044 ext. 5060 or www.ec.gc.ca

Info, Sighting Reports and Stewardship: Maritimes SwiftWatch (506) 364-5196, marswifts@birdscanada.org, www.bsc-eoc.org/volunteer/acswifts, eBird.org