

MCSI Stay-at-home Chimney Swift Monitoring Protocol and Fact Sheet 2020

General Overview

This year Manitoba Chimney Swift Initiative (MCSI) monitoring is staying close-to-home. Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, all MCSI monitoring will take place at homes, apartments and condos across Manitoba.

The following is a description of the MCSI monitoring program and protocol for observations. There are two ways for you to support MCSI and help us to improve our understanding of Chimney Swifts. The first is by recording local presence or absence of flying Chimney Swifts. Sometimes they are discovered where they have not previously been seen and knowing they were sought but not found furthers our understanding of Chimney Swift distribution. Chimney Swift populations are in decline across Canada and are a threatened species under Canada's Species at Risk Act and Manitoba's Endangered Species and Ecosystems Act.

The second way is to record instances of other aerial insectivores (such as swallows and nightjars). Their presence indicates that one element of Chimney Swift habitat – a population of insect prey – may be present in your neighbourhood, town or property. Knowing there is Chimney Swift food in your area helps us to understand their population distribution better. Many members of this related group of birds are also undergoing steep population declines and are listed species under Canada's Species at Risk Act and Manitoba's Endangered Species and Ecosystems Act.

You can be a weekly volunteer monitoring your neighbourhood skies from your property, backyard, balcony, or window.

If you have any questions please email the Project Coordinator at mbchimneyswift@gmail.com.

To Monitor

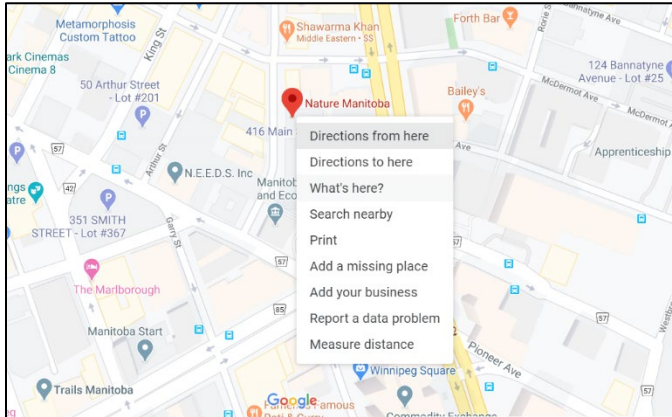
Position yourself with an eye on the sky and an ear out for bird sounds. Monitoring will take place every Wednesday from May 20th to June 24th, with inclement weather dates for Thursday each week. Having a large group of at-home observers out at the same time is important because if Chimney Swifts are recorded in two locations at the same time, we can ensure the same birds are not recorded twice.

Each monitoring session will start 20 minutes before official sunset time and run until 10 minutes after official sunset time, for a total of 30 minutes. Use the resources available from MCSI to help you look and listen. This period is focused on Chimney Swifts but is also a period when many aerial insectivores are active. If swifts are using a neighbourhood chimney, this is the time they come into roost, or rest, for the night; the birds leave the site within ½ hour of sunrise the following morning. If the weather is cold or rainy, swifts may enter their chimneys early or just stay inside until the return of nicer weather. We recommend that you monitor on days without prolonged, heavy rain and/or unseasonably cold temperatures (particularly < 13° C).

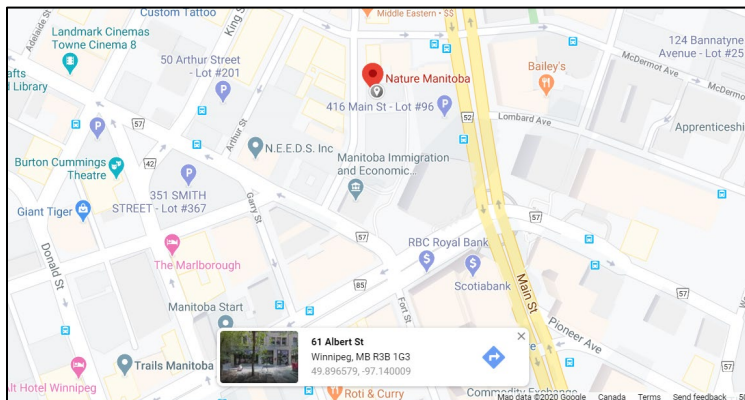
If you do not observe any Chimney Swifts or other aerial insectivores in your surveys, do not be discouraged. Zero data are important data – and you can be outside enjoying our beautiful spring weather! Afterwards fill out the Stay-at-Home Chimney Swift Monitoring form on MCSI’s website. To help you in determining the species of aerial insectivore you are seeing, you can use the species identification guide at the back of this document.

To evaluate your data, we will also need the approximate latitude and longitude of your observation point. You can gather your latitude and longitude through a GPS, or through Google Maps.

Using Google Maps



Zoom close into your observation point in Google Maps. Using your mouse, right click on your observation location and choose “What’s here?”



At the bottom of the screen the location coordinates (latitude, longitude) will show up. Please copy and paste into the reporting form with all decimal spaces.

Reporting opportunistic sightings and new sites

The MCSI also tracks reports of Chimney Swifts you see as you go about your daily business. This includes Chimney Swifts flying overhead or reports about possible nesting or roosting chimneys being used by swifts. As well, if you see an open (uncapped), unlined, rough-interior chimney that is at least 2 by 2 bricks wide please report it to us through the MCSI website general sightings form

(https://www.mbchimneyswift.com/?page_id=1918).

Filling out the datasheet

Use the **MCSI Stay-at-home Chimney Swift Monitoring form** for all Wednesday (rain date Thursday) official monitoring sessions.

Name(s): Write names of each observer

Date: Write the date on which your monitoring session takes place

Location: Enter both the street address, and latitude/ longitude of your place of residence where you are monitoring. This information will be displayed publicly, but anonymously (i.e. no names attached to locations).

Start Time: Record the start time of your observation

Duration: Record the duration of your observation

Sunset Time: Record the official sunset time from:

<https://www.timeanddate.com/sun/canada/winnipeg>

Start Temperature: Indicate the temperature at the beginning of the observation period. You can find this information online at <http://www.theweathernetwork.com/> or http://weather.gc.ca/forecast/canada/index_e.html?id=MB

Wind: Estimate wind speed at the beginning of your observations. Options are: Calm; Light air movement; Slight breeze, wind felt on face; Gentle breeze, small twigs move; Moderate breeze, small branches move; Fresh breeze, small trees sway; High winds

Cloud Cover: Look up at the sky and estimate the percentage covered by clouds. 0 = 0% cloud cover, 10 = 100% cloud cover.

Precipitation: Indicate the conditions at the start of your monitoring session: None, Occasional, Light Rain, Heavy Rain, or Thundershower.

Please make a note if weather conditions change appreciably during your monitoring session.

Detection of Chimney Swifts: Yes or no

IF YES: Seen or heard or both

Any known Chimney Swift chimneys in use nearby: Let us know if there is a nesting or roosting chimney in your neighbourhood and any details you might know (location, distance, direction)

Maximum number: What was the maximum number of Chimney Swifts you saw at one time?

Frequency: How many times did you see Chimney Swifts overhead: once, a few times, many times, constantly?

Direction: Which direction did you see Chimney Swifts flying?

Entering Chimneys: Did you see any Chimney Swifts entering a chimney? If yes, how many Chimney Swifts and at what location?

Detection of aerial insectivores: Did you see or hear any other aerial insectivores? Please identify which species you observed. There is an aerial insectivore identification guide at the back of this document to help you identification by sight and sound.

Observation(s): For each observation of an aerial insectivore please record species, maximum number of insectivores seen, direction they were headed (if known), and provide any other comments. Repeat the observation field for each aerial insectivore you noted.

Identification Tips for Aerial Insectivores

Chimney Swift



Photo by: Christian Artuso

- Cigar-shaped body
- Wings long and narrow
- Short, stubby tail
- Voice: listen for the characteristic chittering calls (listen here: <https://www.xeno-canto.org/302268>). In Manitoba, Chimney Swifts are quite vocal and their chittering calls are often the first clue of their presence.

Common Nighthawk



https://www.allaboutbirds.org/guide/Common_Nighthawk/id

- Long, pointed wings
- White patches on underside of both wings near the outer edge
- Notch in tail
- Deep wing beats, erratic flight pattern
- Glide with wings raised
- Voice: often silent when in migration; however, you may hear a distinctive, scratchy “peent” call (listen here for call and “booming”: <https://www.xeno-canto.org/490771>). In rural areas where nighthawks breed locally, you might be lucky enough to hear the boom made by feather vibration at the bottom of the display dive.

Eastern Whip-poor-will



https://identify.whatbird.com/obj/553/identification/Eastern_Whip-poor-will.aspx

- White feathers on outer edges of tail
- Rounded tail
- Rounded wings
- Active at night
- Voice: the famous “whip-poor-will” song gives this species its name (listen here: <https://www.xeno-canto.org/319518>). Unlike the other species mentioned here, you are more likely to hear Whip-poor-wills than see them.

Barn Swallow



https://www.allaboutbirds.org/guide/Barn_Swallow/id#

- Reddish throat, with white breast
- Strong notch in tail, with outer tail feathers significantly longer than inner tail feathers
- Broad triangular wings
- Voice: Not as key a characteristic as with other aerial insectivores (Listen here: <https://www.xeno-canto.org/511280>).

Tree Swallow



<https://www.treeswallowprojects.com/carrival.html>

- Entirely white breast and throat, metallic blue/green on top
- Slightly notched tail
- Broad, triangular wings
- Voice: Not as key a characteristic as with other aerial insectivores (listen here: <https://www.xeno-canto.org/511279>).

Cliff Swallow



<http://www.birdspix.com/north-america/swallows-hirundinidae/cliff-swallow>

- No notch in tail
- Reddish throat, white breast
- Broad, triangular wings
- Voice: Not as key a characteristic as with other aerial insectivores (listen here: <https://www.xeno-canto.org/511278>)

Bank Swallow



Christian Artuso

- White breast with grey collar around the neck, grey on top
- Slightly notched tail
- Broad, triangular wings
- Voice: Not as key a characteristic as with other aerial insectivores (listen here: <https://www.xeno-canto.org/325094>)

Purple Martin



Christian Artuso

- Large size
- Dark purple/blue (may look black)
- Slightly notched tail
- Broad, triangular wings
- Voice: A series of loud chirps, rattles and “zweet” sounds (listen here: <https://www.xeno-canto.org/278201>).