

Have you seen this bird?

The Chimney Swift is a small, dark grey-brown bird with a pale grey throat. It is most easily identifiable by its long, narrow, boomerang-shaped wings and its short stubby tail.

The Chimney Swift gets its name because it often roosts and nests in old brick chimneys, building a small stick nest which it glues to the rough chimney wall with its sticky saliva.



Illustration: Richard Cain

Flight: erratic with stiff wingbeat



Flight: smooth with flexible wingbeat



Tapered body

Slender body



Wings: narrow base, long and thin

Wings: broad base, triangular shape

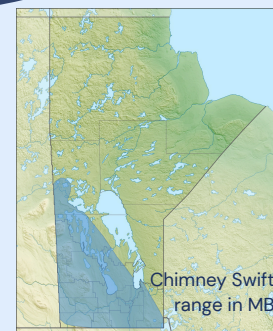


Tail: short and stubby

Tail: forked or notched

From afar, swifts (left) can look similar to swallows and purple martins (right). However, wing and tail shape, and flight pattern can help tell them apart!

Photos: Christian Artuso



File: Canada Manitoba location map.svg by NordNordWest. This file is licensed under the Creative Commons Attribution-Share Alike 3.0 Unported license. Changes made to the original file were by MCS.

Chimney Swifts are found in communities across southern MB, often returning to the same chimney every year. This migratory bird spends its winters in South America and returns to MB each year to nest, from mid-May until late August.



Photo: Christian Artuso

Unfortunately, the Canadian Chimney Swift population has declined drastically, and it is now listed as a Threatened species in Manitoba and in Canada. One factor contributing to their decline is habitat loss – many old brick chimneys are crumbling, while modern chimneys are built in a way that isn't suitable for swifts.

Before they started to use chimneys, Chimney Swifts nested and roosted in large hollow trees in old growth forests. There are few of these old growth forests left in the Chimney Swift's Canadian range. Some swifts currently nest and roost in trees, but little is known about where and how much they're using this natural habitat. As the number of suitable chimneys continues to decline, increasing our understanding of where Chimney Swifts are nesting and roosting in forests is key to protecting important habitat for this species at risk.



Photo: Marissa Berard

Have you seen a Chimney Swift? We'd love to hear about it!



Areas of interest

There have been several observations of Chimney Swifts around larger forested areas in western Manitoba (such as The Pas, Porcupine Hills, Swan River, Duck Mountains, Dauphin, and the Agassiz and Ochre River areas in Riding Mountain National Park) suggesting swifts may be occupying hollow trees in these regions.

Map: Google Earth

HOW YOU CAN HELP

- **Report any observations of Chimney Swifts:** Note the location, time of day, number of swifts seen, and any other info such as if the swift entered a tree or a chimney. Submit to mbchimneyswift@gmail.com or (204) 943-9029.
- **Keep an eye out for old hollow trees:** If you come across a large tree with an opening that you think could be good habitat for swifts, please mark the location coordinates, take a photo and send to mbchimneyswift@gmail.com.
- **Avoid cutting down trees:** By keeping trees standing whenever possible (especially dead and dying trees), you can protect important habitat for Chimney Swifts and other birds.
- **Preserve wetland areas:** Wetlands are so important for swifts, and many other birds who rely on these areas for insects to eat! By preserving wetlands on your property, you can support healthy ecosystems with lots of food for Chimney Swifts.
- **Volunteer with MCSI:** We are always looking for volunteers to help us count Chimney Swifts and monitor chimneys or trees throughout the spring and summer. If you are interested, contact us and we can match you with a chimney in your area.



Two nesting trees used by Chimney Swifts in Québec: Live yellow birch tree with hollow branch opening (left) and dead yellow birch tree with a chimney-like opening (right).

Photos: Vincent Lamarre



CONTACT INFORMATION

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