

WISCONSIN WILDCARDS



AERIAL INSECTIVORES 

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CHIMNEY SWIFT

BASIC ID

Chimney Swifts are dark gray-brown, swallow-like birds with long, slightly curved wings and stubby tails. They fly with stiff, rapid wing beats. Their call is a series of quick, chittering notes.

HABITAT

Chimney Swifts nest and roost in chimneys and on other vertical surfaces in dim, enclosed spaces, including air vents, wells, hollow trees, and caves. Unfortunately, this species is suffering sharp population decline.

WHAT YOU CAN DO

- If you have a masonry or clay flue-tile chimney, keep the top open and damper closed from April through October to provide a nest site for these insect eaters.
- Schedule chimney cleanings before or after the breeding season, November–March.
- Metal chimneys should be permanently capped to prevent birds and other wildlife from being trapped inside.

WILD!

Swifts use their own saliva, which hardens like glue, to attach their twig nests to chimney walls!

For more information, visit: www.wiswifts.org

Baby swift and eggs in nest. Photo by Jack Bartholmai
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ACTIVITY

This small bird spends almost its entire life in flight, feeding and drinking on the wing. Chimney Swifts nest and roost in chimneys and on vertical surfaces in dim, enclosed spaces. On migration in spring and fall, swifts can be seen at dusk swirling into large chimneys by the dozens or even thousands to roost for the night.

HISTORY

Long ago, Chimney Swifts used hollow trees as their "home." As forests were cleared, the swift's natural habitat was lost, but over time, they adapted to using masonry chimneys instead of hollow trees. Unfortunately, this species is suffering sharp population declines.

WILD!

The Swift's toes are anisodactyl—three forward, one back—like those of most birds, but the Chimney Swift can swivel its back toe (its hallux) forward to help get a better grip.

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Photo by Jerry DeBoer
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