

Chimney swifts once nested in old hollow trees, but these old trees have long since been removed from the landscape. The swifts have since adapted to humans and are now almost exclusively nesting inside chimneys.

Birds in my chimney?

- If you hear chirping or chattering inside your chimney you may have chimney swifts.
- Chimneys that are made of stone, brick or masonry flue tiles with mortared joints provide the right surfaces for nesting chimney swifts.
- Unlike creosote buildup, swift nests in chimneys do not cause a fire hazard. Chimneys should be cleaned in mid-March or after the wood-burning season ends and before the swift nesting period begins.



- Dampers should be inspected and remain closed during the nesting season to prevent birds from flying into the house and becoming trapped or injured.
- Chimney swifts are protected by the Migratory Bird Treaty Act and a federal permit is needed to remove birds and their nests during the nesting season.

Chimney Watch

Chimney Watch is a coalition of state and federal agencies, universities, and nonprofit organizations that seeks to understand and reverse recent declines in chimney swift populations.

To learn more about Chimney Watch, please visit our website:

To learn more about Chimney Swifts, here are a few good resources:

Websites:

- www.chimneyswifts.org
- <http://watch.birds.cornell.edu/nestcams/camera/index.html>
- www.youtube.com/driftwoodwildlife
- www.birds.cornell.edu/AllAboutBirds/BirdGuide/Chimney_Swift.html

Books:

- Chimney Swifts: America's Mysterious Birds above the Fireplace by Paul D. Kyle and Georgan Z. Kyle, 2005.
- Chimney Swifts and Their Relatives. By Margaret Whittmore, 1981.



Chimney Watch

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CHIMNEY SWIFTS



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A Chimney Swift
Revitalization Project

Chimney Swifts are one of the most active birds in the world. They fly almost constantly during the day. You can hear them chittering during the spring and summertime as they fly high above, catching flying insects. They have been described as resembling a "flying cigar."



Migration

Chimney Swifts spend the winter in the Amazon Basin of South America, then travel here in the Spring to breed and raise their family. In the Fall, they congregate in large groups as they prepare for their migration trip back to South America. They use large older chimneys as roosts. Roosting groups can number as few as a couple of swifts or larger with thousands of swifts!

To learn more about Fall roosting swifts in your area and to take part in A Swift Night Out, a national program to count swifts, see this website for more information:

www.chimneyswifts.org

Nesting

Chimney Swift nests are a half saucer shape of woven small twigs held together with their own saliva and glued with saliva to the inside wall of a chimney. The nest is about 4 inches wide by 1 inch tall. They typically lay 2-7 eggs. The eggs are incubated for 18-21 days by both parents. After hatching the young stay in the nest for 20 days. After fledging, they will stay in the chimney for another 8-10 days practicing flying. 30 days after hatching, they will take their first flight out of the chimney.

Family Life

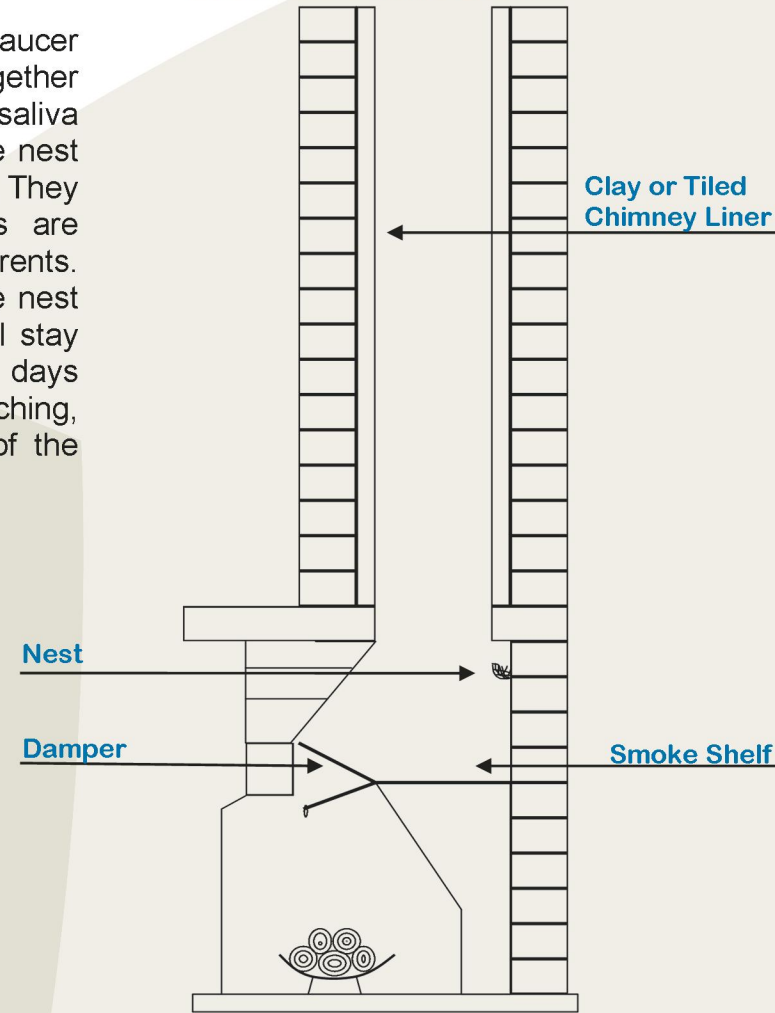
Chimney swifts are monogamous; records indicate that some chimney swifts will remain with the same mate for up to eight or nine years. Swifts are known to stay together as family groups. They have been seen migrating together and during the breeding season, young from the previous year will assist with raising the new brood. They are known as "helpers at the nest".

Conservation

Chimney Swifts used to nest in large, old, dead, hollowed out trees. Very few of these trees now exist and swifts have had to adapt to using human made chimneys as nesting areas. In the past this has worked out well for the swifts: they had an abundance of nesting areas available to them, and their population grew.

This is a typical chimney design.

As you can see the swifts place their nest near the bottom of the chimney above the smoke shelf.



Unfortunately, in the past decade chimney designs have changed and many new chimneys can not be used by swifts to nest. Also, many older homes have put caps on their chimneys, which keep out the swifts. This has led to a rapid decline in the swift population.

