



Maritimes SwiftWatch

VOLUME 5 — 2014 - 2015 Season

Season review

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Mark your calendar!

The 2015 roost count dates are:

May 20
May 24
May 28
June 1

Additional counts are welcome!

Led by Bird Studies Canada (BSC), Maritimes SwiftWatch is a citizen-scientist monitoring and conservation program designed to bring together volunteers and community groups to act as stewards for Chimney Swifts and their habitat.

In 2014, over 125 volunteers scoured the region for swifts, conducting over 170 roost watches and submitting 70 other observations.

This season was slightly less dramatic than 2013 in terms of Chimney Swift numbers but one highlight from this year was a new roost discovered in Riverside-Albert hosting up to 60 Chimney Swifts during migration. Swift Night Out community events in Bear River, Wolfville and New Glasgow proved to be a huge success with over 50 people attending the Bear River event and close to 100 at each of the Wolfville and New Glasgow events.

Unfortunately, SwiftWatch staff learned of two nests that were removed from chimneys this breeding season. One set of young swifts were taken in by the Cobequid Wildlife Rehabilitation Centre and were later released in Ontario (read more on

page 4). The second family of young swifts was taken in by Hope for Wildlife, which successfully released all of the young in East Dalhousie, NS.

As always, a sincere **thank you** is due to the volunteers, partners, and supporters whose contributions make SwiftWatch possible.

– Allison Manthorne and Holly Lightfoot
Maritimes SwiftWatch Coordinators

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Maritimes SwiftWatch

Visit www.birdscanada.org/volunteer/ai/chsw

Chimney Swifts of Sussex become TV Stars



Rogers TV's Andre Arsenault gets ready to film the Sussex swifts (Judy Stockdale-Dow 2014)

May 8, 2014 marked the annual return of Chimney Swifts to the roost chimney they have used since 2012. By May 21, we observed 62 during the first roost count and just four days later, we counted 168. This was the evening these birds became TV stars.

Earlier in the spring, I was contacted by Don MacPhail who helped the NB Wildlife Trust Fund set up filming of some projects that they have been involved with in the province, including SwiftWatch. After checking with the property owner and SwiftWatch Coordinator Holly Lightfoot, we decided on Sunday, May 25, one of the roost count dates. It was a beautiful evening to capture lots of birds entering the roost chimney.

Holly was at a Swift Night Out in NS, so I agreed to be interviewed by Don MacPhail, with Rogers TV producer Andre Arsenault filming. We completed most of the interview across the street from the roost, before the actual count began. Don also did the count and we both counted 168. Someone else also observed two swifts enter a nesting chimney next door.

Roger's Channel 10 has been airing the feature since the fall, under 'NB Wildlife Wonders'. The piece runs 30 minutes and also features the 'Puffins of Machias Seal Island'. I believe Rogers TV broadcasts this show across NB as friends in other areas

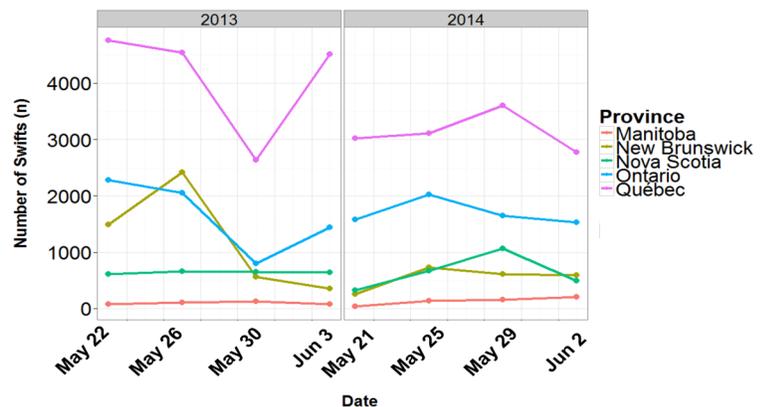
have seen it too. Many in Sussex have watched it, and those who have never seen the swifts at the roost chimney now plan to do so in 2015. Thanks to the New Brunswick Wildlife Trust Fund, and Rogers TV for providing this opportunity to showcase the Chimney Swifts of Sussex.

I was also pleased to discover two more nesting chimneys in Sussex, and have spoken with the homeowners and given them lots of information. Because Sussex is so small, it is easy to spread the word and to search for nesting locations on foot. We have now found five nests, including the chimney in my own home.

-Judy Stockdale-Dow

SwiftWatch Across Canada

Maritimes SwiftWatch had a very productive survey year, with nearly 100% coverage of known roost sites! This information is very important in monitoring both regional and national population trends. Observers across Canada conduct counts on the same four nights. Below are results from these efforts. Synchronizing counts is important to ensure that we are not double counting the same swifts. This provides a much better estimate of the Canadian population.



In 2013, swift migration seemed to peak on 26 May; SwiftWatchers counted 9776 swifts.

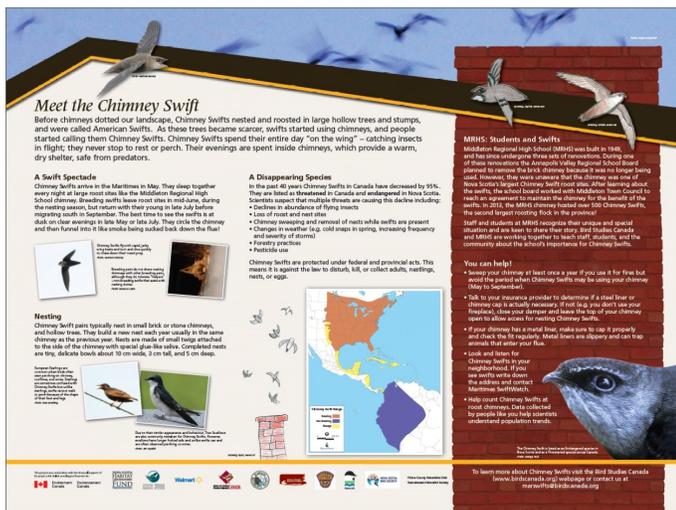
In 2014, this peak was a bit later on 29 May; just over 7000 individual swifts were counted. We're excited to see what 2015 counts will tell us!

School SwiftWatch 2014

2014 was another busy year for School SwiftWatch. The new Middleton Regional High School interpretive panel was installed and unveiled just prior to spring migration. Additionally, we presented to Grades 6, 7, and 8 as well as two high school classes. Later in the summer, MRHS and its chimney swifts were featured in a Land and Sea Documentary on Birds at Risk (watch it online at cbc.ca/player).

Temperance Street Elementary School was decommissioned over the summer, with students now attending the New Glasgow Academy. Ownership of Temperance Street was transferred to the Town of New Glasgow late in 2014. The Town plans to sell the building through a Request for Proposal and is adamant that any request received will ensure that this habitat is preserved. Maritimes SwiftWatch, along with federal and provincial biologists, will continue to work with Town Council in 2015 to protect this important Chimney Swift roost.

Lastly, for the second year in a row, we received reports of close to 100 swifts using the chimney at Tobique High School in Plaster Rock. We hope to visit this school in 2015 to talk to staff and students about their special house guests!



This Chimney Swift interpretive panel, designed by Michelle Doucette and featuring artwork by Middleton Regional High School students, was installed at MRHS in spring 2014.

Courage of the Small

By shalan joudry

I will tell you what is courageous
- the tenacity to attempt every last opening
as the chimneys close
one after the other,
year after year
generation after generation
- looking for a home

be it not enough we've taken their roosts once
fell the large trees for our own
then they found the chimneys
now we're taking them too

I will tell you what is courageous
- these swifts here
swimming on air masses,
diving on the last mosquitoes we've barely
poisoned,
while the sun reddens,
clacking out to each other, "time for bed, head
for one cover"

"now, don't mind the humans, they're distracted
tonight"

"on your mark, together"
and they plunder in swooping spirals
all 143 souls into the mouth of their canyon
just at the last moment, each pushes steady
lower themselves down

and wonder if when they awake in the morning,
will their home this still be?

SwiftWatch in Northeastern New Brunswick



Left: Old Bathurst Post Office showing the roost chimney and iconic clock tower. Right: one of the artificial towers built by Nature NB (Lewnanny Richardson 2014)

Nature NB works on various projects to recover Chimney Swifts in New Brunswick. Our staff and volunteers have built and installed wooden nesting structures on the Acadian Peninsula and elsewhere (photo above right). Swifts have not yet nested in these structures, and do not appear to be attracted by them – at least not yet. The volunteers who have structures on their property are patiently waiting the day when the swifts will take to them.

In northeastern New Brunswick, Chimney Swifts nest at a Paquetville church and roost in the old Bathurst post office chimney. Nature NB monitors these sites together with our wonderful volunteers. In 2014 the high count at the Bathurst roost was on May 29, with 290 birds entering the chimney. On the same day in Paquetville, five birds entered the church's two chimneys which undoubtedly served as nest sites as swifts were seen around the church all summer long. We will continue to monitor Chimney Swifts and may also undertake a census of nesting sites in the future.

In Trudel, the Acadian Peninsula Naturalists Club recently erected a brick roost of similar dimensions to the Bathurst chimney, with help from the New Brunswick Wildlife Trust Fund, Nature NB, and the kindness of a devoted volunteer. Built into a gar-

age, the structure has all the makings of a perfect swift roost and is now ready to receive swifts.

If you pass through Bathurst this spring, the show put on by swifts entering the roost at sunset is well worth seeing. Located downtown, the old post office is a historic building with a large clock built into its structure. During summer, you can even admire this spectacle during musical evenings presented by the city – two shows for the price of one!

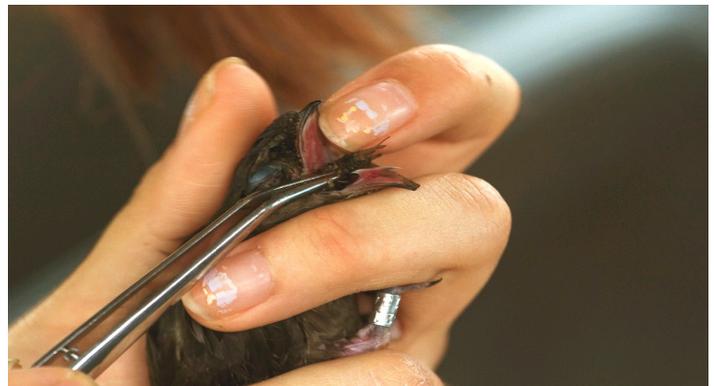
Please contact Maritimes SwiftWatch with any comments and observations of swifts in the Bathurst region.

-Lewnanny Richardson, Nature NB

Another Swift Recovery

For the second year in a row, a nest of young Chimney Swifts was dropped off at the Cobequid Wildlife Rehabilitation Center in Truro.

The chicks arrived later in the season and veterinarian Helene Van Doninck knew that by the time she raised these young, most Chimney Swifts would have left the Maritimes to fly south for the winter. However, Chimney Swifts remain in Ontario and Quebec much later into fall. So instead these young birds were transported on a 4.5h flight by Pilots n Paws (www.pilotsnpaws.org) arriving at Le Nichoir Wild Bird Rehabilitation in Hudson QC (<http://lenichoir.org>) where they spent 3 weeks be-



Young Chimney Swift being hand fed. Normally swifts feed while flying and can't pick up insects from the ground. For this reason they must be hand fed during rehabilitation. (Paul Roedding 2014)



Young swift ready to be released (Ally Manthorne 2013)

fore moving onto Swift Care Ontario in London. This trio was successfully released at a roost site on September 9th and easily joined the resident group of 300+ swifts!

Also this year, a nest of Chimney Swifts arrived at Hope for Wildlife in Seaforth, NS in mid-August. These birds were older than the CWRC nestlings and remained in NS.

However, by the time they were ready to be released, there were few Chimney Swifts at roost sites in the Maritimes. Instead this trio was released at a barn in south-western NS to join a family of swifts that had spent the summer there. The family seemed to accept the new additions, and all hung out at the barn until September 4th. Hopefully these parents didn't mind showing a few more young the route south!

Although both these stories ended well, these events were both avoidable. Again we remind folks that it is against the law to remove a Chimney Swift, or its nest from your chimney. Their nests do not create at fire hazard and they do not carry disease, so are not a health concern. Young can be a bit noisy when they are begging (visit our Facebook page to see some clips of them in their nests), but this period usually lasts less than 2 weeks. If you think you may have Chimney Swifts count yourself lucky: a single Chimney Swift can eat over 1,000 insects per day and can help "debug" your yard!

We thank CWRC, Hope For Wildlife, Le Nichoir Wild Bird Rehabilitation, Swift Care Ontario and all their volunteers for their hard work ensuring a successful rehabilitation of these swifts.

If you find Chimney Swifts in your chimney, please don't disturb them - contact us for advice!

New for 2015: Swifts and Swallows Website

Over the last 40 years aerial insectivores including Chimney Swifts and many swallow species, have undergone steeper declines than any other group of birds in Canada. These birds will only recover if they are valued as an integral part of our neighbourhoods and ecosystems.

Bird Studies Canada staff across the country are busy at work on a new website that helps visitors learn about each of the featured species, including techniques to help with identification. The site also features resources to support landowners and managers in becoming good stewards of land and property.

Also featured on the Swifts and Swallows page is a data entry portal that lets SwiftWatchers easily download survey materials and data sheets, submit roost count and nest data, report sightings and more. The data will be housed in a national database, making entering, sharing and analysing data from national SwiftWatch program easier for everyone dedicated to aerial insectivore monitoring and conservation.

The website is a work in progress so keep checking the SwiftWatch page for updates:

www.birdscandada.org/volunteer/acswifts



Young swifts huddled at the peak of a barn. (Donna Crossland 2014)

Tracking Swift Numbers

Although 2014 was not the banner year that we had in 2013, the swifts did not disappoint. Heavy rains in northern NB thwarted swift counts on May 21; in fact, numbers were low all across the Maritimes. However, by the end of the month numbers peaked just shy of 2,000 swifts, with the “hot spot” this year located in New Glasgow, NS. We were pleased to add a new roost in Riverside-Albert, NB and several new nest sites were reported in both provinces, including several nests inside barns in Nova Scotia.

Sometimes busy schedules prevent us from conducting counts on scheduled count dates. If you know in advance that you may miss a count, please let us know so we can help to arrange a ‘backup’ counter. Furthermore, if you are interested in helping out at a roost near you, let us know and we can connect you with other SwiftWatchers!

Province	Site	Building Type	21-May	25-May	29-May	2-Jun
NS	St. Bernard (Weymouth)	Church	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a
NS	McGowan Lake	Unused smithy	74	n/a	139	142
NS	Bear River	House	70	180	165	171
NS	Middleton	School	58	364	192	112
NS	Wolfville	Freestanding chimney	30	118	65	55
NS	Upper Falmouth	House	6	10	27	3
NS	Truro	New town library	23	n/a	n/a	n/a
NS	New Glasgow	School	62	0	461	207
NS	Oxford	Freestanding chimney	6	n/a	14	3
NS	Mabou	Church	0	0	n/a	1
NB	Saint-Quentin	Church	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a
NB	Sainte-Anne-de-Madawaska	Church	n/a	257	269	229
NB	Sainte-Anne-de-Madawaska	School	n/a	0	0	0
NB	Bathurst	Former post office	n/a	290	296	202
NB	Paquetville	Church	3	5	5	5
NB	Plaster Rock	School	n/a	n/a	n/a	97
NB	Fredericton	Commercial	163	175	157	69
NB	Chipman	Freestanding chimney	0	0	0	0
NB	Island View forestry nursery	House (used as office)	5	0	0	0
NB	Sussex	Apartment complex	62	170	92	71
NB	Hampton	Former post office	25	70	51	89
NB	Riverside-Albert*	House	not reported until 1st June			60
		TOTAL	587	1639	1933	1516

*indicates a new site reported in 2014"

n/a" means no count was done on this date



BIRD STUDIES
ÉTUDES D'OISEAUX **CANADA**

Maritimes SwiftWatch is a multi-partner project led by Bird Studies Canada together with:



Kepukwitk's SAR Program
Pictou Co. Naturalist Club



Maritimes SwiftWatch supporters:

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