

Winter 2013-2014

Season Review

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.

The 2013 season was full of surprises. Inclement weather in the early part of the migration season stalled Chimney Swifts in the Maritimes. While waiting out cool wet conditions in other parts of their breeding range, the swifts gave Maritimers quite the show! Record numbers were recorded across all roost sites with a peak of 1493 recorded at a new Fredericton roost site.

School Swiftwatch has continued to receive support from the staff and students with a new interpretive panel to be installed at Middleton Regional High School this spring. Swift Night Out gatherings in Sussex and Wolfville proved to be a huge success with over 50 people attending the event in Sussex and over 90 attending the event in Wolfville. With these successes we hope to hold even more in 2014. Finally a rehabilitation of 5 orphaned swifts by the Cobequid Wildlife Rehabilitation Centre in Truro ended with a successful release at the Middleton roost site at the end of August.

As always, a sincere “thank you” is due to the volunteers, partners, and funders whose contributions make SwiftWatch possible. – *Holly Lightfoot and Allison Manthorne, Maritimes SwiftWatch Coordinators*



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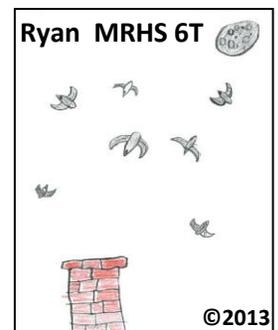


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School SwiftWatch Update

Middleton Regional High School (Middleton) and Temperance Street Elementary School (New Glasgow) host up to 700 swifts between them during spring migration, which provides a unique opportunity for students to learn about this provincially endangered species. This past year Ally Manthorne visited both MRHS and New Glasgow Junior High School to give presentations explaining the biology and significance of their chimney guests. Ally also asked the students to contribute some swift artwork for future presentations and educational material, highlighted over the next few pages. It is easy to see that we have some very talented young artists in the Maritimes.

Further, some of this artwork submitted by the Grade 6 students at MRHS will be included on an interpretive panel to be installed at MRHS this spring. The interpretive panel is currently being designed but stay tuned for more information on its unveiling.



Roost Spotlight: Bear River – A new home for the swifts of L'sitkuk

Bear River First Nation and Acadia First Nation are teaming up to look at certain species at risk and critical habitats in our traditional Mi'kmaw territory of Kespukwitk (southwest Nova Scotia). One of our favourite species to watch this year was the local Chimney Swift population which found a new home in the L'sitkuk area.

Did you know...

L'sitkuk is the traditional Mi'kmaw name for the river and surrounding shores with its steep hills (the area also known as Bear River).

Historically Chimney Swifts roosted in the main Bear River village in a brick chimney in the old Oakdene School. From conversations with locals, we know that different birders and



© Greg Turner 2014

New Bear River roost site

community members have enjoyed watching the swifts at dusk for at

least a decade. Since being decommissioned as a functioning school, the Oakdene building has become more of a community hall with rented rooms for studios and organizations. Caretakers were concerned about the energy efficiency and health of the building and modified the brick chimney a few years ago. Local swift watchers were worried about the birds' future, but hoped they would find another location.

This past summer, retired high school Science teacher and swift-watcher, Greg Turner, heard about the swifts' return to an adjacent unoccupied house. After watching a successful evening descent, he contacted biologists. The timing couldn't have been better as our community, L'sitkuk, was resuming its work on species at risk. We were delighted to then receive the news from partner biologists.



© Shalan Joudry 2013

Young swift watchers Malaika and Milidow Joudry-Martel participating in a roost count!

Currently the local roosting population of Chimney Swifts is estimated at about 145 individuals. As part of our program we took Elders and youth to visit the roosting site, to watch and talk about the Chimney Swifts. Many passersby also learned about these endangered birds and their biology through our work. Until now there wasn't an organized local attempt to monitor and keep track of long-term data on these swifts. But by the end of the summer the number new swift watchers was growing as local interest and curiosity piqued.

over the winter the chimney might be capped like the Oakdene chimney. As a result we called the house owner to talk about the swifts and explain how special his building is, now that it is home to a substantial little population. He was surprised to learn about their chimney hosting so many swifts but seemed interested and offered more ideas on research for this coming summer.

Because the house is quite old and will require renovations many of us were concerned that

Interested in checking out the Bear River roost site?

This summer the Bear River Tourism organization will include location information and notes on Chimney Swifts in its "Self-guided Tour of Bear River" program. For more information visit www.bearriver.ca

And so it begins, that our swifts have found a new home in L'sitkuk. Although they are safe for the next few years, it is our hope that through inter-community coordination we will create long-term awareness and protection. This project shall bring various community members together, Elders and youth, Mi'kmaq and non-Mi'kmaq. – Shalan Joudry, Kespukwitk's SAR Program (envirobrfn@eastlink.ca; 902-467-3802)

SwiftWatch Across Canada

Maritimers were very active in SwiftWatch this year. New roost and nest sites were reported, casual observations submitted, and Swift Night Out in Sussex and Wolfville had great turnouts. Many others learned about swifts on their local news well received reports on television and radio. However, we are not alone in reporting swifts. Programs exist in Quebec, Ontario, and Manitoba, each with its own research projects and outreach programs.

For example, in Manitoba Nature Manitoba has erected swift towers in five different locations around the province. As part of this project they are using temperature probes to determine if the towers provide sufficient protection from cold weather. In Ontario, BSC's Ontario SwiftWatch is working with community groups to open old chimneys that have been capped, but that were historically used by swifts. And similarly in Quebec work is being done to restore roost sites, one of which is in Lac Megantic, the site of the train derailment and explosion in 2013.



One thing all groups have in common is their commitment to survey for Chimney Swifts. Each year, all groups involved in swift monitoring decide on four days in late May/early June to conduct simultaneous surveys. This way we can ensure that we are not counting the same swifts, providing a better Canadian population estimate!

Mark your Calendars!
The 2014 SwiftWatch dates are:

Wednesday, May 21st

Sunday, May 25th

Thursday, May 29th

Monday, June 2nd

Acadian Peninsula Update

Our third year of participating in SwiftWatch was very successful. We began the season by giving presentations on Chimney Swifts in schools across the Acadian Peninsula, in the Bathurst area and elsewhere in New Brunswick. Nature NB volunteered to host information sessions at the Bathurst and Paquetville roost sites every evening on the scheduled SwiftWatch dates, with many volunteers participating in this effort. The information sessions dealt with Chimney Swifts, their biology and their threatened status, as well as the SwiftWatch program and the importance of monitoring the species. These activities also generated a great deal of media interest in the Bathurst area, drawing attention to the species in the region. The result was increased interest in swift monitoring. In 2013, a total of 35 volunteers gave over 95 hours of their time to monitor Chimney Swifts in the Bathurst and Acadian Peninsula regions.



This year, roughly 377 Chimney Swifts used the Bathurst roost site. At the Paquetville church roost site, swifts were sighted during the daytime. The fact that the birds were seen going in and out of the chimney at

various times of the day suggests that a pair probably nested there this season, for the second year. Every year, the total number of birds using this roost increases. In addition, many volunteers from different regions reported swift sightings from all over New Brunswick.

Lastly, Chimney Swifts in the Paquetville area now have a place designed especially for them, thanks to the Wildlife Trust Fund and the dedication and enthusiasm of a naturalist from our region. An artificial chimney with the same dimensions as the Bathurst roost was constructed on the property of one of our members, Frank Branch, with the help of the Club de Naturalistes de la Péninsule Acadienne (the local naturalist club) and Nature NB. Frank and the other participants donated countless hours to this project. The site of the new roost is Frank's garage in Trudel; Trudel is very close to Paquetville, where swifts are using the church's two chimneys as a nesting and roost site. – *Nathalie Paulin Nature NB*

A Swift Rehabilitation

What could have spelled disaster for five young Chimney Swifts turned into a success story. This past spring the nestlings were removed from a homeowner's chimney when they were mistaken for European Starlings. Luckily, they were quickly transported to the Cobequid Wildlife Rehabilitation Center (CWRC) in Truro. Founded and operated by Helene Van Doninck in 2001, CWRC has rehabilitated countless animals including many species of birds, although this was their first attempt at rehabilitating Chimney Swifts. After countless feedings by dedicated volunteers and practice roosting in a fake chimney the young Chimney Swifts were ready to be released in mid-August.



Anxiously waiting for the young to join the adults in the sky.

The fledglings were transported to Middleton Regional High School and quickly took to the sky to join the 100+ adults circling the chimney. They were even greeted by some adults swooping down before they all funneled into the chimney for the night.

Although this story had a happy ending we do want to take this opportunity to remind everyone that it is against the law to remove a Chimney Swift or its nest. If you think you may have Chimney Swifts please feel free to contact us at marswifts@bsc-eco.org and we can help you with the identification.

We also want to take this time to thank CWRC and their volunteers for all their hard work and dedication ensuring a successful rehabilitation for these fledging. For more photos and information, visit the Cobequid Wildlife Rehabilitation Centre's YouTube channel (<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=C4Lm0aqiuo4>), and Facebook page (<https://www.facebook.com/pages/Cobequid-Wildlife-Rehabilitation-Centre/134671693239334/>).



Young swifts practice roosting in a fake chimney before being released.

Connect With Us

We'd love to hear from you! There are many ways to share your photos, stories, questions and more with fellow SwiftWatchers:



Visit the SwiftWatch [website](#) to learn about Chimney Swifts, find other Chimney Swift programs, and download factsheets, data forms, and more



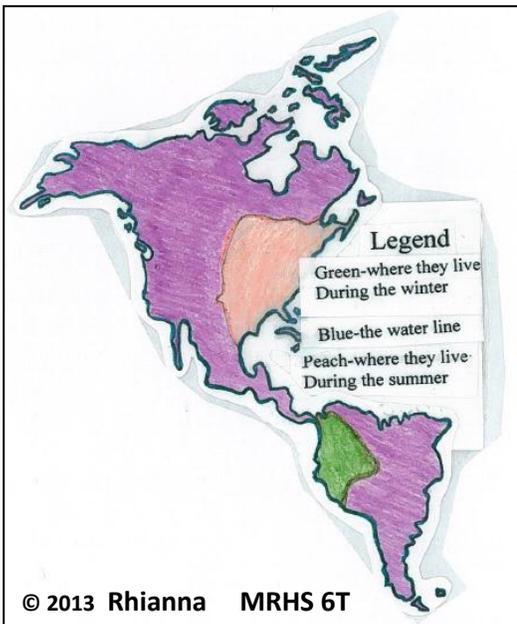
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Swifts around the World

There are many organizations dedicated to Chimney Swifts and their relatives:

- [Audubon Minnesota](#) has a Frequently Asked Questions page.
- Connecticut has a Chimney Swift program called [Chimney Swift Watch](#) and information on how to monitor your own chimney, locate a roost chimney, etc.
- [Driftwood Wildlife Association](#) wrote the book on Chimney Swifts-literally. They also coordinate the annual Swift Night Out and even provide advice on rescue and rehabilitation of swifts.
- [Manitoba Chimney Swift Initiative](#) maintains a blog about its program.
- Led by Bird Studies Canada, [Ontario SwiftWatch](#) also has a Facebook page and great resources online.
- Finally, overseas, [Swift Conservation](#) in Britain has videos, sound clips, and links to Common Swift projects in Europe.

If you know of other swift projects, let us know and we'll link to them on our website.

Tracking Swift Numbers

In 2013, poor weather early in the season stalled Chimney Swifts in the Maritimes much to the delight of volunteers; thousands of swifts put on shows across the Maritimes. Highlights from the season included the discovery of a new roost in Fredericton in a commercial building on McLeod Avenue which boasted the highest swift numbers in the Maritimes. Further, swifts were spotted in Truro at the Old YMCA building, a shift from the abandoned historic roost site at the NS agricultural College. With over 15 new roost and nest sites reported across the Maritimes it is clear that Maritimers are actively searching out these aerial insectivores! One thing you'll notice as you look at the table below is that many sites had missed counts. Our volunteers work very hard to make sure counts are done at each site but busy schedules occasionally prevent us from completing a watch. If this describes you, let us know and we'll help you arrange a 'backup' counter in case of illness or previous commitments. Or, if you're looking to help out at a watch, we'll gladly find a site for you and connect you with other SwiftWatchers.

Province	Site	Building Type	22 May	26 May	30 May	3 June
NS	St. Bernard (Weymouth)	Church	n/a	0	93	n/a
NS	McGowan Lake	Unused smithy	4	26	50	109
NS	Middleton	School	n/a	0	108	238
NS	Wolfville	Freestanding chimney (Robie Tufts Nature Centre)	20	87	25	32
NS	Kentville*	School	reported on 24 th	0	0	n/a
NS	Upper Falmouth	House	7	n/a	121	17
NS	New Glasgow	School	586	530	202	126
NS	Oxford	Freestanding chimney	20	20	2	2
NS	Bear River *	Detached house	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a
NS	Truro *	Old YMCA/Normal College building	reported 30 th		52	52
NB	Sainte-Anne-de-Madawaska	Church	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a
NB	Sainte-Anne-de-Madawaska	School	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a
NB	Bathurst	Former post office	326	377	147	100
NB	Paquetville	Church	1	n/a	n/a	2
NB	Hampton	Former post office	25	179	36	104
NB	Sussex	Apartment complex	348	365	135	144
NB	Saint-Quentin	Church	n/a	n/a	31	n/a
NB	Fredericton *	Commercial	n/a	1493	209	n/a
NB	Chipman *	Freestanding chimney	reported after spring migration; no count completed			
NB	Plaster Rock *	Tobique High School	reported after spring migration; no count completed			
NB	Island View forestry nursery	House (used as office)	6	1	3	0
		TOTAL	1339	3052	1214	986

"n/a" means that no count was conducted on this date

*indicated a new site reported in 2013

Maritimes SwiftWatch is a multi-partner project led by Bird Studies Canada, together with the Blomidon Naturalists Society, Environment Canada, Kennebecasis Naturalists Society, Mersey Tobetic Research Institute, Nature NB, Nova Scotia Bird Society and Pictou County Naturalists Club.



Pictou County
Naturalists Club

This project is undertaken with the financial support of the Government of Canada.



Other supporters include New Brunswick Wildlife Trust Fund, Canadian Wildlife Federation, Nova Scotia Habitat Conservation Fund, and Walmart Evergreen Grants.



For more information on anything in this newsletter or for more details on Maritimes SwiftWatch please feel free to contact us at:

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<http://www.birdscanada.org/volunteer/acswifts/>

