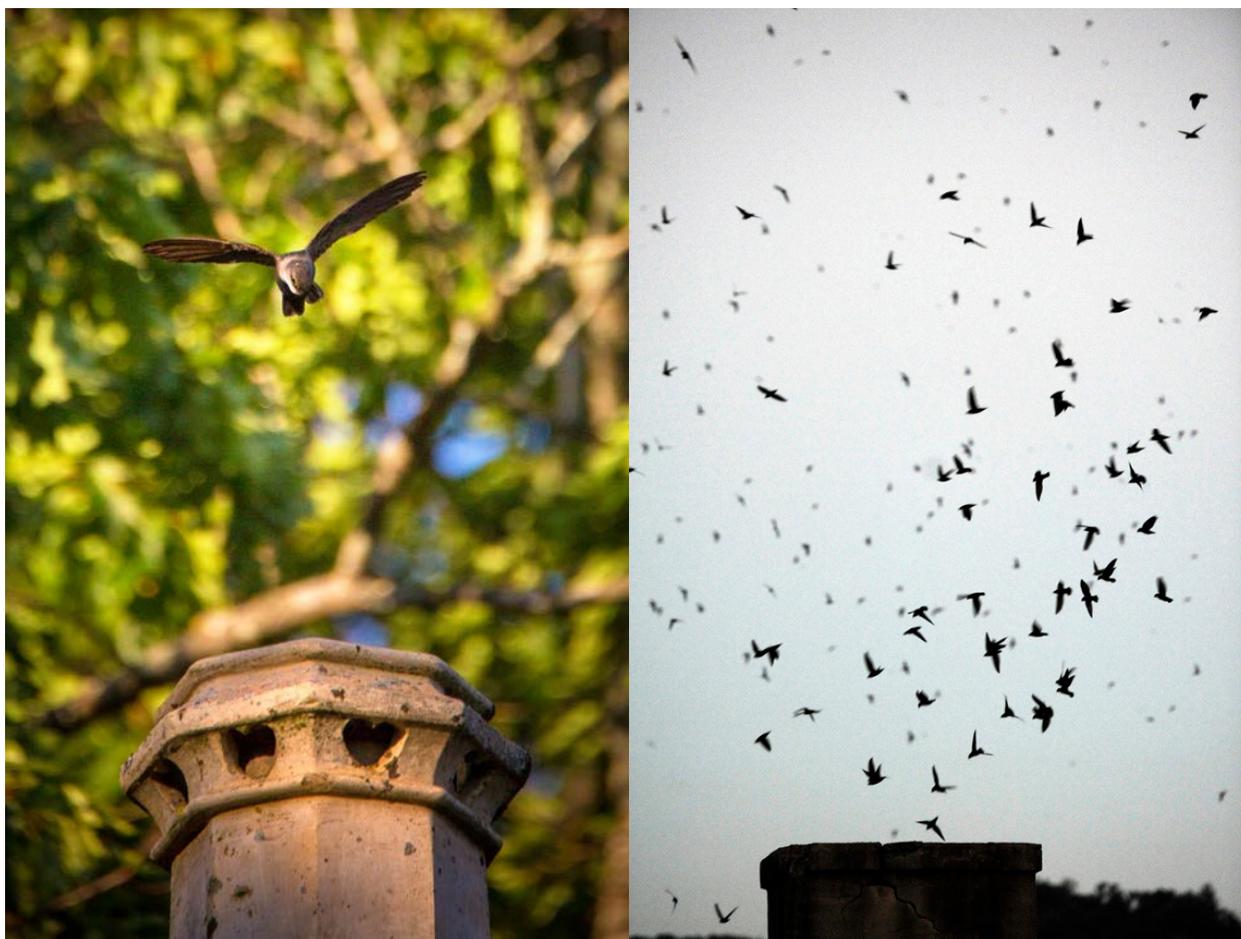


Maritimes SwiftWatch

Survey Protocol

(Updated April 2018)



Photos: Jason Headley (L), Erin Brethauer, Asheville Citizen-Times



Maritimes SwiftWatch

Bird Studies Canada

17 Waterfowl Lane

Sackville, NB E4L 1G6

(506) 364-5196

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Maritimes SwiftWatch is led by Bird Studies Canada in partnership with:



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Environment and
Climate Change Canada

Environnement et
Changement climatique Canada



Graham and Susan Smith

Kepukwitk's Species At Risk Program

Pictou Co. Naturalists Club



Our project(s) are funded in part by the New Brunswick Wildlife Trust Fund. This Wildlife Trust Fund obtains a portion of its revenue from the purchase of conservation plates by New Brunswick residents who are interested in conservation. Seven dollars (\$7) from each conservation plate purchase goes into that fund annually. These funds are awarded to projects such as ours by the Minister of Natural Resources following review and recommendation by an independent board of 17 volunteers. Revenue from license plates is critical in furthering conservation efforts in our province so please consider purchasing conservation plates with your next car purchase to enable the NB Wildlife Trust Fund to continue to provide financial support for worthy wildlife projects.



Introduction

Famously referred to as a “cigar with wings”, the Chimney Swift (*Chaetura pelagica*) is a small, plump, charcoal-grey bird with long, pointed wings and a very short, squared-off tail. The Chimney Swift is an aerial insectivore (a bird that specializes in eating flying insects while in flight) and is almost always seen and heard flying high overhead in towns and cities across eastern North America.



Photo: Ron D'Entremont

Between May and September, Chimney Swifts congregate at communal roosts (predominantly chimneys) at dusk and it is possible to observe hundreds of swifts flying into these roosting chimneys just after sunset. In June, breeding pairs leave roosts to find nesting sites in individual chimneys, as well as other dark, sheltered locations such as hay barns while non-breeding swifts remain at roosts. A single pair of swifts can raise up to five young, sometimes with assistance from one or two non-breeding ‘helper’ swifts. Maritimes SwiftWatch was initiated in 2011 to bring together the many individuals and organizations that previously monitored Chimney Swifts independently, at various scales of effort and detail. Maritimes SwiftWatch participants learn to identify Chimney Swifts by sight and sound and monitor swifts at roost and nest sites. The Data collected through monitoring helps track Chimney Swift population trends. We also use monitoring data to identify specific threats at roost and nest sites, and to facilitate stewardship of these important sites for Chimney Swifts in the long-term.

Thank you for volunteering your time and effort to participate in Maritimes SwiftWatch. By coordinating our efforts, we are directly contributing to habitat stewardship while drawing a broader, more informative picture of Chimney Swift population dynamics, behaviour and ecology to advance the recovery of this unique and fascinating species.

How to Conduct a Roost Count:

When: roost counts are conducted on a set of four predetermined dates for all observers across Canada, including in Nova Scotia, New Brunswick, Quebec, Ontario and Manitoba. Choosing the same set of dates ensures that Chimney Swifts are not double-counted as they move through the Maritimes and beyond. In 2018, participants will watch roosts on the following dates:

- May 17 (optional)
- May 23
- May 27
- May 31
- June 4

During spring and fall migration, Chimney Swifts usually remain on the wing from the moment they leave the roost at dawn until they return at sunset. However, on cold or rainy days Chimney Swifts often return to the roost early or may remain inside all day. On these days you might not observe many (or any!) Chimney Swifts entering the roost. However, it is still important to conduct a roost count as it gives us valuable information about their behaviour and provides a consistent count at provincial, regional and national scales.

Before you begin: Please look at your Roost Monitoring Form and read the Safety and Equipment checklists (page 8). Since it is difficult to predict the exact time when Chimney Swifts will return to the roost, please arrive at your roost site **at least 30 minutes prior to sunset** to give yourself time to set up and get comfortable. On cold, cloudy, or rainy evenings, arrive at least **45 minutes prior to sunset** as swifts often return early in poor weather. Sunset times for specific sites can be found in newspapers, on weather channels, or on the Weather Network website: <http://www.theweathernetwork.com>. Continue your roost count until 15 minutes after the last Chimney Swift has entered the chimney, or until it becomes too dark to count. This ensures that the “stragglers” get counted.

When you arrive at your roost site, find a location where you will be safe and out of the way of pedestrians and traffic. Make sure that you have a clear view of your chimney, unobstructed by trees, power poles and other buildings in the background. Ideally, you should situate yourself so that your chimney is silhouetted by the setting sun (not only picturesque, but the swifts will “stand out” in the sky over the chimney!). You will be at your roost site for approximately one hour, so it’s a good idea to bring a folding lawn chair to sit in as you monitor your site. You may also sit in your car while conducting your roost count, so long as you have a clear view of the chimney and surrounding area. We have included a one-page flyer that you can give to curious passersby who approach you during your survey, as well as a printable sign to place in your car’s front or rear window to identify yourself as a SwiftWatch volunteer.

Filling in your Roost Count Form: Please complete the *Observer Information* and *Roost Information* sections of your data sheet before beginning your roost count. If you bring a friend, record their name under *Additional observers*. Record the name of the building with the roost, if known, and the street address, as well as your arrival time at the site.

Chimney Swifts are often heard before they are seen. Listen carefully for the high-pitched, rapid “chittering” call of the swifts as they fly overhead. When Chimney Swifts begin to appear over your roost site, record the local weather conditions (below; wind speed, cloud cover, temperature, and precipitation) using the weather codes provided on the back of your data sheet. This helps us study how weather conditions affect counts.

Now it’s time to sit tight and keep your eyes focused on the chimney! Record the time (hour:minute) when the first swift enters the chimney. While Chimney Swifts are gathering and preparing to enter a roost, individual birds may try a few ‘practice runs’ before they feel comfortable entering the chimney. Try not to count those birds that are diving down but not actually entering the chimney, as including them will lead to an over-estimate of Chimney Swifts at your roost. As well, some

birds may actually exit the chimney while others are entering. If you see birds coming out of the chimney, keep a separate tally of those and subtract that from the total number Chimney Swifts entering the chimney (see “Tips”, Page 8).

When the number of Chimney Swifts entering the roost drops off to zero, record the current time (i.e., time of last swift entry) and keep watching for 15 minutes longer in case of stragglers. Your roost count is over when 15 minutes have passed with no additional swift activity, or when it becomes too dark for you to count the birds properly. Remember to record the time of night (HH:MM) of the last Chimney Swift entry, as well as the time when you conclude your roost count, so that we can calculate effort at each site. If you have any notes on swift behaviour, observations about the building, or activity at the roost site (e.g. predators, construction activity) please include them in the *Comments* section.

<u>Wind (Beaufort Scale)</u>	<u>Precipitation</u>	<u>Cloud Cover</u>
0 Calm, smoke rises vertically	None	0 Clear
1 Light air movement, smoke drifts	Rain	1 10%
2 Slight breeze, wind felt on face	Hail	2 20%
3 Gentle breeze, small twigs move	Trace/occasional rain	3 30%
4 Moderate breeze, small branches move	Thundershower	4 40%
5 Fresh breeze, small trees sway		5 50%
6 Strong breeze, large branches in motion		6 60%
7 Whole trees moving, resistance felt walking against wind		7 70%
		8 80%
		9 90%
		10 100%
		11 Fog

Presence/Absence Surveys (finding new active chimneys)

The purpose of Presence/Absence surveys is to identify chimneys potentially used by swifts for roosting and/or nesting, and then to observe these chimneys to determine if they are being used by swifts. Importantly, Presence/Absence surveys also identify chimneys that appear suitable but are not being used by swifts.

How to find roost and nest sites: Choose an area to scout out potential chimney habitat, i.e., any buildings with large, open (not capped) chimneys. Areas with heritage buildings, industrial buildings, older schools and/or churches are good places to start. These are often found in town/city centres or heritage districts. Contact Maritimes SwiftWatch or one of our regional partners in your area (page 8) for help selecting an area to survey or for a list of specific chimneys to watch.

Once you have chosen your area, identify one or more suitable-looking chimneys to survey. Conduct your surveys between May 15 and August 15 using the **Presence/Absence Form** to collect initial observations. The best time to detect *roosting* swifts is at dusk in late May, or late July/early August. The best time to detect *nesting* swifts is throughout July, when they are making frequent trips in and out of chimneys to feed growing young. Nesting swifts can also be detected in June during nest-building, which also occurs throughout the day.

Try to survey potential roost or nest chimneys for up to 1 hour, or until you detect a swift entering or exiting the chimney, on a day with low wind and no rain. Record the street address and GPS coordinates of the building, the building type (e.g. school, church, commercial, industrial, private residence, etc.) and/or building name, the net total number of swifts entering the chimney (even if it's zero!), and the date and time of the observation using the Presence/Absence Form. Include any comments and details you can make on behaviour or surrounding habitat. **Please note if there are multiple chimneys on a building and which ones are used by swifts; each chimney should be treated as a separate site (e.g., 123 Main St, WEST chimney).** If you have a camera, please take a picture of the chimney.

Continued Monitoring (at already known active sites)

The same chimney can be surveyed spring through fall to evaluate between-year occupancy at nest and roost sites. Data accumulated over many years may provide valuable information on site-use trends and potentially population trends, as well as help prioritize sites for further conservation action.

How to do ongoing nest and roost site monitoring: Monitoring is done at known active nest and/or roost chimneys. Contact Maritimes SwiftWatch to sign up for an active chimney to monitor in your area. Observations can be made at any time from early May to early August. Many prefer to monitor their chimney on the same night every week or every other week; however, the frequency of monitoring and the date are up to you!

Starting 30 minutes before sunset, volunteers use the **SwiftWatch Data Form** to record observation start and end time, weather conditions, and the net number of swifts entering the chimney (i.e., entries minus exits). Please keep records even when zero swifts enter the chimney (this is helpful for tracking year-to-year occupancy). Continue your watch until 15 minutes after the last Chimney Swift has entered the chimney, or until it becomes too dark to count.

Daytime observations help to distinguish between roost sites and nest sites. If Chimney Swifts enter/exit a chimney during the day, then this indicates the chimney is being used as a nest site; activity patterns vary with different stages of nesting. Make note of any interesting behaviour you observe (e.g., swift carrying twigs). Note that Chimney Swifts are often silent and stealthy when returning to the nest and tend to enter the nest chimney quickly and suddenly. The best month to detect nesting swifts is July, during low wind and non-overcast sky conditions.

Casual Observations

Casual observations are very important and can assist in finding new areas of concentration or new nest and roost sites. If you observe swifts foraging overhead or happen to see swifts using a chimney, barn, silo, well, or tree, record the date, time, location, and comments on the swifts' behaviour. Casual observations of swifts can be submitted online at www.birdscanada.org/birdmon/ai/aicasual or by email to marswifts@birdscanada.org, or by mail.

Chimney Assessments

This information helps us understand more about how the dimensions and structure of a chimney may influence its suitability for Chimney Swifts. If you are reporting a new roost or nest site, please complete the **Chimney Assessment Form** and return it with your other forms.

Submitting Your Data

Please submit data by **October 1**. We encourage volunteers to enter their data online at <http://www.birdscanada.org/birdmon/ai/submitdata.jsp> If you require assistance creating a NatureCounts login or have forgotten your password, please contact Maritimes SwiftWatch at (506) 364-5196 or marswifts@birdscanada.org and we will be happy to help you get set up!

At the end of the SwiftWatch season, please make a copy of your data sheets for your personal records and send the *original* copies to Bird Studies Canada (find our address on the front page of this document and on each form). This is important to guard against data loss in the unlikely event that your data sheets are lost in the mail!

Tips for Counting Chimney Swifts:

At highly-populated roost sites, it can be hard to keep track of the number of Chimney Swifts entering (and sometimes exiting!) the chimney. Here are a few suggestions to keep you from losing count of all those birds:

1. Set up a **video camera** mounted onto a sturdy tripod to record the swifts as they enter the chimney. This can be reviewed later in slow-motion to provide an accurate swift count. If you choose to video-record your swift watch, please make a visual count as well, in case something goes wrong with your video (e.g. the battery or memory card runs out!).
2. Try mentally “grabbing” **groups of 5, 10 or 20** swifts as they enter the chimney instead of attempting to count individuals. This can be highly effective at sites where swifts are entering together at high speed.
3. There may be an occasional lull in activity during the watch. Without taking your eyes off the chimney, periodically write down your current total (your “**subtotal**”) on the back of your data sheet, and then start counting again from zero. At the end of your watch, add up all of those sub-totals to come up with your grand total.
4. Do the best you can! Swift watching can be challenging, but don’t forget to **have fun** and enjoy this natural phenomenon!

Equipment Checklist:

- Maritimes SwiftWatch Protocol and data forms, and scrap paper
- Mechanical pencil (bring spares!)
- Clipboard
- Watch
- Headlamp or flashlight (optional but helpful for packing up)
- Foldable lawn chair (optional)
- Video camera and tripod (optional; bring spare batteries!)
- Insect repellent
- Warm clothing, including windbreaker and rain gear
- Cell phone in case of emergency
- Map of the area

Keeping Safe during Your Swift Watch:

- Always ensure that you are situated in a safe place out of the way of pedestrians, cyclists and vehicle traffic.
- Unless you have received prior permission from the property owner, conduct your swift watch from the sidewalk or other public place.
- If possible, bring a friend. This not only increases your safety, it can also be more enjoyable, and your assistant can help fill out the data sheet as you conduct the watch.

- If your roost site is in an unfamiliar area, obtain a map and study it before you visit your roost site to familiarize yourself with the area. Let someone know where you are going.

Weather and sunset times:

- <http://www.theweathernetwork.com/>
- http://www.weatheroffice.gc.ca/canada_e.html

Project Partners and supporters:

- Bird Studies Canada <http://www.birdscanada.org/>
- Blomidon Naturalists Society <http://www.blomidonnaturalists.ca/>
- Clean Annapolis River Project <https://www.annapolisriver.ca/>
- Environment and Climate Change Canada <http://www.ec.gc.ca/>
- Kespukwitk Species at Risk Program
- Mersey Tobeatic Research Institute <http://www.merseytobeatic.ca/>
- Nova Scotia Bird Society <http://www.nsbirdsociety.ca/>
- Nature NB <http://www.naturenb.ca/>
- Nature Sussex <http://www.naturesussex.ca>
- Pictou County Naturalists Club

Use this space to keep a tally or take notes on each visit:

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Wind (Beaufort Scale)

- 0 Calm, smoke rises vertically
- 1 Light air, smoke drifts
- 2 Light breeze, wind felt on face
- 3 Gentle breeze, small twigs move
- 4 Moderate breeze, small branches move
- 5 Fresh breeze, small trees sway
- 6 Strong breeze, large branches in motion
- 7 Near gale, whole trees moving

Precipitation

- None
- Rain
- Hail
- Trace /Occasional Rain
- Thunderstorms

Cloud Cover (%)

- 0 Clear
- 1 10%
- 2 20%
- 3 30%
- 4 40%
- 5 50%
- 6 60%
- 7 70%
- 8 80%
- 9 90%
- 10 Overcast
- 11 Fog

Additional Comments?

Please return completed sheets to your coordinator:

MARITIMES SwiftWatch

Bird Studies Canada
 PO Box 6227, 17 Waterfowl Lane
 Sackville NB E4L 1G6
 Fax: (506) 364-5062
marswifts@birdscanada.org

ONTARIO SwiftWatch

Bird Studies Canada
 P.O. Box 160, 115 Front Street
 Port Rowan, ON N0E 1M0
 Fax: (519) 586-3532
OntarioSwiftWatch@birdscanada.org

Or enter your data online at:

<http://www.birdscanada.org/birdmon/ai/submitdata.jsp>

SwiftWatch Chimney Assessment Form

Town/Province: _____ Street address of building containing chimney: _____																			
How many chimneys does this building contain? This is chimney # _____ of _____ total chimneys at this address (If one of several, please differentiate, e.g. this is the west chimney)	Has this chimney been used by Chimney Swifts in previous years? <input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> Unknown If yes, then for how long? _____ years																		
Building Type (Circle only one): <table style="width: 100%; border: none;"> <tr> <td style="width: 50%;">1 House</td> <td style="width: 50%;">5 School</td> </tr> <tr> <td>2 Low-rise Apartment (≤ 5 storeys)</td> <td>6 Hospital</td> </tr> <tr> <td>3 High-rise Apartment (≥ 6 storeys)</td> <td>7 Commercial Building</td> </tr> <tr> <td>4 Church</td> <td>8 Factory/warehouse</td> </tr> <tr> <td colspan="2">9 Other (describe): _____</td> </tr> </table>	1 House	5 School	2 Low-rise Apartment (≤ 5 storeys)	6 Hospital	3 High-rise Apartment (≥ 6 storeys)	7 Commercial Building	4 Church	8 Factory/warehouse	9 Other (describe): _____		Habitat Surrounding Chimney (within 250m): <table style="width: 100%; border: none;"> <tr> <td><input type="checkbox"/> Residential</td> <td><input type="checkbox"/> Industrial</td> </tr> <tr> <td><input type="checkbox"/> Open/Agricultural (rural)</td> <td><input type="checkbox"/> Commercial</td> </tr> <tr> <td><input type="checkbox"/> Regional Facility/ School</td> <td><input type="checkbox"/> Downtown</td> </tr> <tr> <td colspan="2"><input type="checkbox"/> Other (describe): _____</td> </tr> </table>	<input type="checkbox"/> Residential	<input type="checkbox"/> Industrial	<input type="checkbox"/> Open/Agricultural (rural)	<input type="checkbox"/> Commercial	<input type="checkbox"/> Regional Facility/ School	<input type="checkbox"/> Downtown	<input type="checkbox"/> Other (describe): _____	
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<input type="checkbox"/> Regional Facility/ School	<input type="checkbox"/> Downtown																		
<input type="checkbox"/> Other (describe): _____																			
Chimney Material: <input type="checkbox"/> Brick <input type="checkbox"/> Stone <input type="checkbox"/> Cinder Block <input type="checkbox"/> Concrete <input type="checkbox"/> Other (describe): _____	Chimney Modifications (circle one): 1 Building does NOT contain a chimney 2 No visible modification 3 Terra Cotta Liner (clay flue pipe visible) 4 Metal liner with cap 5 Animal Guard/Spark Arrestor (wire mesh) 6 Other (describe): _____																		
<table style="width: 100%; border: none;"> <tr> <td style="width: 50%; border-right: 1px solid black; padding-right: 5px;"> Flue Material: <input type="checkbox"/> Clay tile <input type="checkbox"/> Metal <input type="checkbox"/> Unknown or other (describe): _____ </td> <td style="width: 50%; padding-left: 5px;"> Number of Open Flues (if multiple flues in one chimney): _____ </td> </tr> </table>	Flue Material: <input type="checkbox"/> Clay tile <input type="checkbox"/> Metal <input type="checkbox"/> Unknown or other (describe): _____	Number of Open Flues (if multiple flues in one chimney): _____	NOTE: Measurements can sometimes be estimated by counting bricks. Standard bricks have the following measurements: 20cm x 9 cm x 6 cm (L x W x H)																
Flue Material: <input type="checkbox"/> Clay tile <input type="checkbox"/> Metal <input type="checkbox"/> Unknown or other (describe): _____	Number of Open Flues (if multiple flues in one chimney): _____																		
Chimney Shape and Size: <input type="checkbox"/> If round → Diameter (cm): _____ <input type="checkbox"/> If square → Width (cm): _____ <input type="checkbox"/> If rectangular → Width (cm): _____ Length (cm): _____																			
Estimating Chimney Height: Total Chimney Height (m) = _____ <table style="width: 100%; border: none; margin-top: 10px;"> <tr> <td style="text-align: center;">_____</td> <td style="text-align: center;">X</td> <td style="text-align: center;">3 m</td> <td style="text-align: center;">+</td> <td style="text-align: center;">_____ m</td> <td style="text-align: center;">=</td> <td style="text-align: center;">_____ m</td> </tr> <tr> <td style="text-align: center;">(# of storeys in building)</td> <td></td> <td style="text-align: center;">(approx. height of one storey)</td> <td></td> <td style="text-align: center;">(Height above roofline)</td> <td></td> <td></td> </tr> </table>		_____	X	3 m	+	_____ m	=	_____ m	(# of storeys in building)		(approx. height of one storey)		(Height above roofline)						
_____	X	3 m	+	_____ m	=	_____ m													
(# of storeys in building)		(approx. height of one storey)		(Height above roofline)															
Chimney Placement (check one box only): <input type="checkbox"/> Chimney is on an interior wall <input type="checkbox"/> Chimney is on an exterior wall																			
Additional Comments (e.g. condition of chimney, landowner contact info, encroaching vegetation or wildlife presence, etc.). If this is one of multiple chimneys on building, please include notes to differentiate between chimneys (e.g. this is the west chimney, or the rear chimney): 																			

Submit completed forms online or by post, email, or fax to:
Maritimes SwiftWatch
Bird Studies Canada
17 Waterfowl Lane
Sackville, NB E4L 1G6

Tel: (506) 364-5196 Fax: (506) 364-5062
marswifts@birdscanada.org

www.facebook.com/Maritimes.Swifts

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

Email: marswifts@birdscanada.org

Phone: 506-364-5196

.....
Hello, I am volunteering for **Maritimes SwiftWatch**, and I am counting Chimney Swifts as part of a national monitoring program. For more information about this project, contact us!

SWIFT WATCH
SUIVI DU MARTINET



Bonjour, je suis le volontariat pour **Suivi du martinet dans les Maritimes** et je suis comptage Suivi du martinet dans le cadre d'un programme national de surveillance. Pour plus d'informations sur ce projet, contactez Suivi du martinet dans les Maritimes!

.....
Téléphone : 506-364-5196

Courriel : marswifts@oiseauxcanada.org

www.oiseauxcanada.org/volunteer/ai/chsw

www.facebook.com/Maritimes.Swifts



Application for Voluntary Support

Bird Studies Canada (BSC) is a non-profit research organization dedicated to advancing and encouraging the wider understanding, appreciation and conservation of wild birds and their habitats. A primary objective of BSC is to undertake and promote bird monitoring programs, using volunteers to the maximum practical extent. BSC currently supports numerous volunteer bird monitoring programs both nationally and internationally.

As a charitable organization, BSC can offer tax receipts for donations. Volunteers can make a donation to BSC and thus receive a tax receipt. We are happy to extend this benefit to participants in projects approved by BSC: the Breeding Bird Survey in Canada, the Nocturnal Owl Survey, the Marsh Monitoring Program, the Coastal Waterbird Survey, the Beached Bird Survey, H.E.L.P, Maritimes SwiftWatch, volunteers of LPBO, and Project Ambassadors.

Volunteer participants should record their mileage and keep receipts for other expenses (e.g. food, accommodation). Please do not include receipts for gas purchases and other related automobile expenses, as they are included as part of the mileage investment. After the survey, fill in this form and return it, along with a personal cheque, to BSC. Please make your cheque payable to Bird Studies Canada. Your total donation should be equal to, and preferably greater than, the amount of your documented expenses. We will then send you a tax receipt for your donation. In addition, we will also send a cheque for the total amount of your documented expenses. We cannot process your application without an accompanying cheque. **All applications must be received by 1 December each year. All applications received after this date will be returned.**

NAME: _____

ADDRESS: _____

TYPE OF SURVEY: (eg. BBS, Nocturnal Owls): _____

ROUTE NAME AND NUMBER: _____

MILEAGE: Distance home to start: _____ km Total Distance Driven: _____ km

TOTAL MILEAGE COST (@ \$0.45/KM):

OUT-OF-POCKET EXPENSES: (Please attach receipts)

FOOD _____ ACCOMMODATION _____ OTHER _____

TOTAL OUT-OF-POCKET EXPENSES:

ADDITIONAL DONATION to support bird conservation:

TOTAL DONATION (Mileage + Out-of-pocket Expenses + Additional Donation):

Please return completed application form and **cheque made out to BSC** by 1 December to:
Bird Studies Canada, P.O. 6227, 17 Waterfowl lane, Sackville, NB E4L 1G6

Account	Project	Amount	Approved
5380	_____	_____	_____

Canadian co-partner of
 un partenaire canadien de

