



# Chimney Swift Fact Sheet

## Chimney Swifts are in trouble!

- Chimney Swifts are adapted for life on a roughened vertical surface—they are physically unable to perch like an average songbird on a horizontal surface.
- Historically, they roosted in big hollow trees, but when the big trees were cut down in the early 1900's, Chimney Swifts turned to chimneys as a substitute for trees.
- Now, as old chimneys are torn down, capped, or lined with metal, the swifts find fewer and fewer places to roost and raise their young.
- A changing climate disrupts migration routes and the birds' ability to find food, as does widespread pesticide use.
- Nationally, Chimney Swift numbers have fallen 72% in the last 50 years. They continue to decline at a rate of 2.5% of population annually.
- Chimney swifts are classified as Near Threatened in the United States by the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN), and an Endangered Species in Canada.

## We need our Chimney Swifts!

- Chimney Swifts eat up to 1/3 of their body weight daily in insects.
- They carry no known transmissible diseases.
- When the swifts arrive in Ann Arbor in April from South America, breeding pairs find chimneys to raise their young (one nesting pair per chimney). See [chimneyswifts.org](http://chimneyswifts.org) for information on how to best prepare your home chimney for a nesting pair.
- It is illegal to harass, remove, or in any way disturb a nesting pair of Chimney Swifts under the Migratory Bird Treaty Act.
- In late summer and fall, the swifts gather in large roost chimneys in preparation for migration back to South America. The natural spectacle of hundreds of Chimney Swifts spiraling into a chimney is enjoyed every year by many Ann Arborites.
- The large chimney at 415 W. Washington is heavily used by Ann Arbor's swifts. 1,400 Chimney Swifts were recently counted there (the highest population of swifts anywhere in the city)!