

# Chimney Swift Conservation and Permitting



**The Chimney Swift is a migratory bird and species at risk whose population in Canada has experienced a decline of close to 88% over the past 50 years.**

This insectivorous bird forages for insects while in flight and generally uses brick, stone, or concrete chimneys for nesting and for roosting at night during the summer. Unlike many other birds, Chimney Swifts are incapable of perching and can only cling to vertical surfaces. They cling to the interior wall of a chimney while attaching their small nest to its rough surface. Chimney Swifts typically use their nesting sites from early May to mid-August, and they roost in structures from late April to late September, or even late October in Ontario (refer to table 1 for regional timing).

Prior to European settlement in North America, the Chimney Swift nested and roosted in large hollow trees. As suitable large trees became increasingly scarce with extensive logging, clearing of land for agriculture, and urban development, the Chimney Swift began to primarily use brick, stone and concrete chimneys, which is how the species got its name. Since chimneys are an integral part of buildings, property owners have an important role to play in protecting this threatened species. **As a property owner with a suitable structure for Chimney Swift nesting or roosting, we are counting on your co-operation to help ensure the species' recovery.**

The Chimney Swift is protected by both the *Species at Risk Act* and the *Migratory Birds Convention Act, 1994* and their regulations. The best approach for minimizing the risk of contravening these laws is to be fully aware of the impact that your activities could have on migratory birds and their nests and eggs, and to take reasonable precautions and implement suitable avoidance measures. In fact, under the acts and regulations, it is an offence to kill, hunt, capture, injure or harass a migratory bird or to damage, destroy, remove or disturb its nest, eggs or residence without a permit. The residences of the species are the structure housing the nest, including the nest while in use, and the structure used for roosting, such as a chimney, silo or other suitable structure.

**Activities can be carried out without a permit under the *Species at Risk Act* IF:**

- They are conducted between October 1st (or mid-late October in Ontario) and April 15<sup>th</sup> (i.e. after the birds have left for the winter and before they return in the spring), **AND**
- The interior of the structure (e.g. chimney) is kept intact and is accessible to the birds when they return to Canada.

***These include:***

- Cleaning/sweeping the chimney
- Replacing the roof covering
- Repairing the exterior of the chimney (repointing the masonry, resurfacing the outside of the chimney) where the inner surface is maintained, a metal liner is not installed and where the opening is kept free of obstructions
- Installing an artificial chimney for the exclusive use of Chimney Swifts

**Activities likely to require a permit, if the structure is used by Chimney Swift or has been in the past 3 years:**

- Capping a chimney or installing a spark arrester that would prevent Chimney Swifts from entering the structure
- Installing a chimney liner
- Making changes to the chimney or building that would alter the internal conditions (temperature, light, etc.) of the structure
- Demolishing a chimney or cutting a tree used by the species

**Permit applications must be submitted online (<https://splep-saraps.az.ec.gc.ca/>) at least 90 days prior to the planned start of any work.**



## Table 1: When are Chimney Swifts in my region?

Region	Chimney Swift arrival	Chimney Swift nesting period	Chimney Swift migration south	Permitting contact	Report a sighting of a Chimney Swift entering or leaving a structure
<b>ATLANTIC</b> (New Brunswick and Nova Scotia)	Late April – early June	Late May – early September	Late July – mid-September	sarapermittingatl@ec.gc.ca	<b>Birds Canada SwiftWatch</b> <i>Online:</i> <a href="https://www.birdscanada.org/bird-science/swiftwatch">https://www.birdscanada.org/bird-science/swiftwatch</a> <i>Phone:</i> 506-364-5196 <i>Email:</i> <a href="mailto:marswifts@birdscanada.org">marswifts@birdscanada.org</a>
<b>PRAIRIE</b> (Manitoba and Saskatchewan)	Mid-May	Late May – mid-August	Late August – early September	sarapermitPNR@ec.gc.ca	<b>Manitoba Chimney Swift Initiative</b> <i>Online:</i> <a href="https://www.mbchimneyswift.com">https://www.mbchimneyswift.com</a> <i>Phone:</i> (204) 943-9029 <i>Email:</i> <a href="mailto:mbchimneyswift@gmail.com">mbchimneyswift@gmail.com</a> <b>Saskatchewan Chimney Swift Initiative</b> <i>Online:</i> <a href="https://www.naturesask.ca/what-we-do/saskatchewan-chimney-swift-initiative">https://www.naturesask.ca/what-we-do/saskatchewan-chimney-swift-initiative</a>
<b>ONTARIO</b>	Late April – May	Late May – mid-August	August – mid/late October	<a href="mailto:wildlifeontario@ec.gc.ca">wildlifeontario@ec.gc.ca</a>	<b>Birds Canada SwiftWatch</b> <i>Online:</i> <a href="https://www.birdscanada.org/bird-science/swiftwatch">https://www.birdscanada.org/bird-science/swiftwatch</a> <i>Email:</i> <a href="mailto:OntarioSwiftWatch@birdscanada.org">OntarioSwiftWatch@birdscanada.org</a>
<b>QUEBEC</b>	Late April – Early June	Late May – late August	Late July – early September	Permislep.Qc@ec.gc.ca	<b>Regroupement Québec Oiseaux</b> <i>Phone :</i> 514 252-3190 <i>Toll free :</i> 1 888 (647-3289) <i>Email :</i> <a href="mailto:martinetinfo@quebecoiseaux.org">martinetinfo@quebecoiseaux.org</a>

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If you are doing work to modify a chimney or other structure, you may also need to follow provincial requirements. Contact the provincial authorities in your area for more information.

If you want to build a structure to replace an existing chimney that has documented use by Chimney Swifts, please contact us at the e-mail address in the table above to find out more about building plans and features that the structure should have.

For more information on Chimney Swift, please visit: <https://species-registry.canada.ca/index-en.html#/species/951-650> and <https://species-registry.canada.ca/index-en.html#/documents/1102>

You can also visit the following site to learn more about Avoiding Harm to Migratory Birds:  
<https://www.canada.ca/en/environment-climate-change/services/avoiding-harm-migratory-birds.html>

