

# Chimney Swift

*Chaetura pelagica*

**STATUS**

Threatened 

Endangered 

13



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## Species Description

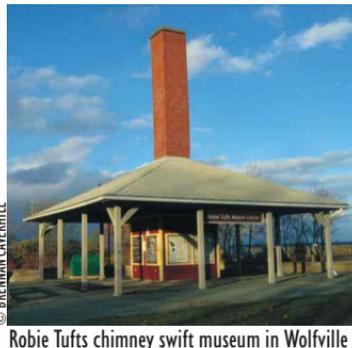
The Chimney Swift is a small bird (12-14 cm) with dark brown plumage, and a pale throat. It has a long, thin body, with long, narrow, pointed wings that project beyond the short spiny tail when folded. It has a quick jerky flight. All ages and sexes are similar in appearance.



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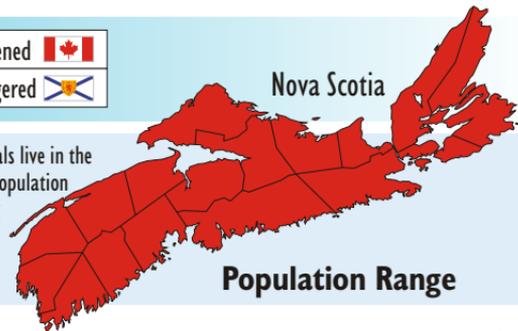


Robie Tufts chimney swift museum in Wolfville

Chimney Swifts are seen from mid-April through September at dusk and dawn throughout Nova Scotia.

## Habitat

Fewer than 1000 individuals live in the maritime provinces. The population in Nova Scotia is declining rapidly. Winters in the Amazon River drainage basin in South America.



Before Europeans arrived in North America, the birds used giant hollow trees for nesting sites; they still use this habitat today, but they also use abandoned chimneys in urban and rural areas where temperatures are relatively constant. Being aerial foragers, they concentrate in areas where insects are abundant, such as near lakes and wetlands.

## Interesting Points

- Pairs are monogamous, and mate for life, beginning at age two.
- The population in Canada is estimated at fewer than 12,000 individuals.
- One bird can eat over 1000 insects per day.
- They can not take off if they are on the ground!



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## Threats to Survival

- Dwindling number of breeding and roosting sites due to logging, which reduces the number of big, old, hollow trees.
- Destruction of old abandoned buildings, which reduces the number of suitable chimneys.
- Light pollution and pesticide spraying, which kills insects and reduces food availability



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## Similar Species

### Note:

Swallows in Nova Scotia have a whitish breast, and smoother flight pattern than the chimney swift.

### Cliff Swallow:

Similar size (13 cm); blue back, brown wings and tail, white belly and forehead; tiny black bill.



### Bank Swallow:

Similar size (12 cm); brown back, white belly; narrow brown band on breast.



### Barn Swallow:

Similar size (13 cm); blue back, brown face, buff belly; longer pointed tail.



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## How You Can Help

Foresters: leave big dead trees standing. Everyone: report sightings (especially known nesting sites), turn your outdoor lights off and minimize light pollution - save energy, money and birds! Support sustainable forestry practices and habitat restoration.

## Contacts, Information & Sighting Reports

**Contact:** Environment Canada (506) 364-5044 or [www.ec.gc.ca](http://www.ec.gc.ca)

**Info:** [www.speciesatrisk.gc.ca](http://www.speciesatrisk.gc.ca), [www.chimneyswifts.org](http://www.chimneyswifts.org)

**Sighting Reports:** 1-866-727-3447 or [sightings@speciesatrisk.ca](mailto:sightings@speciesatrisk.ca)