

Annual Report, 2021/22, of Nature London Chimney Swift Initiative

This account covers the 12 months from November 1, 2021, to October 31, 2022, a period that enables reporting on a single (April-to-October) season of Chimney Swift presence in London. Nature London (NL)'s swift program operates independently of other programs in Ontario. As time and opportunities permit, we collaborate and share information with other swift stakeholders. The London program is overseen by Sandy and Ric Symmes, Glenn and Susan Berry, Dave and Winnie Wake, assisted by additional volunteers (40-60 in total). Thanks to all.

After two years of reduced activity due to COVID-19 restrictions, we mounted a full 24-week season of Tuesday-evening monitoring at 18 chimneys, plus carried out additional monitoring. In 2022, we documented more monitoring visits than in any past year – 559 data entries at 52 chimneys.

A summary of 2021/2022 swift activities is presented below in three categories (with some overlap): Education/Outreach, Conservation/Advocacy and Monitoring/Data Collection.

Education/Outreach

- On NL website swift page, added 2 info sheets and 2 reports, updated 2 articles.
- Supported Bird Friendly London by leading swift walk for Migration Festival (May 6, attendance 6) and providing info on 10 swift sites for BFL's interactive city map of where to find birds.
- Supported Biodiversity Inventory at Western by co-hosting Swift Night Out at Huron College (May 31, 8 present) and providing advice for creating protocol for finding nighthawk nests.
- Supported UWO Sustainability: zoom meeting with staff to discuss ways to engage students re swifts (Apr 26) and compiled summary of swift use of UWO chimneys since 2005.
- CBC radio interview on swifts & NL monitoring: online nationally Sep 11, aired locally Sep 12.
- Exchanged info/advice/ideas with swift stakeholders in Sarnia, Wallaceburg, Dutton, Guelph, Kitchener, Prince Edward County, Manitoulin Island, Montreal, Waterloo, Manitoba, Niagara Falls NY and Birds Canada.
- Helped staff Nature London booth at Earth Fest (Apr 22), led NL walking tour of chimneys (May 29, 7 present), hosted pop-up Swift Nights Out at swift roost at First-St. Andrew's, Aug 13 & 20.
- New innovations: Glenn Berry created swift monitors' business cards, posted many videos of London swifts on YouTube (one had >750 hits!), launched Twitter account: @london_swifts.
- Delivered PowerPoint on swift monitoring to naturalists' club in North Bay, Feb 8 (via zoom).
- Gave brief presentations on swifts at NL zoom meetings Feb 25, Mar 18, Apr 22, Sep 16.

Publications

- Chimney Swift Highlights from 2021, W Wake, *Cardinal* 266, Winter 2022, pp 26&27.
- Photographing Chimney Swifts, G Berry, *Cardinal* 266, Winter 2022, p 28.
- Monitoring Chimney Swifts in London, S Berry, *Toronto Ornithological Club Newsletter* 314, Feb 2022, pp 5-7.
- Monitoring Chimney Swifts in London ON, W Wake, *The Woodland Observer*, March 2022.
- Chimney Swifts at First-St. Andrew's, W Wake, *Tidings* 32(2), Summer 2022, pp 8-9.
- Chimney Swift Outreach, W Wake, *Cardinal* 268, Summer 2022, pp 27-29.

Conservation/Advocacy

- Presented Swift Friendly Property sign (courtesy of Birds Canada) to Nova Craft Canoe.
- Contacted owners of 11 London swift chimneys and shared info on 2021 usage and best practices.
- Chimney Restoration Fund, Birds Canada; funder Environment & Climate Change Canada/ECCC
 - NL considered invitation to join national committee overseeing this new fund.
 - NL declined, as scope of duties is beyond NL's capacity, will continue to communicate.
- Ontario Breeding Bird Atlas:
 - Several monitors contributed data documenting out-of-town swift nesting activity.

- At request of Mike Cadman, prepared article on finding chimneys & documenting nests.
- For editors of *Canadian Field-Naturalist*, provided reviewer comments for submission on swifts.
- Draft Recovery Strategy for the Chimney Swift: WW submitted comments to ECCC, and provided info & helped/encouraged other stakeholders to make input to draft strategy.
- Contacted City of London and Ministry of Environment, Conservation and Parks urging action be taken to remove a recently installed mesh cap on a known East London swift chimney.
- Responded to requests for info/advice on keeping swifts from entering interior of a house, finding swift chimneys, monitoring swifts, confirming nesting, outreach ideas, building public support for chimney preservation, artificial chimneys that work, stopping demolition of swift chimneys, restoring a chimney, best practices for owners, engaging public officials to protect chimneys, etc.
- Facilitated releases of young swifts (at Smith Fruit) for out-of-town wildlife rehab centres:
 - 6 swifts from Le Nichoir in Hudson, QC (Aug 26).
 - 7 swifts from Destined to Fly in Harrowsmith, ON (Sep 3).

Monitoring / Data Collection

Organized weekly Tuesday-evening monitoring in London (plus extra dates during spring migration)

- Tried to create meaningful and enjoyable experiences for volunteer monitors.
- Updated monitoring guidelines, field forms, online data entry portal, safety protocol, etc.
- Introduced new computer-generated system for scheduling monitoring assignments.
- Glenn Berry monitored by video to improve accuracy.
- Recruited new monitors via NL e-newsletter, *The Cardinal*, club zoom meetings, Earth Fest, swift chimney walking tours, swift nights out, personal contact, etc.
- Engaged ~60 volunteer monitors (core of ~40), rotated weekly to different assigned chimneys.
- Welcomed 9 new monitors; mentored by experienced volunteers.
- Monitored 18 chimneys weekly May to Oct (plus additional daytime & evening visits)
- Sent weekly updates: assignment schedule, memory joggers, table & analysis of recent results.
- Monitored at 34 other chimneys (mostly 1 visit each); 31 in London, 3 out of town.
- Identified 1 new chimney in London and 1 new active roost chimney out of town.
- Collected 559 data entries from 52 chimneys (forwarded to Ontario SwiftWatch at end of season).
- Prepared end-of season swift monitoring report for 2022 (38 pages).
- Hosted end-of-season monitors' celebration and gathering on Oct 29 (32 attended).
 - Presentations by W Wake (season's results and highlights) and G Berry (videos of swift releases, Merlin, and swifts entering chimneys), plus swift fun and games, prizes.
- Highlights of monitoring results in 2022:
 - Spring migration peaked 3 weeks later than 2 other years for which data are available.
 - Nesting ran late; 2 of 18 (& possibly up to 6 more) chimneys fledged some young.
 - Ten roosts of ≥ 20 swifts were active at some time during season (12 roosts of ≥ 10 swifts)
 - Combined tally for 13 chimneys peaked at 806 on Aug 23, lowest fall peak in 5 years.
 - Largest single-night count at one roost was 479 at Smith Fruit on Aug 25.
 - Last chimney occupied was Labatt's on Oct 5 (1 swift), 1 week later than 2020 and 2021.
- Collected sightings of Common Nighthawks, Barn Swallows and bats.

Compiling Nature London historic swift data in a single spreadsheet

- Completed 2008, started 2009 (2003 to mid-2008 previously done); total to date >1300 entries.

Sincere thanks to all the volunteers (including the organizing committee) and to Nature London for providing funding and other support. 2022 has indeed been a banner year! What a truly amazing team!

Winifred Wake,

Chimney Swift Liaison for Nature London, November 16, 2022