



Look for a Chimney Swift Roost in Your Neighborhood

You don't live near one of the chimney swift roosts the Connecticut Department of Energy & Environmental Protection (DEEP) monitors, but you see swifts all the time and would like to find a chimney swift roost. Chances are there is some type of a roost nearby! It is often difficult to find some of these smaller roosting locations because the birds go in so quickly and we are not often watching our chimneys so intently.

DEEP keeps records of these roosting locations because chimney swift roosts are important shelters for the birds during migration, and we want to be sure this resource is available for swifts. Chimneys are subject to pressures from renovation. If we know where these roosts exist, we can plan for replacement as they disappear from the landscape.

What is a chimney swift roost? A roost is a location where chimney swifts congregate overnight to stay warm. Roosts are most noticeable during migration, but also occur during the breeding season as well.

Is a roost the same as a nest? Sometimes. This is tricky to decipher. There is usually one chimney swift nest per chimney flue, so you would not expect to see more than 3-4 birds entering a chimney if it is an active nest. A chimney can sometimes be used as a roost during migration and a nest during the breeding season. But generally, if there are 8 or more birds using the chimney, it is probably a roost and not a nest. DEEP would be interested in hearing about any chimney you see birds go into.

Where should I start looking? You can look at any chimney that has dimensions larger than 2.5 by 2.5 bricks, appears to have only one flue or vertical shaft, and is not more than 3 stories higher than the roof of the main building from which it extends. The entrance to the chimney should not be blocked, but the birds will tolerate a slate cap as long as there is a gap through which they can fly.

Not sure where to start? Try your neighborhood school. Of the 12 most reliable roosting locations in Connecticut, 10 of them are school buildings or former school buildings! Why? We are not exactly sure, but school buildings have slightly larger chimneys (usually about 5 bricks by 5 bricks wide) that can accommodate a larger number of birds and may have not yet been renovated to exclude the birds.

When should I look for a roost? The easiest time to find a roost is during the end of summer. This is when the adults and young flock up for migration. Birds congregate in the largest numbers **throughout August into mid-September**. You also can find roosts during spring migration (April 20 - May 10) and you might find a roost during the summer breeding season, which runs from approximately mid-May until the end of July. You also might find a nest during the summer months, which might turn into a roost at the end of the season.

How do you look for a chimney swift roost? Find a spot where you regularly see chimney swifts. Start looking around for a suspect chimney. Position yourself with a good vantage point of the swifts and the suspect chimney about 15 minutes before sunset and then watch the birds. If the birds are using this chimney, they will enter it sometime between sunset and 20 minutes after sunset. If they don't enter this chimney, watch where they go, and then start the process again with a new chimney!

If you find a chimney that the birds are using, please report the chimney to Shannon.Kearney@ct.gov; 860-424-3011 with:

1. The date you found it.
2. The complete address.
3. The number of birds.
4. The chimneys that were checked but aren't being used.

Please respect private property, and unless you have permission to enter a property, monitor the chimney from a public location. Please do not monitor private homes unless you have permission to do so.

Thanks for your help!

Shannon Kearney
CT DEEP Wildlife Division
Sessions Woods WMA
P.O. Box 1550
Burlington, CT 06013
860-424-3011
Shannon.Kearney@ct.gov
www.ct.gov/deep/wildlife