

Chimney Swift Fact Sheet

- Migrate from as far north as Canada to as far south as northern Chile
- Depart NC in mid-October
- Return to NC early to mid-April
- Historically, they roosted and nested in large hollow trees
- As these trees became scarce due to the expansion of European Colonists, swifts adapted to nesting in chimneys
- Now they rely almost exclusively on chimneys in houses and factories
- Fewer and fewer new homes and factories have chimneys, thus nesting and roosting places for chimney swifts are becoming scarce all over again
- Within a few decades, chimney swifts will become endangered in all likelihood due to the lack of chimneys
- While hundreds or even thousands of swifts will occupy the same roost during migration, only one pair will occupy a chimney for nesting
- During migration, flocks of thousands swirl in tornado-like formations and funnel into chimneys to roost for the night
- Nests are comprised of small twigs that the adults break off and glue to the inside of the chimney with their saliva
- Eggs usually number 4 to 5
- Incubation of the eggs takes an average of 19 days
- Chicks stay in the nest for 28 – 30 days before their first flight
- Swifts feed on flying insects, consuming one third of their body weight in insects each day.
- Average life span is about 5 years; have been known to live up to 15 years.
- Most swifts that survive return to the same nest site (chimney) and pair with the same mate.

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Chimney Swift Quiz!

1. Where did Chimney Swifts nest and roost before there were chimneys?
2. Why might Chimney Swifts become endangered in the next few decades?
3. How far north do they migrate in the spring? And how far south in the fall?
4. How many Chimney Swifts may roost in a single chimney during migration?
5. How many will nest in one chimney?
6. How do Chimney Swifts attach their nests to the inside of a chimney?
7. How many eggs do they lay?
8. How long does their average incubation period last?
9. How long do Chimney Swift chicks stay in the nest before their first flight?
10. What do Chimney Swifts eat?
11. What is the average life span of a Chimney Swift?
12. Do Chimney Swifts return to the same chimney each year to nest?

How did you do?

*Track down a friendly Audubon member for the answers!
(Or find a "neighbor" who has already discovered the answers!)*

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