



# Maritimes SwiftWatch

VOLUME 10 — 2019-2020 Season

## In This Issue

Season Summary	1
Bridgetown, NS Artificial Roost	2
Swift and Swallow Stewards Recognized	2
Swifts by the numbers – 2019	3
Project Supporters	7

### **IMPORTANT Spring 2020 update:**

**Due to the ongoing  
COVID-19 situation,  
Birds Canada has  
come to the difficult  
but necessary  
decision to suspend  
all volunteer sur-  
veys and field work  
until further notice.  
Please read our Poli-  
cy on Outdoor Work  
under COVID-19, at  
[www.birdscanada.org](http://www.birdscanada.org)**

Led by Birds Canada, Maritimes SwiftWatch is a volunteer-based monitoring and stewardship program designed to bring together biologists, citizen scientists, landowners and communities as stewards for Chimney Swifts and their habitat.

In 2019, 66 volunteers spent 145 hours scanning the skies for swifts and swallows, conducting 164 roost surveys, documenting nesting activity at many previously known nest sites, and identifying 16 new nest sites and roost chimneys. Maritimes SwiftWatch staff and partners contacted landowners hosting swifts on their properties to provide information about swift and swallow biology and stewardship.

Much like 2018, cold and damp spring weather persisted into early June, challenging participants to make accurate counts in stormy weather. More detailed information about Maritimes SwiftWatch roost count results and the National Roost Monitoring results can be found on pages 3-6.

This year SwiftWatch staff and partner organizations held public outreach and education events in Cap-Pelé, Halifax, Saint-Andrews, Sackville, and White Point, and our staff provided stewardship advice to owners of 72 properties hosting swift and swallow nests and roosts.

As always, a sincere **thank you** is due to the volunteers, partners, and supporters whose contributions make SwiftWatch possible!

*-Ally Manthorne,  
Maritimes SwiftWatch Coordinator*



Chimney Swifts drop into a newly constructed artificial roosting tower in Bridgetown, NS

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## New Freestanding Roost Tower Works



In early spring 2019, a new freestanding Chimney Swift roost tower was constructed in Bridgetown, NS. This tower was designed by a committee of architects, biologists and engineers to replace the original brick chimney of the Bridgetown Regional High School, which was demolished in 2018 and which had hosted over 500 roosting Chimney Swifts.

The new roost tower is located on the edge of the property, which is being transformed into a track and field facility. The tower construction was completed in April 2019, just in time to welcome the first roosting Chimney Swifts on May 11! Chimney Swifts continued to roost at the new tower by the hundreds all spring and summer, until heading south in the first part of August. Congratulations to everyone who contributed to the initial success of this project!

We strongly recommend thoroughly exploring the feasibility of preserving an existing occupied chimney over replacing it with an artificial one. However, in cases where the preservation of the existing chimney is not possible, artificial roost towers are one of the tools in our collective conservation toolbox. With that in mind, we wanted to share the design considerations and plans for this tower with others in Canada and US who are also considering designing and constructing

roost towers. To read the report summarizing the design and construction of the Bridgetown artificial roost tower, please contact Kathy St. Laurent, Species at Risk Recovery Biologist – [kathy.stlaurent@canada.ca](mailto:kathy.stlaurent@canada.ca)

## Swift and Swallow Friendly Properties Recognized

In 2019, 16 additional Chimney Swift nest and roost sites were reported to SwiftWatch by landowners, volunteers, and partner organizations. We also spent time revisiting known nest sites to check out nesting activity and work with landowners to maintain swift-friendly properties. Birds Canada has “Swift Friendly Property” and “Swallow Friendly Property” signs available in English and French to thank and acknowledge property owners for their integral role in the recovery of swift and swallow populations. Please contact Maritimes SwiftWatch ([marswifts@birdscanada.org](mailto:marswifts@birdscanada.org) or 506-364-5196) if you are a landowner hosting swifts and/or swallows and would like a sign for display, or to nominate a landowner steward in your community.

When new nest sites are found or reported in chimneys, barns, wells or other structures, we record characteristics of the site such as the size and shape of the chimney or other structure, materials, building type, surrounding habitat, how long the site has been occupied by swifts, how the site is used by owners and identify possible risks to the birds. This information is helping us address questions about nest site selection, how to prevent disturbance and harm to nesting Chimney Swifts, and how to help landowners maintain swift-friendly chimneys over time. In 2019, we worked with landowners and building managers to complete 24 risk assessments for properties hosting Chimney Swifts. Thank-you to all of our fantastic landowners and managers who worked with us to steward swifts and their habitat in 2019!

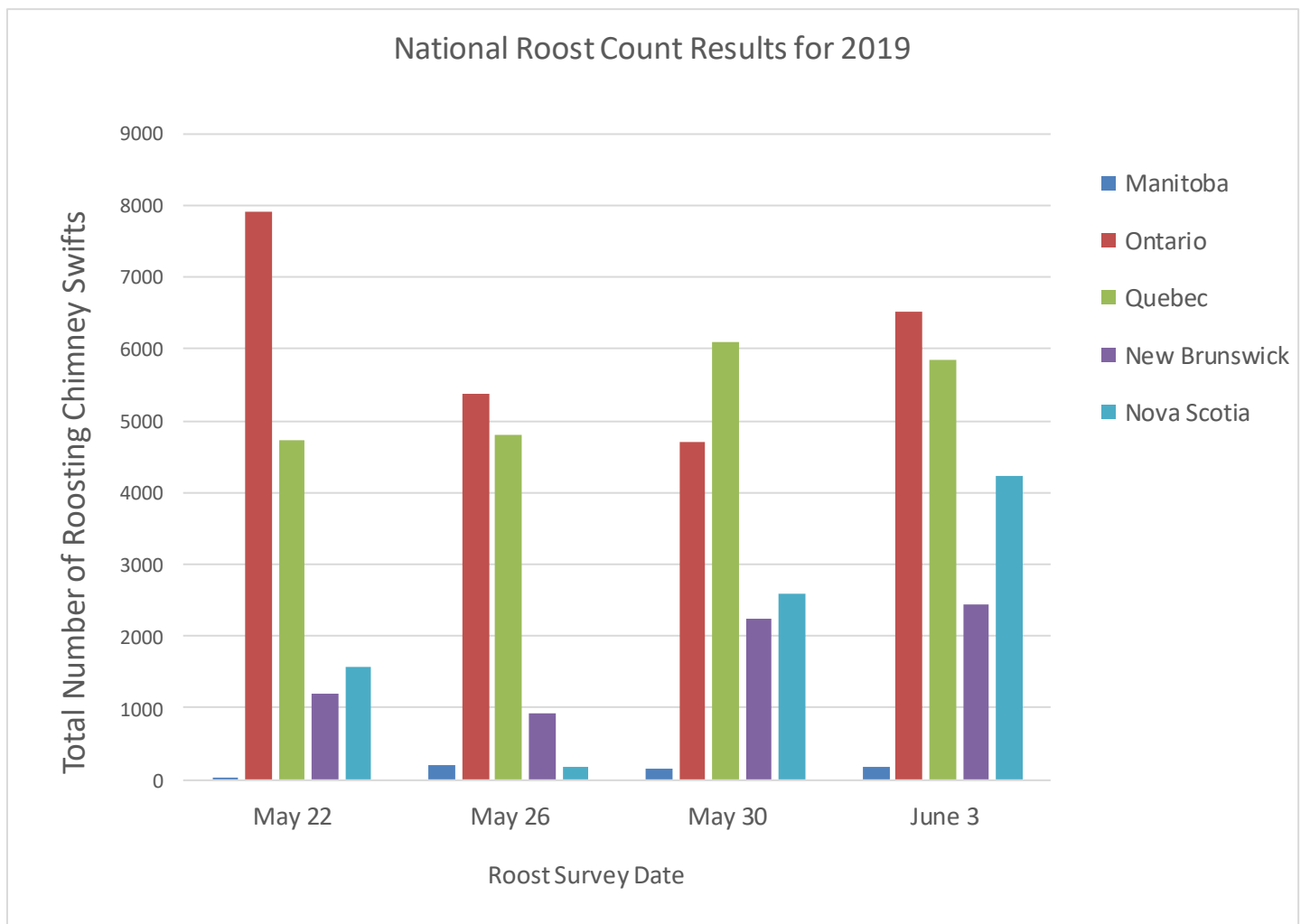


## Swifts By the Numbers –2019

Observers across Canada count Chimney Swifts on the same four nights, synchronizing counts to ensure that we are not double-counting swifts as they migrate through different regions. The number of surveyed roosts has increased from 82 of 97 sites surveyed in 2013, to 111 of 131 sites surveyed in 2019 (see table on following page for more 2013-2019 results). These numbers represent both an increase in the number of previously unknown roosts identified, and in the numbers of volunteers adopting roosts to monitor - and both are positive measures of awareness and stewardship for Chimney Swifts!

In 2019, dedicated volunteers in Manitoba, Ontario, Quebec, New Brunswick and Nova Scotia counted a combined total of 19,214 swifts on June 3, which is the highest count yet! The total number of swifts counted on each 2019 count date in each province are displayed in the graph below.

It will take a few more years of data collection to determine how well the National Roost Monitoring protocol is detecting population trends in our region, but the monitoring data is helping to demonstrate the importance of individual roost sites to the owners and managers of these structures as well as the surrounding communities, and underscore the need for protection and long-term stewardship of roost sites across Canada, which serve as vital stopover points for migrating and non-breeding swifts.



**Results 2019 - Chimney Swift Roost Survey\***

	May 22		May 26		May 30		June 3	
	Number of swifts	No. surveyed roosts / No. known roosts	Number of swifts	No. surveyed roosts / No. known roosts	Number of swifts	No. surveyed roosts / No. known roosts	Number of swifts	No. surveyed roosts / No. known roosts
Manitoba	13	7/9	198	7/9	164	9/9	170	9/9
Ontario	7916	37/51	5378	42/51	4694	36/51	6532	39/51
Quebec	4741	44/48	4804	45/48	6104	45/48	5845	45/48
New Brunswick	1193	8/10	928	6/10	2248	8/10	2434	8/10
Nova Scotia	1577	7/13	181	6/13	2595	9/13	4233	10/13
<b>Total</b>	15440	103/131	11489	106/131	15805	107/131	19214	111/131

**Results 2018 - Chimney Swift Roost Survey\***

	May 23		May 27		May 31		June 4	
	Number of swifts	No. surveyed roosts / No. known roosts	Number of swifts	No. surveyed roosts / No. known roosts	Number of swifts	No. surveyed roosts / No. known roosts	Number of swifts	No. surveyed roosts / No. known roosts
Manitoba	156	13 / 14	160	10 / 14	179	9 / 14	215	10 / 14
Ontario	5260	46 / 59	4568	43 / 59	4225	45 / 59	5332	48 / 59
Quebec	5034	42 / 45	5184	43 / 45	3952	44 / 45	5948	42 / 45
New Brunswick	890	8 / 10	1268	7 / 10	1156	9 / 10	2668	8 / 10
Nova Scotia	1596	7 / 10	2304	6 / 10	979	8 / 10	2034	7 / 10
<b>Total</b>	12936	116 / 138	13484	109 / 138	10491	115 / 138	16197	115 / 138

**Results 2017 - Chimney Swift Roost Survey\***

	May 24		May 28		June 1		June 5	
	Number of swifts	No. surveyed roosts / No. known roosts	Number of swifts	No. surveyed roosts / No. known roosts	Number of swifts	No. surveyed roosts / No. known roosts	Number of swifts	No. surveyed roosts / No. known roosts
Manitoba	100	6 / 9	115	7 / 9	234	8 / 9	213	8 / 9
Ontario	5422	48 / 59	4583	46 / 59	6792	49 / 59	5792	48 / 59
Quebec	3902	45 / 47	3568	45 / 47	6187	44 / 47	5068	45 / 47
New Brunswick	1157	7 / 10	2337	8 / 10	1335	7 / 10	2690	7 / 11
Nova Scotia	982	7 / 10	1861	6 / 10	932	8 / 10	1537	8 / 10
<b>Total</b>	11563	113 / 135	12464	112 / 135	15480	116 / 135	15300	116 / 136

**Results 2016 - Chimney Swift Roost Survey\***

	May 25		May 29		June 2		June 6	
	Number of swifts	No. surveyed roosts / No. known roosts	Number of swifts	No. surveyed roosts / No. known roosts	Number of swifts	No. surveyed roosts / No. known roosts	Number of swifts	No. surveyed roosts / No. known roosts
Manitoba	218	4 / 7	188	4 / 7	220	7 / 7	152	5 / 7
Ontario	3441	34 / 45	3459	36 / 45	3116	34 / 45	4700	34 / 45
Quebec	3008	43 / 44	3675	41 / 44	3709	41 / 44	3027	38 / 44
New Brunswick	851	9 / 10	1205	8 / 10	1033	9 / 10	1398	8 / 10
Nova Scotia	734	9 / 10	1588	9 / 10	1781	9 / 10	1470	9 / 10
<b>Total</b>	8252	99 / 116	10115	98 / 116	9859	100 / 116	10747	94 / 116

**Results 2015 - Chimney Swift Roost Survey\***

	May 20		May 24		May 28		June 1	
	Number of swifts	No. surveyed roosts / No. known roosts	Number of swifts	No. surveyed roosts / No. known roosts	Number of swifts	No. surveyed roosts / No. known roosts	Number of swifts	No. surveyed roosts / No. known roosts
Manitoba	89	7 / 8	143	7 / 8	111	7 / 8	213	7 / 8
Ontario	9565	46 / 57	4671	49 / 57	3900	49 / 57	6481	44 / 57
Quebec	4617	42 / 43	4868	41 / 43	3215	42 / 43	3687	42 / 43
New Brunswick	1193	8 / 10	2254	10 / 10	1231	9 / 10	1219	10 / 10
Nova Scotia	1664	9 / 10	1619	8 / 10	1200	8 / 10	451	7 / 10
<b>Total</b>	17128	112 / 128	13555	115 / 128	9657	115 / 128	12051	110 / 128

**Results 2014 - Chimney Swift Roost Survey\***

	May 21		May 25		May 29		June 2	
	Number of swifts	No. surveyed roosts / No. known roosts	Number of swifts	No. surveyed roosts / No. known roosts	Number of swifts	No. surveyed roosts / No. known roosts	Number of swifts	No. surveyed roosts / No. known roosts
Manitoba	37	9 / 9	139	9 / 9	156	9 / 9	204	9 / 9
Ontario	7056	39 / 48	5542	40 / 48	5666	38 / 48	5697	37 / 48
Quebec	3020	35 / 40	3114	36 / 40	3605	38 / 40	2772	36 / 40
New Brunswick	255	6 / 10	983	8 / 10	860	8 / 10	831	10 / 12
Nova Scotia	344	9 / 10	728	6 / 10	1063	7 / 10	694	8 / 10
<b>Total</b>	10712	98 / 117	10506	99 / 117	11350	100 / 117	10198	100 / 119

**Results 2013 - Chimney Swift Roost Survey\***

	May 22		May 26		May 30		June 3	
	Number of swifts	No. surveyed roosts / No. known roosts	Number of swifts	No. surveyed roosts / No. known roosts	Number of swifts	No. surveyed roosts / No. known roosts	Number of swifts	No. surveyed roosts / No. known roosts
Manitoba	71	9 / 9	107	9 / 9	124	5 / 9	86	8 / 9
Ontario	4983	20 / 31	4958	23 / 31	1627	23 / 31	5018	17 / 31
Quebec	4759	37 / 39	4543	37 / 39	2633	38 / 39	4514	36 / 39
New Brunswick	1493	6 / 9	2414	5 / 9	704	8 / 9	582	8 / 9
Nova Scotia	1145	6 / 8	666	6 / 8	653	8 / 9	584	6 / 9
<b>Total</b>	12451	78 / 96	12688	80 / 96	5741	82 / 97	10784	75 / 97

\*: Data source: Bird Studies Canada, Manitoba Chimney Swift Initiative, Environment and Climate change Canada Canadian Wildlife Service  
Data cannot be published without the agreement of these three organizations involved in data collection

Maximum number of swifts counted  
<https://www.mbcchimneyswift.com/>  
[marswifts@oiseauxcanada.org](mailto:marswifts@oiseauxcanada.org)  
[OntarioSwiftWatch@birdscanada.org](mailto:OntarioSwiftWatch@birdscanada.org)

## Monitoring Swift Numbers in the Maritimes

The National Roost Monitoring program results for each site monitored in 2019 are displayed in the table on the following page. Roost counts at some locations were significantly higher than previous years, while other sites reported a total absence of roosting swifts during some surveys. Low or missed counts in many communities on May 22 and May 26 reflected region-wide cold, wet weather that kept swifts (and some of us!) huddled inside for the day.

In 2019, new roost sites were reported in Hillsborough, NB and Shelburne, NS. In Wolfville, Middleton and Bear River, NS, swifts abandoned their historically preferred roost chimneys for alternate sites nearby, for reasons we do not yet understand.

Of note, the average number of swifts per Maritimes roost chimney has steadily increased since surveys began in 2011. This may reflect an increase in discoveries of chimneys hosting large congregations of roosting Chimney Swifts (which are typically more obvious than sites hosting just a handful of swifts), rather than an actual population increase. As Maritimers become more aware of Chimney Swifts and the importance of finding and reporting roost sites, we have seen increased reports of roost chimneys small and large!

Sometimes busy schedules prevent us from conducting counts on scheduled count dates. If you know in advance that you may miss a count, **please let us know** so we can help to arrange a 'backup' counter. On the other hand, if you have time to conduct extra watches before, between and after the four count dates we encourage you to continue monitoring your site throughout the season! The more count data that exist for each site, the better we can manage risks and threats for this habitat.



## 2019 National Roost Monitoring Results for NB and NS

Site	Building Type	18-May	22-May	26-May	30-May	03-Jun
Bathurst	Commercial (former post office)	53	92	0	776	882
Edmundston	Church	n/a	0	36	284	176
Fredericton	Commercial building	522	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a
Hampton	Office (former post office)	7	85	9	65	5
Plaster Rock	School	n/a	6	697	396	421
Riverside-Albert	House	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a
Sainte-Anne-de-Madawaska (main roost)	Church	1	6	186	89	241
Sainte-Anne-de-Madawaska (occasional roost)	School	0	0	0	0	0
Sussex	Apartment complex	67	510	n/a	284	209
Woodstock	School	n/a	494	n/a	354	500
Bear River - downtown	House	19	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a
Bridgetown (new 2019)	Freestanding roost tower	90	262	123	243	295
Mabou	Church	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a
McGowan Lake	Unused smithy	196	453	n/a	408	374
Middleton (new 2019)	Commercial building	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	400
Middleton	School	0	0	0	0	2
New Glasgow	Apartments (former school)	n/a	n/a	5	171	950
St. Bernard	Church	300	600	40	616	690
Truro	Library (former school)	1	0	0	62	35
Upper Falmouth	House	2	118	11	710	1093
Wolfville (Robie Tufts Nature Centre)	Freestanding chimney	0	18	n/a	2	6
Wolfville (University Hall) (new 2019)	Institutional building	n/a	126	2	302	388
<b>TOTAL</b>		<b>1258</b>	<b>2770</b>	<b>1109</b>	<b>4762</b>	<b>6667</b>

"n/a" means no count was conducted on this date



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**Maritimes SwiftWatch is a multi-partner project led by Birds Canada together with:**



Kespukwitk's SAR Program

Pictou Co. Naturalist Club



**Maritimes SwiftWatch supporters:**

This project was undertaken with the financial support of:  
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Environment and Climate Change Canada

Environnement et Changement climatique Canada



**Graham and Susan Smith**



**TD Friends of the Environment Foundation**



Our project is funded in part by the New Brunswick Wildlife Trust Fund. This Wildlife Trust Fund obtains a portion of its revenue from the purchase of conservation plates by New Brunswick residents who are interested in conservation. Seven dollars (\$7) from each conservation plate purchase goes into that fund annually. These funds are awarded to projects such as ours by the Minister of Natural Resources following review and recommendation by an independent board of 17 volunteers. Revenue from license plates is critical in furthering conservation efforts in our province so please consider purchasing conservation plates with your next car purchase to enable the NB Wildlife Trust Fund to continue to provide financial support for worthy wildlife projects.



**SWIFT WATCH**  
SUIVI DU MARTINET

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