



# Maritimes SwiftWatch

VOLUME 11 — 2021 Season

## In This Issue

Season Summary	1
Bridgetown, NS Artificial Roost Update	2
SwiftWatch Program Methods and Reminders	2
Swifts by the Numbers – 2021	3
A Swift Summer: Reflections from the Field	6
Project Supporters	7

**Spring 2022 updates  
and news:**

**We are hoping to  
monitor all known  
roosts this year—  
reach out if you or  
someone you know  
is interested!**

**Are you involved in  
local government?  
Contact us to learn  
how we can work  
together to protect  
Chimney Swifts!**

The Maritimes SwiftWatch newsletter is back after COVID-19 paused surveys and the newsletter in 2020!

Birds Canada leads Maritimes SwiftWatch, a volunteer-based monitoring and stewardship program designed to bring together biologists, Citizen Scientists, landowners, and communities to conserve and monitor Chimney Swifts and their habitat.

In 2021, 45 volunteers (with 95 assistants) spent 280 hours scanning the skies for swifts and swallows, conducting 227 roost and nest surveys at 131 sites, documenting nesting activity at many previously known nest sites, and adding 76 new nest sites and 2 new roost chimneys to our database. Maritimes SwiftWatch staff and partners contacted many landowners hosting swifts on their properties to provide information about swift biology and stewardship.

After missing a survey season in 2020, it was great to have volunteers and two dedicated field technicians back out at roost sites in the Maritimes this past summer. The Maritimes SwiftWatch roost count results and the National Roost Monitoring results can be found on pages 3-5.

In 2021, Birds Canada staff provided two virtual presentations about Chimney Swifts and the SwiftWatch program, and worked with 35 landowners who host swifts to help them steward this species on their properties.

As always, a giant and sincere “thank you” to the volunteers, partners, and supporters whose contributions make SwiftWatch

possible! We are always looking for more SwiftWatch volunteers, so please don’t hesitate to send any interested swift lovers our way!

-Graham Sorenson, Acting Maritimes SwiftWatch Coordinator



A Chimney Swift sits on a nest in a barn. Photo by A. Manthorne

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## Bridgetown Artificial Roost Update

The Bridgetown Artificial Roost continues to be a success story for Chimney Swifts, with approximately the same number of birds using the new roost as used the original! This was the third year of monitoring at the Bridgetown artificial roost, a free-standing structure that was built in 2019 when the chimney of the old Bridgetown high school, a known Chimney Swift roost, was slated for demolition. The replacement structure was constructed in April 2019 and the brick chimney originally used by the swifts was left standing, though it was inactivated (the top was sealed). The brick chimney was demolished mid-season on July 2, 2019, while swifts were visiting the new roost, and efforts were made to minimize disturbance to the roosting site.

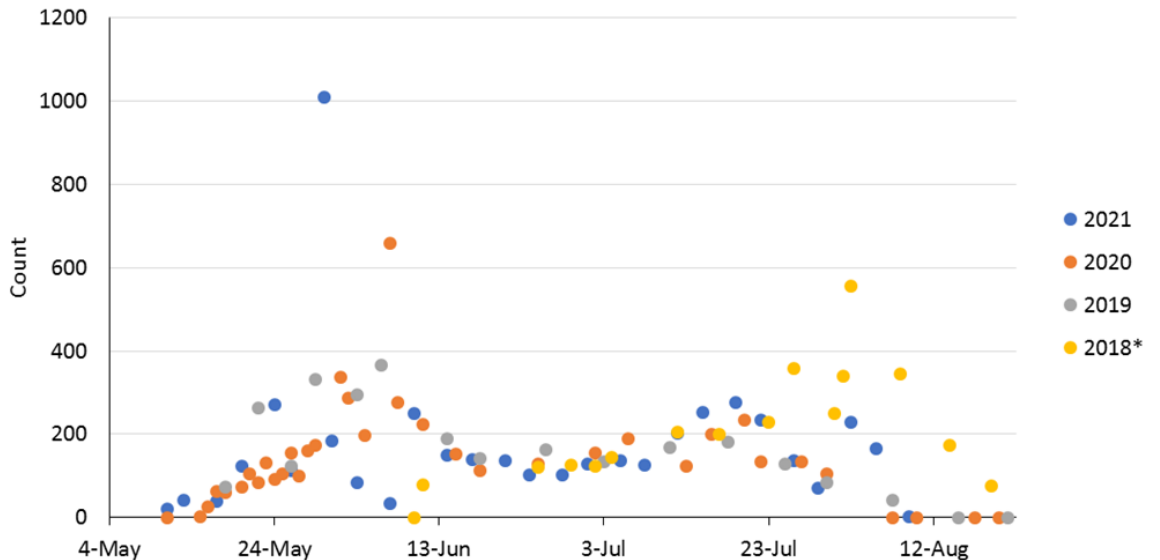
While preserving original chimney structures that are used by swifts is the best option, this roost is an example of the success that can be achieved when a roost chimney must be removed. The number of swifts using the constructed Bridgetown roost was similar for the three years of post-construction monitoring (2019-2021) compared with Demolition of the original brick chimney and on-going construction activities nearby appeared to cause minimal disruption to roosting activity. During the beginning and middle of the breeding season, the four years of monitoring were very similar, though swift occupancy appears to have been higher in the old structure during the late breeding and post-breeding period in August.

Overall these results suggest no obvious year-to-year disruptions in roosting caused by the removal of the original brick roosting chimney - Chimney Swifts using the Bridgetown roost site seem to have quickly adapted to the constructed replacement roosting structure.



Bridgetown Roost, Photo by K. Hanifen

Figure 1: Summary of visual counts of roosting Chimney Swifts in 2019-2021 at the constructed roost structure, and in 2018 at the former high school chimney, Bridgetown, Nova Scotia.



## SwiftWatch Program Methods and Reminders

The SwiftWatch program is primarily focused on monitoring roost sites – the chimneys and structures that support large numbers of Chimney Swifts and act as a hub for breeding swifts in the region. To best estimate provincial, Atlantic region, Canadian, and North American populations, these counts are coordinated across the species’ breeding range on the same four nights each year. By doing this, roost counts can be added together to estimate a minimum population without double counting individuals across all survey locations.



The added roost count total is considered a *minimum* population because some roosts are unknown or not counted. This is also why SwiftWatchers across Canada are always on the lookout for new potential Chimney Swift roosts – the more known roosts that are counted, the better our population estimate will be.

In 2022, the national roost monitoring dates for Chimney Swift roosts are **May 21 (optional), May 25, May 29, June 2, and June 6**. Volunteers and surveyors are always encouraged to do additional surveys before, after, and between these dates, but **ensuring surveys are done on these dates is key to successful national monitoring**. If you are signed up to survey a roost and are unable to survey on one of these dates, please let us know so that we can help find someone to cover the survey.

We are keen to find new roost sites around the Maritimes, so please contact us if you ever notice swifts entering a chimney and are unsure if it is a known site. We also encourage volunteers to help detect nesting sites – **if you see Chimney Swifts entering a chimney during the daytime, let us know!** Regular monitoring of nest sites is valuable to help us understand timing and success of Chimney Swift breeding, and we also want to make sure we have records of nesting locations for conservation planning purposes.

Once you have conducted your SwiftWatch surveys, it is easiest to enter your data online through our NatureCounts Swifts and Swallows website (<https://www.birdscanada.org/birdmon/ai/main.jsp>). You can also find blank survey forms on NatureCounts or on the SwiftWatch website (<https://www.birdscanada.org/bird-science/swiftwatch/>) and can email/mail us completed forms using the contact information on the final page.

Please don't hesitate to get in contact with us if you have any questions!

## Swifts By the Numbers –2021

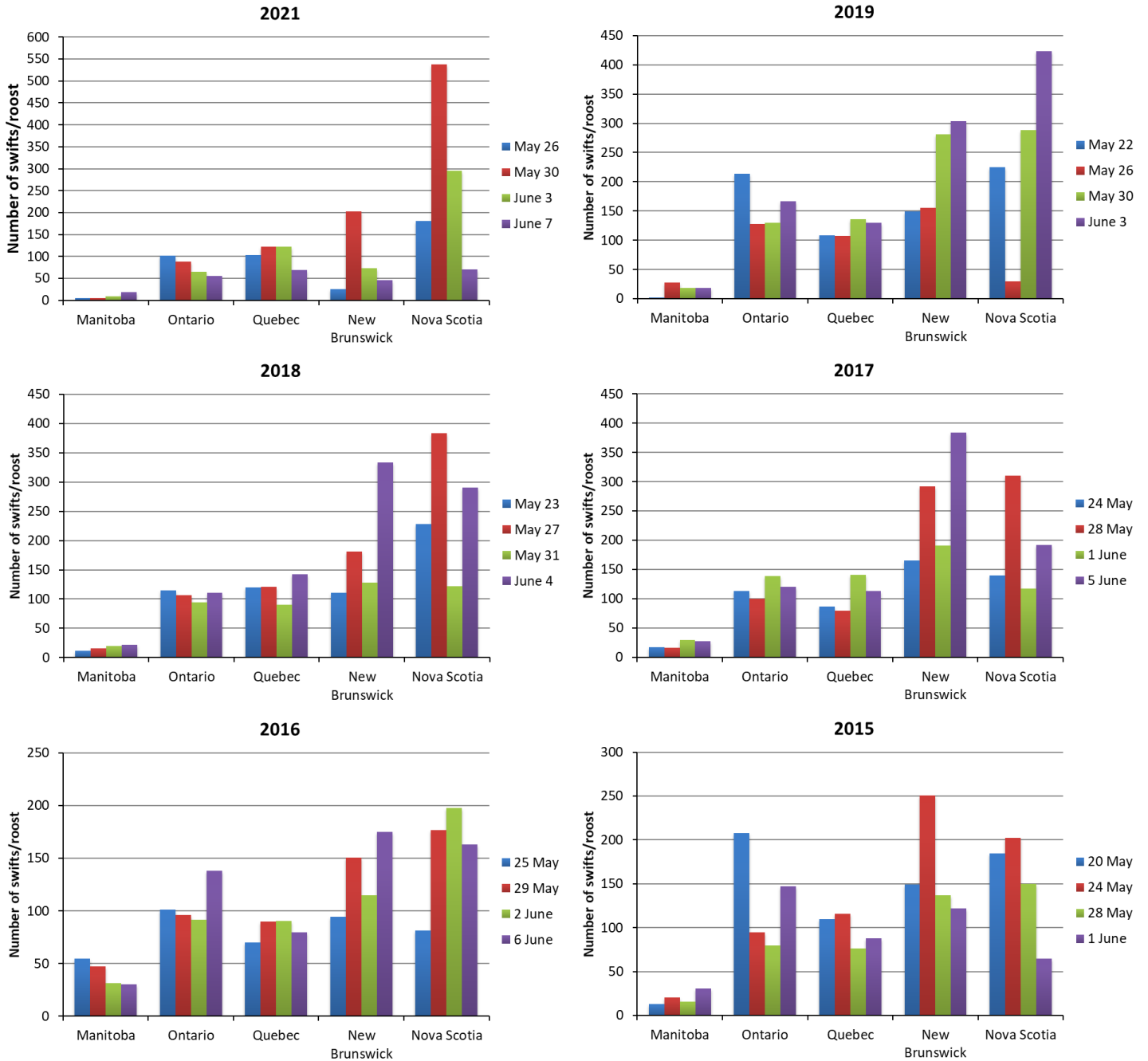
### National Roost Monitoring Data

The number of surveyed roosts was 88 of 137 known sites in 2021 - more known sites than past years but slightly lower percentage counted due to continuing pandemic limitations (see Figure 2 for 2015-2021 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 2021, volunteers in Manitoba, Ontario, Quebec, New Brunswick and Nova Scotia counted a combined total of 11,974 swifts on May 30 which was the highest count day for each province except Manitoba.

2021 Chimney Swift Roost Survey Results	May 26			May 30		
	No. of swifts	No. of surveyed roosts / known roosts	Mean no. of swifts/roost	No. of swifts	No. of surveyed roosts / known roosts	Mean no. of swifts/roost
Manitoba	62	11/16	6	60	12/16	5
Ontario	1523	15/46	102	1581	18/46	88
Quebec	4935	48/51	103	5762	47/51	123
New Brunswick	101	4/11	25	808	4/11	202
Nova Scotia	1452	8/13	182	3763	7/13	538
Canada	8073	86/137	94	11974	88/137	136
2021 Chimney Swift Roost Survey Results	June 3			June 7		
	No. of swifts	No. of surveyed roosts / known roosts	Mean no. of swifts/roost	No. of swifts	No. of surveyed roosts / known roosts	Mean no. of swifts/roost
Manitoba	131	14/16	9	184	10/16	18
Ontario	1107	17/46	65	892	16/46	56
Quebec	5595	46/51	122	3186	46/51	69
New Brunswick	291	4/11	73	138	3/11	46
Nova Scotia	2065	7/13	295	635	9/13	71
Canada	9189	88/137	104	5035	84/137	60

Table 1: 2021 results from all five Canadian National Roost Monitoring provinces including total number of swifts, number of surveyed roosts out of the number of known roosts, and the mean number of swifts per roost for each count date.



Data source: Birds Canada, Manitoba Chimney Swift Initiative, Environment and Climate Change Canada, Canadian Wildlife Service.  
 Data cannot be published without the agreement of the above three organizations involved in data collection.  
 The Chimney Swift Roost Survey was not conducted in 2020 due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

<https://www.mbcchimneyswift.com/>, [marswifts@birdscanada.org](mailto:marswifts@birdscanada.org), [ontarioswiftwatch@birdscanada.org](mailto:ontarioswiftwatch@birdscanada.org)

Data compiled by the Canadian Wildlife Service, Quebec Region, November 24, 2021

Figure 2: Summary tables of National Roost Monitoring in Canada for past six years (2015-2021).

**Maritimes SwiftWatch Results**

Monitoring data continues to demonstrate the importance of individual roost sites to the owners and managers of these structures and the surrounding communities. Birds Canada is using this important roost monitoring data to bring municipalities into the conservation of Chimney Swifts by encouraging them to use



our database, add Chimney Swifts to municipal planning processes, and increase awareness with property owners and developers.

In general, 2021 swift counts and averages across New Brunswick and Nova Scotia were lower than in 2019. This is likely partly a result of fewer volunteers able to participate due to the continued impact of Covid-19. Another year of (hopefully) more thorough monitoring will help us understand how swift populations in individual roosts are doing. We also hope to increase the number of roosts we are able to survey and keep documenting and monitoring new roosts.

Site	Building Type	22-May	26-May	30-May	3-Jun	7-Jun
Allardville	Church	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a
Bathurst	Commercial (former post office)	78	0	412	0	122
Edmundston	Church	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a
Fredericton	Commercial building	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a
Hampton	Office (former post office)	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a
Plaster Rock	School	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a
Riverside-Albert	House	n/a	1	n/a	n/a	n/a
Sainte-Anne-de-Madawaska (main roost)	Church	2	n/a	5	3	5
Sainte-Anne-de-Madawaska (occasional)	School	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a
Saint John (new 2021)	Commercial building	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a
Sussex	Apartment complex	177	18	271	67	11
Woodstock	School	n/a	82	120	221	n/a
Bear River	House	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a
Bridgetown	Freestanding roost tower	n/a	161	1111	84	37
Mabou	Church	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a
McGowan Lake	Unused smithy	n/a	243	14	318	137
Middleton	Commercial building	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a
Middleton	School	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a
New Glasgow	Apartments (former school)	6	432	1187	436	187
Shelburne (new 2021)	Commercial building	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	68
St. Bernard	Church	350	435	334	1052	185
Truro	Library (former school)	n/a	28	141	65	21
Upper Falmouth	House	240	11	166	n/a	0
Wolfville (Robie Tufts Nature Centre)	Freestanding chimney	n/a	2	n/a	0	0
Wolfville (University Hall)	Institutional building	n/a	140	810	110	0
<b>TOTAL</b>		<b>853</b>	<b>1553</b>	<b>4571</b>	<b>2356</b>	<b>773</b>

Table 2: Table of roost count numbers in New Brunswick (above blue line) and Nova Scotia (below blue line) in 2021. “n/a” means no count was conducted on this date. If you have data that is not recorded in this table, please let us know!



## A Swift Summer: Reflections from the Field

By: Kristine Hanifen, Field Technician

If you are a SwiftWatch Volunteer or Property Steward in Nova Scotia, then you've likely spoken to me in-person, over-the-phone, or by email! After communicating with volunteers and helping to coordinate survey efforts in the spring, I surveyed swift and swallow nesting sites across Nova Scotia all summer. This allowed me to visit many beautiful communities I had never been to before, as well as meet many kind landowners who are our much-appreciated Chimney Swift and swallow property stewards. During each visit, I was made to feel very welcomed – whether through genuine kindness, high interest and enthusiasm for the birds living on their property, or great hospitality (offering comfortable seating, snacks, and water while I observed their chimneys for nesting activity). So, I would like to send a heartfelt “thank you” to all of you; you have made this part of my job much easier!



Barn nesting Chimney Swift. Photos by K. Hanifen

Through roost and nest surveys, I saw a lot of chimney swift activity this summer. It was rewarding and encouraging to see so many nesting pairs making trips in and out of chimneys, small groups foraging together in the sky, and large flocks funneling into roosts in the evenings. It was also very exciting to discover a couple of new-to-us nesting sites! One of these discoveries occurred while I was visiting a friend in the Wolfville area. As I was about to leave her place, I heard the chittering call of chimney swifts above my head. When I looked up, I saw two enter the chimney of the house! I was thrilled to have witnessed this, and while I wasn't working on this day, I was always prepared with my clipboard, forms, notebook, and chimney swift pamphlets in my car. My friend, the property owner, and I had a great chat about chimney swifts, the dangers they face, the importance of locating and monitoring roosting and nesting sites, and the conservation work done by Birds Canada. This led to a new landowner relationship, as well as a new, proud chimney swift property steward!

It has been wonderful to share the marvels of swifts and swallows with so many people this summer, and to meet so many folks who care about birds and species at risk. After over a year of Covid-19 lockdowns and isolations, it was nice to casually (and safely) engage with the public and with landowners and talk birds and conservation. Thanks again to all our volunteers and property stewards!

Sincerely, Kristine Hanifen



Photo by Bill Hubick ([www.billhubick.com](http://www.billhubick.com))



**BIRDS CANADA**

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



Kespukwitk's SAR Program

Pictou Co. Naturalist Club



**Maritimes SwiftWatch supporters:**

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**TD Friends of the Environment Foundation**

**Graham and Susan Smith**

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.



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