**IMPORTANT OBSERVATIONS WHEN MONITORING**

**FOR NESTING CHIMNEY SWIFTS**

Things you may note during your observation time that could signify breeding/nesting:

1. **Flight Patterns**
2. **Entering Tower during daylight hours**
3. **Vocals**

**Flight patterns**

Aerial courtship is depicted as synchronous flying-one bird behind the other. They fly at an ever increasing speed, twisting and turning matched identically and instantaneously. Exuberant chattering vocalizations accompany the flights. After these manic maneuvers, they will slow to a graceful glide; the trailing bird will snap its wings up into a **“V” position** while continuing to soar. The bond is secured when the leading bird responds with a matching “V” as they sail on, chattering excitedly to each other.

Additional swifts may join in the chase. It may be a rivalry for a mate or be in-flight training for a younger bird in the finer arts of courtship.

Adult swifts will defend their nest from intruders: **wing clap** and even physical removal of the intruder.

Once eggs hatch, other Chimney Swifts may go by the chimney and **chipper and look inside** but will not enter during daylight hours.

Once an entire brood has fledged, they will fly with parents in **slow noisy parades** around the nest site.

**Entering tower during daylight hours**

Swifts regularly spend their entire day in the air and only enter the chimney at night to roost. If daylight chimney entrances are noted it is a good indicator that nest building or feeding of young is occurring.

Nest building: The nest is built by both parents using small dead twigs or pine needles snapped off from the tree inflight with their feet and then carried by their bills. Materials are glued to the inside of the tower with the swift’s saliva. An average nest contains about 265 individual pieces. A pair will collect and glue between 8 and 12 sticks per day. In approximately 7 days, the receptacle will accommodate an egg. Even though the nest is far from complete at the time, the female lays an egg. Nest building continues, and the female lays one egg every other day. Incubation begins as soon as the next to last egg is laid Throughout the 18 to 21 days of incubation the pair will continue to add sticks to their nest. Once an egg is hatched, no more sticks are added to the nest and parents now concentrate on bringing insects to feed the young. Remaining eggs hatch about every 8 hours.

Feeding young: Feeding by both parents on average every 30 minutes until young are 7 days old then hourly thereafter. Chimney Swift will eat more than 1,000 mosquito-sized insects each day.

Fledged young: The young will return frequently to the roost during the first few days.

**Vocals:**

Adults: a sharp, rapid “tick-tick-tick” or bright “chippering” sound. They utter a gentle "chippering" as they socialize with one another in the roost during nest-building and at night.

Young feeding call: a loud, high-pitched “gim-me, gim-me, gim-me” as they beg for food.

Young alarm call: a winding or whirring “raah, raah, raah” which is mechanical hissing sound they make when disturbed or frightened

**IN ADDITION, YOU MAY WITNESS THE CHIMNEY SWIFTS DISCOVERING A NEW TOWER:**

When a new tower is first discovered by a swift, the bird will utter very loud, continuous excited chippering while inspecting the structure. Beginning at the top of the tower, the swift will make passes from every conceivable angle, stall over the top, and peer inside. It will then make flybys lower and lower until skimming a mere two feet from the ground, still vocalizing and approaching each side of the structure from different directions. Following the exterior inspection, the bird will circle above the tower, raise its wings, and disappear inside. The tower will be inspected, approved, and claimed in less than five frenetic minutes!

Remarkably this behavior is usually displayed only once. As soon as a tower has been discovered it enters into the “neighborhood registry.” Occupants will change over the years, but the excited display of the original discovery may never be repeated.

Information printed in these handouts was summarized from “Chimney Swifts-America’s Mysterious Birds above the Fireplace” by Paul & Georgean Kyle and from the Chimney Swift Handout PDF located at http://www.chimneyswifts.org

The Kyle’s knowledge about Chimney Swifts comes from 20 years and countless hours of observation (nest camera) as well as hand rearing and rehabilitating injured swifts.