

# 2026 Manitoba Chimney Swift Initiative Monitoring Protocol

## GENERAL INFORMATION

### **Why do we monitor?**

The purpose of our monitoring program is to collect data on Chimney Swifts in Manitoba. Monitoring provides a variety of valuable information, including but not limited to:

- where swift habitat is located in Manitoba
- which chimneys are being used as roost sites and/or nest sites
- how many swifts are using these sites
- how swift numbers vary from year to year
- the timing of swift migration and reproduction in Manitoba

The MCSI-collected data is shared with the Province of Manitoba's Conservation Data Centre, as well as with biologists at Environment and Climate Change Canada. With this data, we are able to reach out to the managers of buildings in which the swifts roost and nest in order to promote protection and support recovery efforts.

### **Where to monitor?**

There are chimneys to monitor in communities across southern Manitoba and north to The Pas. Volunteers can choose to monitor the same site multiple times, or visit different sites throughout the season. Both approaches are helpful.

Check out our new interactive chimney map! This [map](#) shows the locations of chimneys known to be used by swifts across the province, monitoring results from 2022-2025, as well as suggested viewing locations for each chimney. If there's a chimney near you that you'd like to monitor, let us know!

If you live in a community without any previously confirmed swift chimneys, let us know and we can give you instructions on how to look for (and hopefully discover) new sites. See [Communities with Chimney Swifts](#) for a list of communities with known sites and a list of communities without known sites (but with possible Chimney Swift presence).

To be matched with a site (or multiple sites) in your preferred area, please contact the MCSI coordinator (email: [mbchimneyswift@gmail.com](mailto:mbchimneyswift@gmail.com), phone: 204-943-9029).

### **When to monitor?**

May to early June (arrival): As Chimney Swifts begin to arrive in Manitoba during spring migration, roosting hour monitoring sessions are best. Groups of swifts will be spending

the night in communal roost chimneys on their way to their summer chimneys. Some breeding Chimney Swifts may return to their nest sites early and use these sites as roosts only, until they begin to also use them for nesting (beginning with nest building) in late May. **This year, the National Roost Monitoring Protocol (NRMP) dates are May 20, May 24, May 28, June 1.** In case of poor weather, the rain day will be the following day. If you are available to monitor a chimney on any of these evenings, please let us know. The data that we collect on these evenings will be included in a national roost monitoring database.

Early June to mid-August (nesting season): Once Chimney Swifts have begun to nest, both daytime or roosting hour monitoring sessions are appropriate depending on the chimney. Nesting swifts will be entering and exiting nesting chimneys throughout the day, and will enter the chimney for the night during the roosting hour. Non-breeding swifts will also be entering their roost chimneys every night, though the groups are usually smaller than earlier in the season during spring migration, when swifts haven't dispersed yet.

Mid-August to early September: As the nesting season wraps up and daytime chimney use winds down, roosting hour monitoring sessions are best. As the swifts prepare to head south for the winter, they may once again spend the night in communal roost chimneys.

We will be holding monitoring 'blitzes' throughout the season. The goal of these scheduled blitzes is to monitor as many sites as possible on a given night and get a snapshot of what is happening at different sites at different points throughout the nesting season. You can monitor your "usual site" if you have one, and/or we can match you up with a different site to monitor for the evening.

Our monitoring blitzes will be on:

- Wednesday, June 17, 2026
- Wednesday, July 15, 2026
- Wednesday, August 12, 2026

### **Frequency**

Volunteers can choose the time commitment that works for them. Whether you are only able to monitor once, a few times, or regularly throughout the season, you will be contributing to Chimney Swift conservation. The more data the better, but **any data is better than no data!** Even one-time site visits are worthwhile and valuable. The MCSI coordinator can help match you with a site based on your availability and desired time commitment.

## **Volunteer sign-up form**

All volunteers must fill out our 2026 volunteer form. You can find the form by clicking [here](#), or visiting the following link:

<https://docs.google.com/forms/d/e/1FAIpQLSfRHcAI2bjFEAFB8DA2SKmQ9o8XdueANES4kFtO7d41clyxyg/viewform?usp=header>

## **MONITORING INSTRUCTIONS**

### **Overview**

The main goal of a monitoring session is to record the number of entries and exits by Chimney Swifts at a specific chimney (and what time each entry and exit event occurred). This information is recorded on a datasheet ('MCSI Chimney-Side Monitoring Datasheet 2026'). See the [Instructions for filling out a datasheet](#) section for more information.

### **Timing and duration**

For roosting hour monitoring, begin monitoring 30 mins (or more) before local sunset time and monitor until 30 mins after local sunset (60 mins or more total). If the weather is cold or rainy, it is best to begin the monitoring session earlier (e.g., 60 minutes before sunset) to reduce the likelihood of missing the swifts (they may enter the chimney for the night earlier than usual to seek shelter from the weather). If the chimney you are monitoring is also a known or likely nest site, beginning the monitoring session early (e.g., 45-60 minutes before sunset) is helpful for getting a glimpse of any nesting activity before they enter the chimney for the night.

For daytime nest monitoring, monitor the chimney for a period of 60 minutes (or more). For all other monitoring, please make sure to note the start time, end time, and duration (in minutes).

### **Equipment needed:**

- Printed datasheet(s), pen/pencil, clipboard
- Watch (or other way to tell the exact time)
- MCSI volunteer lanyard (contact us to receive one)
- Phone (for communication in case of emergency)
- If needed: Lawn chair, clothing layers, rain gear, water, snacks, bug spray, bug net, sunscreen, binoculars

## **Safety**

Safety is always the number one priority. Always remain aware of your surroundings and bring a phone in case of emergency. Let someone know when and where you will be monitoring. Even better – bring a buddy! If you ever feel unsafe, for any reason, please stop monitoring and leave the area.

## **Tips**

- Set up in a spot that is **public** (avoid trespassing) and that offers a clear view of the chimney. We can provide details on the best vantage point for your site. Monitoring from inside a vehicle is an option as well if that is more comfortable for you.
- If you would like Chimney Swift factsheets to hand out to curious passersby, send us an email.
- If you can, take photos of the site you are monitoring so that we can add them to our photo database of swift sites in Manitoba. Try to take one close-up photo of the chimney (to show the chimney's condition and if it might need repairs), and one photo of the chimney from your monitoring location (to show the view from the best vantage point). Please specify the name of the photographer, the date the photograph was taken, and the name and address of the site that was photographed.
- When the number of swifts at a roost is high, it may be very useful to film the birds entering the chimney with a video camera. Then it is possible to count the swifts by watching the film sequence in slow motion.
- Don't take your eye off that chimney! It is very easy to miss an entry or exit, which will impact the estimate of numbers of swifts in the chimney at one time. Monitoring with a buddy can be helpful as you can take turns watching the chimney rim.

## **SUBMITTING YOUR MONITORING DATASHEETS**

We request that participants send their data to the MCSI Monitoring Coordinator in a timely fashion so that updates can be sent out to all participants.

[Datashets](#) may be filled out either electronically or manually (please photograph or scan handwritten datasheets) and emailed to: **mbchimneyswift@gmail.com**. Alternatively, handwritten datasheets can be mailed to: Mackenzie Glover, MCSI Coordinator, Nature Manitoba, 401 - 63 Albert Street, Winnipeg, MB R3B 1G4.

MCSI is always interested in receiving reports of new Chimney Swift sites and opportunistic observations. Tell us about any Chimney Swifts you see in 2026.

### **CONTACT INFORMATION**

If you have any questions or comments, please don't hesitate to contact us.

**Contact us:**

Email: [mbchimneyswift@gmail.com](mailto:mbchimneyswift@gmail.com)

Phone: (204) 943-9029

Website: [www.mbchimneyswift.com](http://www.mbchimneyswift.com)

Instagram: @mbchimneyswift

Address: 401 - 63 Albert Street, Winnipeg, MB R3B 1G4.

**As our project is built upon the foundation of volunteers, the MCSI Steering Committee thanks you for your generous contribution of time and support!**

### **INSTRUCTIONS FOR FILLING OUT THE DATASHEET**

The datasheet can be found on the '[Resources and Links](#)' page of our website. If you need us to send you some printed copies of the datasheet, let us know.

**Date:** Write down the date on which your monitoring session takes place.

**Location:** If you know the address of your site, write it down. If this is unknown, please write down the approximate location of the site. Please be as precise as possible. For example, I watched "the building on the west side of Banning St., north of Portage Ave behind Shoppers Drug Mart". A photo is very helpful to include especially if you are unsure of the address.

**MCSI Site No.:** Each site is identified with an individual site number. The coordinator will give you the site number for each chimney assigned to you. Our database with MCSI site numbers is posted at:

[https://www.mbchimneyswift.com/Documents/2025\\_data\\_summary.pdf](https://www.mbchimneyswift.com/Documents/2025_data_summary.pdf)

**Time of Observation = Start/End Times:** Write down the start time and end time of your observations.

**Duration of Observation:** Write down the total length of time (minutes) which you observed the site for.

**Daytime or Roosting Hour:** Circle the applicable choice(s). Daytime observations take place any time beyond ½ hour after sunrise until ½ hour before sunset. Roosting hour observations take place from ½ hour before sunset until ½ hour after sunset (the swifts leave the roost within ½ hour of sunrise the next morning). Circle both if the observations include both time frames.

**Sunset Time:** Write down the sunset time for the day of observation. Sunset (and sunrise) times can be found online at <http://www.theweathernetwork.com/> or the bottom of Environment Canada forecast pages [http://weather.gc.ca/forecast/canada/index\\_e.html?id=MB](http://weather.gc.ca/forecast/canada/index_e.html?id=MB), and on the weather page of newspapers.

**Start Temperature:** Indicate the temperature at the beginning of the observation period. You can find this information online at <http://www.theweathernetwork.com/> or [http://weather.gc.ca/forecast/canada/index\\_e.html?id=MB](http://weather.gc.ca/forecast/canada/index_e.html?id=MB), or use your vehicle's temperature gauge. Temperature is one of the most important factors influencing Chimney Swift activity. Flying insects are not abundant in the air at temperatures less than 13°C which makes feeding difficult for the swifts. We need to learn more about temperature related Chimney Swift activity, so please try your best to fill this information in as accurately as possible on the datasheet.

**Name of Observer(s):** Write down the names of all observers present.

**Contact Information:** Write down the email address or phone number of one of the observers present.

**Time – Entry (↓) or Exit (↑) – No. of CHSW:** Write down the time when a Chimney Swift(s) enters or exits the chimney (e.g., 20:45). Record the time for each entry or exit event. Please use 24hr format or specify if the time is AM or PM.

**Entry or Exit:** If you observe a swift(s) entering the chimney, mark an arrow pointing down (↓) If you see a swift(s) exiting the chimney, mark an arrow pointing up (↑).

**No. of CHSW:** Record the total number of Chimney Swifts which you saw during the entry or exit event.

**Comments:** If you observe anything that you feel is worth noting while monitoring your site, please enter this in the comments section. Even if you do not observe swifts entering your site, you may notice something that could potentially influence their presence or absence. For example, a rock dove (pigeon) walking on a chimney rim, or nearby construction, may discourage a Chimney Swift entry at the time of your observation.

**Total Entries:** Count the total number of Chimney Swifts that entered the chimney.

**Total Exits:** Count the total number of Chimney Swifts that exited the chimney.

**Max. in Chimney:** The maximum number of Chimney Swifts in the site is determined by the total entries and total exits, adjusted for the sequence of events. Consider two different sequences which both involve 5 entries and 2 exits. For sequence A, which starts with 1 exit followed by 4 entries, 1 exit, and 1 entry, the maximum in the chimney = 4. For sequence B, which starts with 2 entries followed by 2 exits, 1 entry, and 2 entries, the maximum in the chimney = 3. No worries - we can calculate this value for you as long as you provide all the details of "TIME – ENTRY (↓) OR EXIT (↑) – NO. OF CHSW".

**Max. Accounted For (In Air + In Chimney):** The max number of swifts accounted for at one time represents the total number of swifts counted at once (including in the chimney and in the air). For example, if 3 swifts entered the chimney (and have not exited) and meanwhile there are 5 swifts flying overhead, the number of swifts accounted for in that moment would be 8 swifts (3 in chimney + 5 in air). Please note that it is very important to keep monitoring the chimney rim as the priority. If you have an extra set of "eyes" helping, you can do your best to count the swifts in the sky.

**Wind (Beaufort Scale; provided on datasheet):** Use the Beaufort Scale to estimate wind speed at the beginning of your observations.

**Cloud Cover:** Look up at the sky and estimate the percentage covered by clouds. Use the cloud cover scale at the bottom of the datasheet to indicate the range your estimate falls within.

**Precipitation:** Indicate the conditions at the start of your monitoring session: None, Occasional, Light Rain, Heavy Rain, Thundershower, or Other (specify).

Make a note if weather conditions change appreciably during your monitoring session.

### **COMMUNITIES WITH CHIMNEY SWIFTS**

#### **Communities with known Chimney Swift sites**

- |                |                      |
|----------------|----------------------|
| -Brandon       | -Pilot Mound         |
| -Carman        | -Portage la Prairie  |
| -Clearwater    | -Selkirk             |
| -Darlingford   | -Souris              |
| -Dauphin       | -Southport           |
| -Dominion City | -St Adolphe          |
| -Eriksdale     | -St Francois Xavier  |
| -Hartney       | -Saint Jean Baptiste |
| -La Broquerie  | -St. Andrews         |
| -La Salle      | -St Agathe           |
| -Lac du Bonnet | -Steinbach           |
| -Lockport      | -Stonewall           |
| -Melita        | -Swan River          |
| -Miami         | -The Pas             |
| -Morden        | -Wasagaming          |
| -Neepawa       | -Winnipeg            |
| -Otterburne    |                      |

#### **Communities with Chimney Swift sightings but no known site**

- |             |                       |
|-------------|-----------------------|
| -Aubigny    | -Manitou              |
| -Baldur     | -Morris               |
| -Birtle     | -Pierson              |
| -Boissevain | -Pinawa               |
| -Emerson    | -Pine Falls/Powerview |
| -Erickson   | -Starbuck             |
| -Deloraine  | -Ste Anne             |
| -Killarney  | -St-Pierre-Jolys      |
| -Lorette    | -Vita                 |
| -Lyleton    | -Whitewater           |