

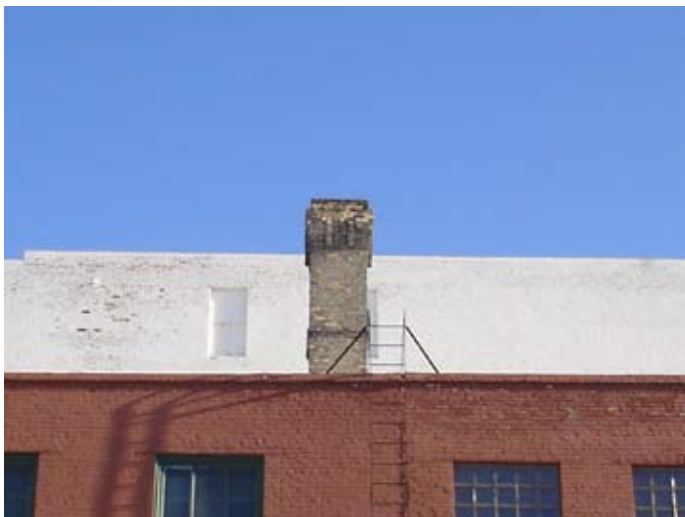
# Manitoba Chimney Swift Initiative

*Mike Quigley*

In the November issue of the MNS *Bulletin*, an article appeared about the declining population of the Chimney Swift (*Chaetura pelagica*) and plans by MNS members to work toward its recovery in Manitoba. Since that time, funding has been received from the provincial government's Sustainable Development Innovations Fund (SDIF) and a part-time Manitoba Chimney Swift Initiative (MCSI) Coordinator has been hired.

In addition to the Coordinator's position, funding from SDIF is also contingent upon having a significant volunteer component to assist with Chimney Swift monitoring during their brief breeding season here in Manitoba. To guide the project and assist with the many tasks and details to ensure its success, an MCSI Steering Committee has been formed with representation from MNS members, municipal, provincial, and federal governments.

The decline of this species has largely been attributed to the loss of its traditional breeding and roosting habitat – old brick chimneys (see photo below) constructed prior to the 1960s. Since 1968, the Canadian population has suffered a 95% reduction and it has been estimated that traditional breeding and roosting sites will be virtually non-existent within 30 years from now. The species is currently being reviewed by the Committee on the Status of Endangered Wildlife in Canada (COSEWIC) and will likely be designated as a species-at-risk.



*Brick Chimney.  
Photo: Mike  
Quigley.*

## **Phase 1: Monitoring**

As we have very little data in Manitoba, the Steering Committee has been actively searching out and identifying potential nesting and roosting sites in Winnipeg to monitor during the breeding and post-breeding season (late May to early September) and will be looking at doing the same for urban and rural sites located outside of the City. This information will help us obtain a better estimate of the Manitoba population and provide baseline data for future monitoring.

## **Phase 2: Building and Placement of Nesting and Roosting Towers**

In addition to acquiring a better understanding of the Manitoba population, the data gathered from the monitoring component will be used to identify suitable sites to place nesting and roosting towers. The towers (see photo opposite) mimic a traditional chimney and have met with great success in places such as Texas where numerous ones have been built. As Chimney Swift pairs are monogamous, mate for life, and return to the exact same breeding site each year, an occupied tower will be used for many years. Nesting sites can also become roosting sites later in the season for dozens, and sometimes hundreds, of newly fledged juveniles, adults, and migrants.

## **Get Involved!**

Volunteers are needed to monitor nesting and roosting sites and help us compile the above critical information. This will consist of being assigned to a site with a chimney and monitoring it for one hour (one half hour before and one half hour after sunset) at least once per week and counting the number of swifts entering the nest/roost. All you need is a lawn chair, pair of binoculars, and love of nature!



*Nesting/Roosting Tower. Photo:  
Paul and Georgan Kyle,  
Driftwood Wildlife Association.*

We will start the monitoring during the latter half of May and continuing until the beginning of September. Even if you can only commit to one week, we need as many volunteers as we can to make this project successful.

Volunteers do not need to possess any prior birding experience to monitor sites, and assistance with identification can be offered at any time.

Please contact Mike Quigley (MCSI Coordinator – [mikequigley@winnipeg.ca](mailto:mikequigley@winnipeg.ca)) or by phone (MNS office) 943-9029 or (w) 986-7234) if you, or someone you know, would like to participate with this very important project.