

<b>Species</b>	<b>#'s</b>	<b>Date</b>	<b>Location</b>	<b>Observers</b>
Varied Thrush	1	Jan 16 13	Ninette	M. Hokanson
Bohemian Waxwing	1,000	Jan 1 13	Winnipeg	D. Dodgson, G. Budyk
Bohemian Waxwing	600	Mar 18 13	Winnipeg	R. Parsons
Cedar Waxwing	1	Jan 6 13	Winnipeg	G. Budyk
Cedar Waxwing	1	Feb 3 13	Winnipeg	R. Iverson
Eastern Towhee	1	Feb 6 13	MacGregor	D. Gamache
American Tree Sparrow	1	Nov 30 12	Eden	R. Demey
Chipping Sparrow	1	Jan 9 13	Winnipeg	R. Wiebe
Fox Sparrow	1	Dec 12 12	Winnipeg	G. Budyk
White-throated Sparrow	3	Dec 1 12	Winnipeg	C. Artuso
White-throated Sparrow	1	Dec 11 12	Winnipeg	G. Budyk
White-throated Sparrow	1	Dec 23 12	Garson	G. & C. Machnee
White-throated Sparrow	1	Feb 1 13	Dufresne	B. Krosney
White-throated Sparrow	1	Jan 1 13	Steinbach	V. & R. Reimer
White-throated Sparrow	2	Jan 28 13	Winnipeg	G. Budyk
Harris's Sparrow	1	Dec 1 12	Gimli	D. Martin
Harris's Sparrow	1	Dec 12 12	Stonewall	D. Oakford
Harris's Sparrow	1	Dec 23 12	Garson	G. & C. Machnee
Harris's Sparrow	1	Mar 13 13	Winnipeg	G. Budyk
White-crowned Sparrow	1	Dec 6 12	Gimli	D. Martin
Dark-eyed Junco	1	Dec 31 12	Starbuck	C. Penner
Dark-eyed Junco	6	Jan 28 13	Winnipeg	D. Dodgson, G. Budyk
Northern Cardinal	1	Dec 18 12	Garson	N. Butchard, A. Mickey
Northern Cardinal	1	Dec 19 12	Winnipeg	R. Staniforth
Northern Cardinal	1	Dec 31 12	Winnipeg	F. Zdrill
Northern Cardinal	2	Jan 28 13	Winnipeg	R. Koes
Northern Cardinal	1	Mar 28 13	Winnipeg	C. Salki
Indigo Bunting	1	Dec 3 12	Gimli	D. Martin
Western Meadowlark	1	Mar 28 13	Windygates	L. Braun
Rusty Blackbird	1	Jan 18 13	Kleefeld	H. Lane
Common Grackle	1	Dec 1 12	Portage la Prairie	C. Roy
Common Grackle	1	Dec 1 12	Winnipeg	G. Walz
Common Grackle	1	Jan 1 13	Breezy Point	N. Butchard
Common Grackle	1	Jan 18 13	Silver Falls	V. & G. Reimer
Common Redpoll	2,300	Jan 6 13	The Pas	J. Kayer

Mike Veltri



**A Chimney Swift**  
*(Chaetura pelagica)*

## The Manitoba Chimney Swift Initiative: A Swift Look at 2012 and 2013

by Frank Machovec, Nature Manitoba member & Project Coordinator

The Manitoba Chimney Swift Initiative (MCSI) has undertaken a variety of projects to address the decline in Chimney Swift populations in Manitoba. Activities of the MCSI include the identification and monitoring of nest and roost sites, the construction of artificial towers for swifts, and outreach; such as the production of brochures, guidelines, reports, and forms. Since 2007 the MCSI has received support from several grants, and the project has received significant contributions from volunteers. The project has a web site ([www.mbchimneyswift.ca](http://www.mbchimneyswift.ca)), a blog ([swift-notes.blogspot.ca](http://swift-notes.blogspot.ca)), and a page in the "birding" section of the Nature Manitoba website.

The Chimney Swift (*Chaetura pelagica*), is a small, agile, swallow-like, sooty-colored bird with long pointed wings. They have been likened to a "flying cigar" with a short tail tipped with spines. Chimney Swifts feed exclusively on insects caught while in flight, and the birds return to their nest or roost sites for the night. Using their own saliva and twigs, adults construct a cup-shaped nest inside unlined and uncapped chimneys. The female lays 2 to 7 eggs that hatch in 18-21 days. The young fledge when they are 30 days old. Our Manitoba swifts arrive in mid-May and depart for South American wintering sites by September.

The Chimney Swift is listed as a threatened species by The Committee on the Status of Endangered Wildlife in Canada (COSEWIC) and the Manitoba Endan-



## Great Bird Search 2013

Saturday, June 1st

For more information, or to have pledge sheets mailed to you, please call the Nature Manitoba office at 204-943-9029 or email [info@naturemanitoba.ca](mailto:info@naturemanitoba.ca).

gered Species Act. A threatened species is one that is likely to become endangered due to low or declining numbers, if the factors affecting it do not improve.

2012 proved to be a challenging year for the MCSI in terms of volunteer effort, success with grant requests, and with the observation of swifts themselves. Approximately twenty-five volunteers submitted extensive monitoring reports, but, at a number of sites, few observations were made this season. On the positive side, we did recruit some new volunteers in smaller communities with active chimneys, and we retained a core group of committed volunteers. In 2012 the project also received a few “casual” reports that suggest new locations for monitoring, both in Winnipeg and in outlying areas. A few previously unknown and active sites were also identified and monitored in 2012.

Highlights for the 2012 season include:

- » 25 sites monitored in Winnipeg – 15 active sites;
- » 28 sites monitored outside of Winnipeg – 25 active sites;
- » 6 artificial towers checked – none used by swifts;
- » 19 casual reports received (from Souris, Steinbach, The Pas, Wasagaming, Winkler and Winnipeg);
- » 6 “new” active chimneys identified in Lorette, Otterburne (3) and Clearwater (2);
- » receipt of a grant from the Endangered Species and Biodiversity Fund.

Because of the limited number of reports in 2012, it is difficult to draw reliable conclusions about overall success at nest sites. It appears that a number of usually active Winnipeg sites have been abandoned (possibly due to declining insect populations or climatic factors), but reports from a variety of other areas suggest “business as usual” from visiting swifts. Based on monitoring reports, we had successful breeding in Winnipeg (sites in St. James, Fort Garry, Lord Roberts, and Saint Boniface), Portage la Prairie, St. Adolphe, Carman, La Broquerie, Clearwater and Brandon.

As for our roost sites in Selkirk, Carman, and Dauphin, monitoring results for 2012 are mixed. Dauphin numbers were up from last year, Selkirk numbers were stable, and Carman results were diminished.

Detailed monitoring results and lists of sites checked may be viewed in the Results section of the MCSI website.

St. Adolphe has been called “the Chimney Swift Capital of Manitoba” and deserves special mention due to its unique cluster of five active chimneys in a small area and a very dedicated group of observers and analysts. It is also the site of one of our artificial towers. Due to the vigilance of the monitors, our project has excellent data on swift behaviour and breeding success in that community. Annual reports since 2009 are available on the Resources page of our website. The St. Adolphe reports are particularly valuable since they utilize data from many nights of simultaneous monitoring of all nest sites, and include inspection of chimney clean-outs to document presence of nests, egg shells, etc.

MCSI has constructed five artificial towers (two in Winnipeg, one each in the Starbuck area, Portage la Prairie, and St. Adolphe). 2012 witnessed the erection of a new tower in the La Broquerie area. This “artificial tree,” constructed by a committed volunteer, offered wooden construction and more elevation than our other towers. Unfortunately, this tower, like its brick and cinder block counterparts, was not used by swifts this year. We recently learned that a number of successful towers have been erected in Minnesota, and we will apply lessons learned by our southern neighbours.

Two members of the MCSI steering committee attended a national conference on Chimney Swifts in February. This proved to be a valuable opportunity to exchange information with other Chimney Swift researchers and leaders of other stewardship programs.

MCSI is looking ahead to the next season. Our objectives for 2013 include:

- » continued nest and roost monitoring;
- » recruitment of additional volunteers;
- » investigation of a number of possible “new” sites;
- » encouraging the large number of Breeding Bird Atlassers to check for potential Chimney Swift nest or roost sites in their areas;
- » continuation of outreach activities through our website, blog, displays at public events, and other media;
- » possible erection of a new tower on private land;
- » liaison with other swift groups regarding the design of artificial habitat and best practices for monitoring;
- » maintaining contact with staff at the Selkirk Mental Health Centre (location of a major roost site and two other active chimneys).

The MCSI would like to thank the members of the steering committee and all of our dedicated volunteers.

The MCSI welcomes new volunteers to help with the project. The time commitment is variable, and many potential sites and roles are available throughout

the province. Nature Manitoba members are urged to become involved with this important project.

For more information about the MCSI, please contact Frank Machovec at 204-798-6275 or [mbchimneyswift@gmail.com](mailto:mbchimneyswift@gmail.com), or visit the MCSI’s website at [www.mbchimneyswift.ca](http://www.mbchimneyswift.ca).

