

Notes on Chimney Swift
Presentation:

Saving the Swifts
By Scott Weberpal

Karen talked about how she and Scott had met, when he came to her home and knocked on the door to ask if he might observe migrating ducks from her yard which fronts Trippe Lake. She said he was welcome to view them from her yard any time! She then introduced him to the group telling us that in addition to being an avid birder, Scott also works for the City of Whitewater as our Geographic Information Systems Technician.

Scott shared a very nice program with the group, including videos and print information on Chimney Swifts, who are named for their habit of using urban structures, especially chimneys, as roost and nest sites.

The video that Scott shared showed a very large group of Swifts crowding over a tall chimney at dusk, flying around and around and taking turns entering the chimney to roost for the night. He explained that a group this big would be seen only during migration because, normally, there is only one roosting pair of Swifts per chimney. These birds mate for life, building their nests out of twigs and sticky saliva which are glued to the inside wall of a chimney. Each Swift pair raises their clutch of 2 - 7 young. After 30 days, the chicks leave the nest.

Chimney Swifts resemble bats as they fly at dusk, being “cigar” shaped and instead of perching on their feet like most birds, hold onto the insides of chimneys and rest vertically. They are also similar to bats in that they are insectivores, eating many, many insects as they fly, each consuming around 1,000 insects per day.

Scott then talked to the group about the need for Chimney Swift Towers to replace the diminishing numbers of chimneys available to these birds for nesting and also for shelter during migration. Most modern construction no longer includes the tall old brick chimneys that used to be a standard feature of any structure. Lack of appropriate nesting chimneys for the birds due to existing chimneys often being capped to keep animals out also compounds their habitat shortage.

Scott is working to raise awareness about the plight of these birds. All through the areas inhabited by Chimney Swifts, efforts are being made to raise funds and

organize groups of interested citizens to build and maintain Chimney Swift Towers so that these birds can continue to thrive.

There was to be a program on building Swift Towers on November 2, 2014 at the Horicon Marsh Nature Center, given by the Wisconsin Chimney Swift Working Group.

Brienne Diebolt-Brown of Whitewater Makerspace was in attendance for the presentation and suggested that Makerspace would probably be interested in taking part and suggested maybe having a contest? More discussion will follow at upcoming meetings.

This was a very interesting program and we were *very happy* that Scott came to our meeting to share his vast knowledge about the Chimney Swift with us. Karen will be working on assembling a list of residents who might be interested in pursuing the goal of building and locating towers in and around Whitewater. Thank you Scott!

Article written by Sherry Stanek.