

Chimney Swifts

Chimney swifts are a federally protected migratory bird. Chimney swifts are unable to perch upright but are uniquely adapted to cling and build their nests on vertical surfaces. These birds are dependent on chimneys, abandoned buildings, and stone walls to roost and nest.

What is the common damage caused by chimney swifts? Chimney swifts spend most of their time flying, landing only to roost at night and to build and sit on their nests. Most complaints about chimney swifts are because they have created a nest in a homeowner's chimney.

Can a WDCA write a depredation permit? A federal permit must first be obtained for any migratory bird, unless there is a federal depredation order specifying otherwise. The USDA Wildlife Services facilitates the procurement of federal depredation permits through the US Fish and Wildlife Service in Atlanta, Georgia. A state depredation permit is also required. A WDCA can write this permit once the federal permit is received.

Can chimney swifts be relocated? No, under the Migratory Bird Treaty Act it is illegal to take, possess, import, export, transport, sell, purchase, barter, or offer for sale, purchase, or barter, any migratory bird without a federal permit.

What can I do with sick or injured chimney swifts? There are licensed [rehabilitators](#) across the state that can take in sick or injured birds. Young chimney swifts can climb and preen before their feathers develop. Advise individuals concerned about nestlings to leave them alone for 24 hours before contacting a rehabilitator.

Are there safety concerns? No, however it is good practice to wear gloves when handling any animal.

Non-lethal Options:

- Exclusion
 - Outside of the nesting season, a chimney cap can be placed over the top of the chimney to prevent birds from having future access. A chimney cap cannot be placed if there is an active nest, as excluding the adults will cause the young to die. Most individuals notice a chimney swift's presence when the young begin calling. This generally occurs when the young are around two weeks old. At point, it will only take a few more weeks for the young to fledge and the noise to cease.

Lethal Options:

- A federal permit is always required to remove chimney swifts.
 - The USDA Wildlife Services facilitates the procurement of federal depredation permits through the US Fish and Wildlife Service in Atlanta, Georgia.
 - Active nests (nests with eggs or nestlings) are protected under the Migratory Bird Treaty Act and cannot be removed without a federal permit.
- In addition to the federal permitting, a state depredation permit is required and can be written by a WDCA, wildlife enforcement officer, or district biologist.



Chimney Swift Photo: George L. Armistead