

This resource is based on the following source:

Kale, H. W., II, B. Pranty, B. M. Stith, and C. W. Biggs. 1992. The atlas of the breeding birds of Florida. Final Report. Florida Game and Fresh Water Fish Commission, Tallahassee, Florida.

This resource can be cited as:

Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission. 2003, January 6. Florida's breeding bird atlas: A collaborative study of Florida's birdlife. <http://www.myfwc.com/bba/> (Date accessed mm/dd/yyyy).

Chimney Swift *Chaetura pelagica*

We know the Chimney Swift as a "winged cigar" (Peterson 1980) soaring and fluttering in the sky, and as the twittering voice inside our chimneys. It is a species that has benefited from an expanding human population. Once limited to natural nesting sites such as hollow trees, it now makes extensive use of chimneys and other human-made structures. Swifts spend much of their time in the air, feeding, drinking, gathering nest material, courting, and even copulating while in flight (Tyler 1940).

Chimney Swifts breed over a large area of the United States and southern Canada. Their March arrival is a sign of spring in Florida.

Habitat. In contrast with the huge roosts sometimes formed during migration, only 1 pair of Chimney Swifts builds a nest in a chimney or shaft; 1 or 2 seasonal visitors may share the site and help feed the young (Dexter 1981). The male and female work together to build the half-cup-shaped nest. It is constructed of sticks stuck together and attached to a vertical surface with the birds' saliva. The nest is unlined (Harrison 1978). Usually 4 or 5 unmarked white eggs are laid. The incubation period is 19 to 21 days, and the young are capable of flight at 28 to 30 days of age. However, they may leave the nest after 3 weeks and cling to the wall.

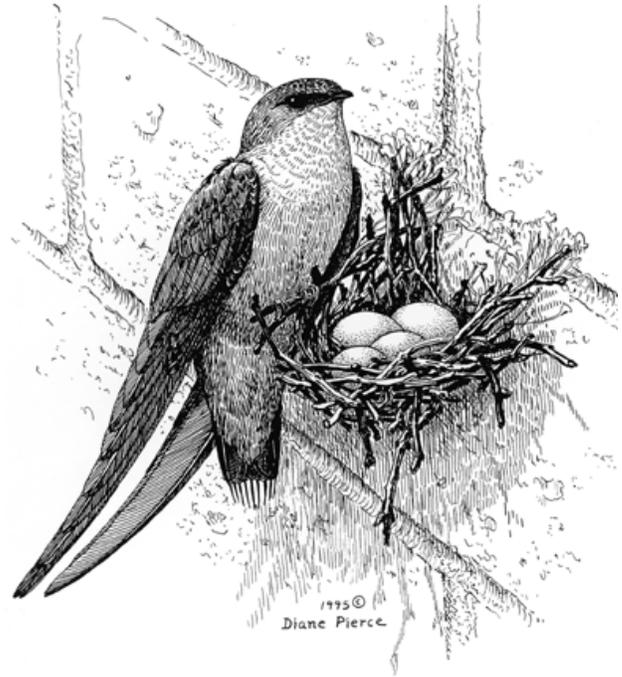


Illustration © 1995 Diane Pierce, All Rights Reserved.

Both parents incubate and care for the young. Nests or nestlings are seldom seen, unless they fall down onto someone's hearth.

Seasonal Occurrence. According to Stevenson and Anderson (1994), Chimney Swifts typically arrive in Florida in late March and remain until mid-October. Egg dates range between 1 June and 13 August.

Status. Breeding Bird Survey data indicate an increase in the Florida population (Cox 1987b); in recent years their range has been expanding southward. Both the increase and range expansion were stimulated by an increase in homes with chimneys or other structures suitable for nesting. Sprunt (1954) considered Chimney Swifts to be uncommon to rare in south Florida, but in the past decade they have been seen with increasing frequency in coastal portions of Palm Beach, Broward, and Dade counties. Furthermore, Atlas data show that Chimney Swifts now breed in all 3 of these counties. A pair has been reported conducting courtship flights over Key Largo (Langridge 1988), but it would be premature (J. Ogden, pers. commun.) to state that swifts are now breeding in the Keys. Nevertheless, it is expected that Chimney Swifts will soon colonize at least the Upper Key

Jane Murray Brooks

Sponsored by Hank T. Bowen

Chimney Swift

