

chimney swift *Chaetura pelagica*

Kingdom: Animalia

Division/Phylum: Chordata

Class: Aves

Order: Apodiformes

Family: Apodidae

ILLINOIS STATUS common, native

FEATURES

The chimney swift averages five to five and one-half inches in length (tail tip to bill tip in preserved specimen). The feathers are gray-black, the wings are long and slightly curved and the bill is short and thin. When flying, it appears that the chimney swift lacks a tail, but it does have a short one. The chimney swift has all four toes pointing forward (with one reversible).

BEHAVIORS

The chimney swift is a common migrant and summer resident throughout Illinois. The flight of this bird is a rapid flapping followed by gliding. It may be heard making loud ticking notes when flying. The breeding season occurs from mid-May through early July. The nest is built in hollow trees, attics, air shafts, barns, silos or chimneys. To make the nest, these birds use their saliva to attach sticks to the walls of whatever location they have chosen. The sticks are obtained in flight by breaking off the tips of dead branches with the feet, then transferring them to the mouth. The male and female construct the nest over a period of three to six days. Two to six, white eggs are laid by the female. Both male and female share incubation duties over the 18- to 21-day incubation period. Fall migration begins in September, and these birds winter in Peru, northern Chile and northern Brazil. The chimney swift feeds on insects, most taken while in flight.

HABITATS

Aquatic Habitats

bottomland forests; marshes; peatlands; rivers and streams; swamps; wet prairies and fens

Woodland Habitats

bottomland forests; coniferous forests; southern Illinois lowlands; upland deciduous forests

Prairie and Edge Habitats

black soil prairie; dolomite prairie; edge; gravel prairie; hill prairie; sand prairie; shrub prairie

© Illinois Department of Natural Resources. 2016. Biodiversity of Illinois.