

Returning Chimney Swifts to the Chimney

Adult Birds

Adult birds that have flown inside can be caught by hand and returned, if uninjured, to the chimney by replacing it on the inside wall of the chimney above the damper and the smoke shelf. Hold the bird to the wall with a hand cupped over its back until it has a firm grasp on the vertical surface. Make certain the damper is closed so they do not fly into the fireplace or house again. If there is no damper or if the damper is not operational, a large piece of foam rubber (do not use fiberglass insulation or fabric) can be wedged up from the fireplace.

Juveniles Feathered and Eyes Open

Juveniles that are completely feathered and have their eyes wide open and have been down for less than 24 hrs can also be returned to the chimney. However, their ability to cling should always be checked before replacing them. Using a yardstick, wrap the end with a piece of paper towel. Secure it to the yardstick with a piece of tape. Place the swiftlet on the papered end of the yardstick. Place the swiftlet above the damper on the inside wall of the fireplace (preferably on the wall where the nest is located). The swift should move from the yardstick to the chimney wall. If he doesn't move quickly, then prop the stick against the wall on the damper and give it a few minutes to move off the yardstick. The swift will climb up to its siblings and continue to be fed. Make certain the damper is closed so it does not fall into the fireplace again. If there is no damper or if the damper is not operational, a large piece of foam rubber (do not use fiberglass insulation or fabric) can be wedged up from the fireplace.

Juveniles Eyes Closed or Entire Nest Has Fallen

Chimney swifts nest in inaccessible places, and this makes returning their babies to them an exceptional challenge. If the babies are feathered with their eyes open, they can be returned above the damper as previously described. If they are not completely feathered or their eyes are not open, the process of returning them will be a little more involved. You will need to prepare a substitute nest from a small wicker or woven basket. They must be able to cling to the sides.

Preparing a Substitute Nest

Because the designs of chimneys are so different, there is no single solution that will work in every situation of a fallen nest. Replacing the nest may require some creativity. It is important that the nest be placed in the exact same chimney-in approximately the same position. At the very least, the nest must be placed as high as possible over the damper.

One option is to place the nest in a shallow wicker basket and place it on the smoke shelf just above the damper. It must be either weighted or wedged in such a way that when the parents land on it doesn't tip over. Some actually lower the nest in a basket from the top of the chimney. A second (and recommended) option is to secure the nest (using tape) to a broom handle and wedge the nest between the broom handle and the inside of the fireplace just above the damper.

Parent swifts feed their young on average every 20 minutes to one hour during daylight hours. Observe the chimney from the outside to determine if the parents are returning to feed.

Portions of this information sheet have been provided by the Driftwood Wildlife Association. To learn more about chimney swifts or the Driftwood Wildlife Association, visit www.chimneyswifts.org.

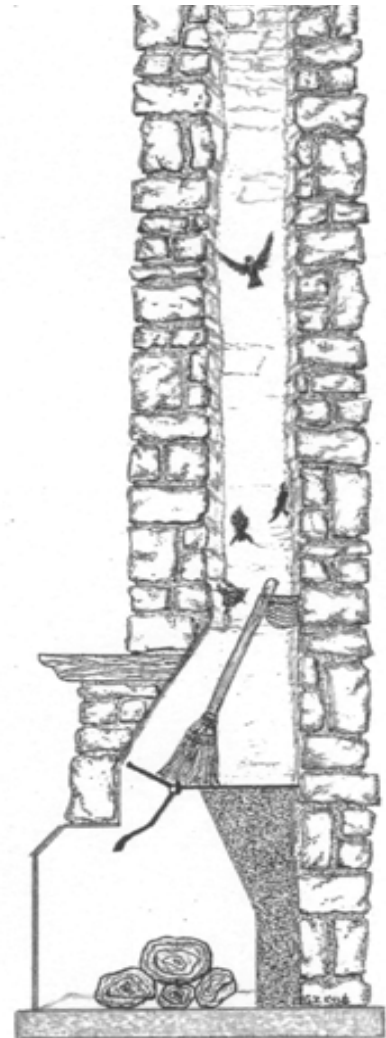


Diagram by Georgan Z. Kyle, Driftwood Wildlife Association