

Swift Count 2020:

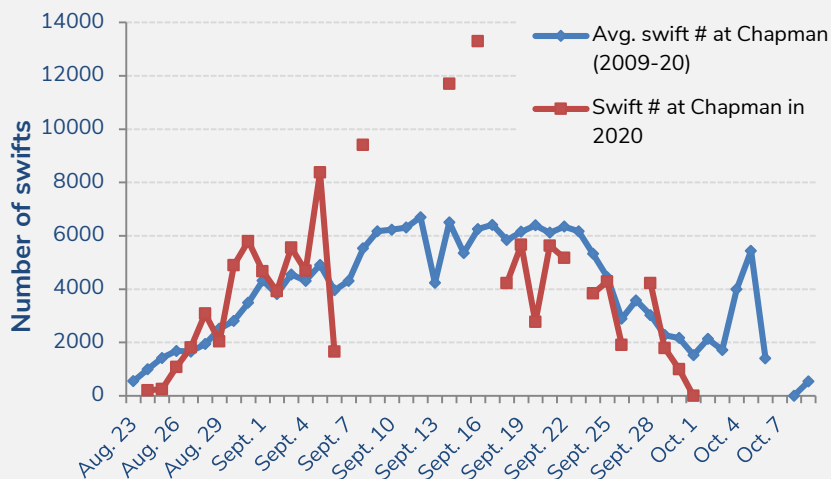
A year of challenges doesn't stop the swifts!

Why We Count Swifts

Since 2009, Portland Audubon has counted migrating Vaux's Swifts at Chapman Elementary School and other sites in the Portland-metro region as part of a community science project to monitor population trends of these exciting birds. In addition to tracking local numbers, these counts contribute toward a larger [Pacific Coast-wide tracking effort](#). The Northwest Vaux's Swift population has been declining for several decades.

2020 at Chapman Elementary

The swifts had a lot to contend with in 2020: The COVID-19 pandemic, wildfire smoke, and a major renovation of the aging Chapman chimney and replacement of the school roof. Portland Audubon worked with Portland Public School and other partners to ensure the chimney renovation would not impact swifts. We also discouraged the public from visiting Chapman to view swifts to respect state guidance to curb the spread of coronavirus.



2020 Effort at Chapman

In 2020 a team of 10 experienced volunteers & staff monitored Chapman 29 nights between August 24th and October 1st. Volunteers did not monitor for 10 days during the dangerous air quality period in mid-September. We were relieved that the swifts accepted the newly renovated chimney and seemingly kept migration on track despite the smoky conditions. Numbers reached their peak on September 16 when 13,300 birds were counted! Rain prevented surveys on 1 night.

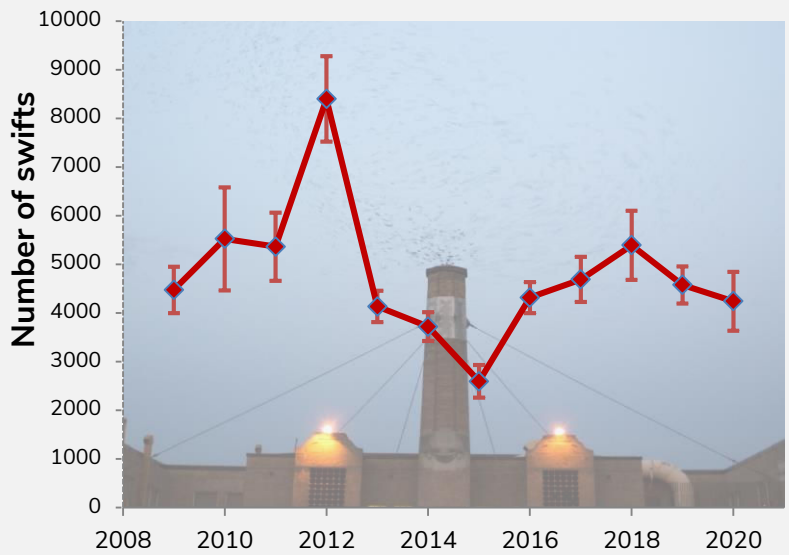


Annual Trend at Chapman

In 2020 the average number of swifts counted per night at Chapman was 4,241 swifts. This is close to the 12-year average of 4,835 swifts per night.

Swifts Detected at Other Sites in or Near Portland

Volunteers monitored at 4 other sites in the Portland Metro area in the fall of 2020 (see table below). Saint John's Theatre was not active this year again but swifts were back at the Museum Annex in Aurora after no birds used it in 2019.



Renovation of Chapman Chimney August 2020 (Photo: T. Timberlake)



Photo: Dave Ledig

Peregrine Falcon

Predators at Chapman

Predation was up dramatically in 2020 compared to 2019 with 24 Cooper's Hawk predation events in 14 nights and 1 by a Peregrine Falcon. In 2019 there were 7 predation events witnessed – all by Cooper's Hawks.

Site	Peak #	Days surveyed
Oregon City (Main Street)	3,670	19
Aurora (Museum Annex)	1,820	7
Portland (Tabor Space)	340	5

People and Swifts

By in large, the public respected the recommendation to not go to Chapman this year. Thank you! In a regular year, attendance can be upwards of 3,000 people.

Chimney Conservation

We want to protect chimneys that traditionally host significant swift roosts. If you hear about chimneys in trouble contact Joe Liebezeit (jliebezeit@audubonportland.org)



Photo: C. Larson

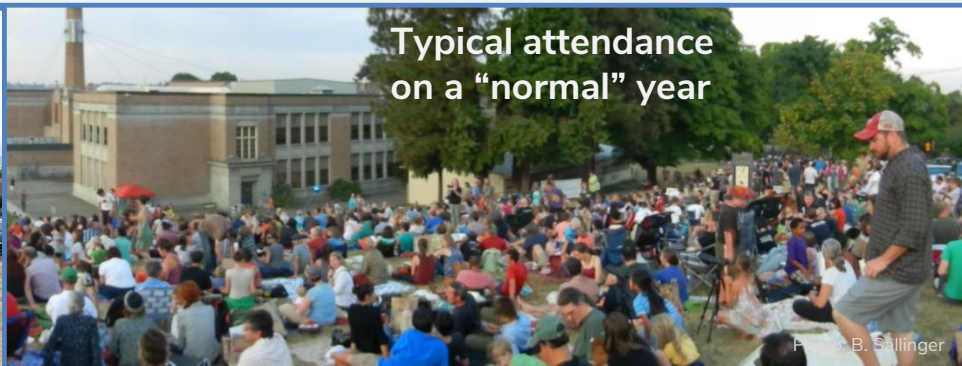


Photo: B. Sallinger