

## **Vaux's Happening - 23 Million and Still Counting**

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Content assembled by Yorgason-Quinn and Larry Schwitters. Schwitters presented at The International Swift Conference in Cambridge, UK. Diane presented at the conference in Tel Aviv.

The Audubon's Vaux's Happening Project began in 2007 as a successful effort to save a school chimney that was one of only two well-known big number Vaux's roost sites in Washington State. This chimney is now recognized as a Partners in Flight Important Bird Area of Global significance. The project quickly expanded into an attempt to locate, raise awareness of, and hopefully preserve the important roost sites used by this species all along their migratory path. The project has now documented over 200 roosting sites from the Canadian Yukon to Guatemala used over 23 million times by swifts in the last 32 migrations. During this program we will share images and information captured by the project's chimney surveillance cameras, precision temperature recorders, and radio tracking transmitters.

We also will share images from Larry's adventure scaling a massive 150-year-old industrial smokestack in the Detroit, Michigan, area to record the roosting activity of the closely related Chimney Swifts. Our camera kept broadcasting for 2 years, showing the world 10-20 thousand roosting Chimney Swifts nearly every evening of the southbound migration, suggesting it being the most significant Chimney Swift roost site in the world. A camera lighting strike is suspect in its failure, and the fix/replacement now falls on Detroit Audubon.

There was a major roost site in west central Oregon that we were not able to save from demolition. Our response was to design and erect a ten-meter-high replacement on city property 3 blocks away. The hope was that these structural building plans could be used to replace the ageing chimneys all along the migration route. We have a made-for-television video describing this project.

Yorgason-Quinn has been in charge of getting the man- and woman-power necessary to obtain every evening observations at six different chimneys on the massive high security Joint Base Lewis McCord. Its flagship site, smokestack 2068, had been the roost site hosting the second most Vaux's swifts in all of North America until Schwitters pried off the screen covering a chimney 150 km to the south that had kept the birds out since 1992. This "new" stack in Rainier, Oregon, just across a bridge from Washington, has become the biggest northwest roost site.

That Rainier, OR, stack was also one of the two northwest sites chosen by the Oregon crew following in the footsteps of StarFlag to do 3-D photography in their study of how birds flock close to each other. The study started in Rome and centered on starling flocks, but has now been enlarged to study various species who flock close together, so swifts swirling into a chimney was an obvious choice.

Please note that the large numbers of Vaux's Swifts documented by Vaux's Happening indicate the additional roost sites being located, making it easier to compute average swifts per observation.