

# Bug-eating swift 'a flying cigar'

ONE OF THE MOST unusual descriptive comparisons for birds that I know of is "a flying cigar." Roger Tory Peterson makes this analogy when talking about the chimney swift.



nature  
**Timothy Nowicki**

These small, seldom noticed birds are dark gray all over with no remarkable plumage patterns. Their straight, stout bodies with squared-off tails give the illusion of a cigar. Connected to each "cigar" is a pair of long, thin, tapered, arched wings. Such wings are adept at rapid movements when coupled with shallow, quick wingbeats. As you watch a bird flash by overhead, it will dart from side to side in efforts to catch insects with its wide mouth.

small sticks to the vertical surface of the chimney. Birds-nest soup is made from an Asian swift's nest made entirely of saliva.

Four to five small white eggs are laid in the nest and are incubated by both adults. Once the eggs have hatched, both adults feed the young. In some nests, sons and daughters of the adult pair from last year will also help feed the young.

Because chimney swifts have very small feet and legs, they spend most of their time flying. In the evening, however, large groups of birds will gather and enter a chimney to roost for the night. One group of 10,000 birds took only 37 minutes to settle down in their favorite chimney.

THEY ROOST and build their nests inside chimneys.

## Nine to play in festival

Nine young musicians from the Observer & Eccentric area will be in the Meadow Brook Academy Orchestra at 8 p.m. Wednesday, Aug. 10, when it is conducted by Gunther Herbig and Geoffrey Simon.

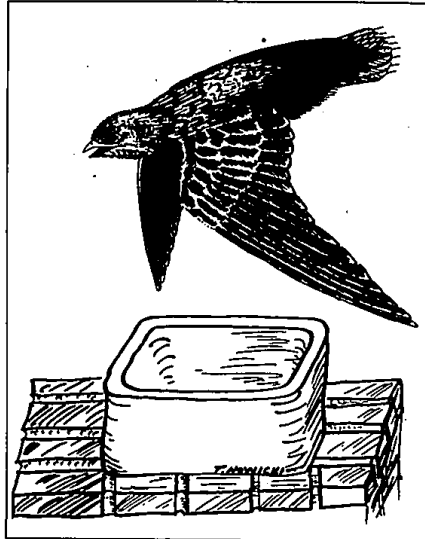
They will perform on the Baldwin Pavilion of Meadow Brook Music Festival, a program of Oakland University near Rochester. Tickets are \$5.

Local musicians are: Anthony Markel, Troy, bassoon; Tracy Kash, Southfield, flute and piccolo; Alice Lenaghan, Birmingham, flute; Erin Pickett, West Bloomfield, flute and piccolo; Kristoffer Gillette, Bloomfield Hills, horn.

Also, Laurel Thompson, Rochester, horn; Keith Carter, Troy, percussion; Scott Williams, Bloomfield Hills, percussion; and Michael McGowen, Farmington, trumpet.

THEIR SMALL feet allow them to cling to coarse brick and mortar. Occasionally they fly to the center of the chimney, flutter for a moment and then return to the side.

One observer was curious to discover what they were doing, but could not see well from above. So he went to the bottom of the chimney to



The chimney swift has a tubular body, wide mouth for catching insects and slender wings for quick movement.

look up toward the opening. Shortly after he stuck his head in the chimney and saw a bird flutter to the center, he discovered what the birds were doing. He then had to

wipe it off his face. Listen for a rapid, high pitched chatter next time you're walking downtown, then look up and see if you can spot a "flying cigar."

# Cut water loss during drought

Q. With this drought, how can I make the most of watering my lawn?

A. To keep your grass green without wasting water and skyrocketing your water bill, try these suggestions:

- Check for leaks that prevent water from going to the area you want.
- Water the lawn in the early morning (preferred by many lawn experts) or late evening to avoid evaporation losses.
- Irrigate slowly, deeply and frequently.
- Do not allow sprinkler water to flow in the gutter.
- Avoid sprinklers that produce a fine mist; too much water is lost in wind evaporation.
- Use a clock and timer to remind you to shut off the sprinklers.
- In arid areas, use landscaping which does not require frequent water.
- Use pistol-grip nozzles (with spring shut-off) on all hoses, to avoid waste.
- Always turn off the faucet lightly when finished to prevent leakage.
- Reduce evaporation losses from flower and vegetable gardens by using an organic mulch or plastic ground cover between rows. Newspapers also work well.



Terry Gibb

• Sweep driveways and walks instead of washing them down with a hose.

Q. Can I turn off the pilot light in my furnace during the summer?

A. Thank you for writing to remind me. Yes. As a conservation suggestion, it is recommended that gas pilots on furnaces be turned off during the summer. In addition to saving money on your summer gas bill, turning off the furnace pilot will help reduce the load on your cooling equipment.

Newer appliances have a pilot position on the main control valve. In many furnaces, there is separate gas valve in the tubing that feeds the pilot, and this can be turned off.

ECO-TIP: To have beautiful and productive flower and vegetable gardens without using harmful chemicals, send for a free copy of "The Environmental Gardener." Please include a self-addressed, stamped envelope with your request to the address below.

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