

Environmentalists, developer and Town help chimney swifts come home to roost

The Chimney Swift was listed as a nationally threatened bird under the federal Species at Risk Act in 2007 and provincially under the Endangered Species Act 2007 in 2009.

In the past, forest management techniques reduced the availability of old growth forests throughout eastern North America. As the large hollow trees disappeared, the swifts adapted to using chimneys in houses, churches, schools and industrial buildings. However, as heating methods replaced fireplaces, many chimneys are being capped, steel-lined or demolished altogether.

This has contributed to a 95 per cent decline in the Chimney Swift population in the last 40 years.

There is one chimney swift roosting site and several nesting sites in the downtown core of Aurora ? the roosting site being the old Wells Street School chimney. The recent conversion of this building into lofts by Betula Developments caused concern.

A group of citizens known as Nature Aurora worked with the developer, the Town, and the Ministry of Natural Resources staff, which resulted in the height of the chimney on Wells Street Schoolhouse Lofts being carefully raised so that it would conform to the old chimney.

We are pleased to report that not only did chimney swifts return to this site after the construction was completed, but according to data collected by local volunteers of Nature Aurora in 2016, the population has exceeded previously reported numbers.

We would like to thank this developer for being a responsible corporate citizen in Aurora.

This success story is testimony to what can be done when there is cooperation between responsible development and conservation interest.

Christine James
Nature Aurora