

**Release of at-risk bird species (chimney swifts) set for this week at King's
For Immediate Release – August 14, 2012
London, Ont.**

A group of at-risk chimney swifts will be released this week (August 15) at King's University College. The swifts, a soot-coloured, robin-sized bird, have seen their populations decrease by over 95% in the past 40 years due decreased food supply (flying insects) loss of habitat, pesticides, climate change, and a shortage of nesting and roosting sites (hollow trees, chimneys).

Despite dwindling numbers, a large population of swifts has found a home at King's. A large chimney attached to the Wemple Building has become a roosting site for hundreds of swifts in August and September. Not only does the chimney make an excellent roost, but the location also offers excellent foraging over the adjacent Thames River, woods and park-like setting. London naturalists have monitored swifts at King's since 2005 and since 2010, hand-reared swifts from as far away as Montreal and Ottawa have been released at the campus.

The release of three swifts is planned for Wednesday, August 15, 2012 (weather permitting). This group of Chimney Swifts was admitted July 23 to Swift Care Ontario (SCO) in critical condition. Their nest had fallen into a furnace pipe and they were recovered by a homeowner in Aylmer. The birds, under the care of SCO, have been rehabilitated and are ready to be reintroduced to the wild. Specialized care is required for these birds including hourly feedings dawn to dusk by only one or two caregivers. The swifts eat mealworms, waxworms and crickets while in care - averaging 112 insects a day (they consume 1000 flying insects per day in the wild including mosquitoes). While in care, they also consume vitamin and mineral supplements, are housed in an artificial chimney, and learn to fly in special soft-sided flight cage.

Swift Care Ontario is a wildlife rehabilitation facility located just outside of London. Established in January, the facility is registered charity and licenced by the Ministry of Natural Resources and the Canadian Wildlife Service. Their main focus is to raise orphaned or rehabilitating Species at Risk in Ontario, most notably aerial insectivores (birds that feed almost exclusively on insects gathered while in flight) like the Chimney Swift, Common Nighthawk, and Whip-poor-will.

"The King's community is proud to provide sanctuary to a large population of chimney swifts," notes Principal David Sylvester. "We strive to protect and enhance the environment on and around campus and are happy to work with Swift Care Ontario to help these at-risk birds."

Swift Care Ontario will meet in the parking lot adjacent to the Wemple Building at King's at 6 p.m. The birds will remain in their cage for approximately 45 minutes to become comfortable with the sounds around them. Members of the public are welcomed to visit campus for the release.

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