

and two young were fledged and banded (Photo 2).

As you can see from the drawing (Figure 1), the tower I built is a simple structure. I used three sheets of outdoor plywood meant for siding on a house, cutting the 4x8' sheet of plywood into four 2x4' foot sections so the grooves would be horizontal, not vertical, and placing the grooves on the inside of the structure. By doing this, the swifts were given toeholds that simulated a block or brick chimney. I put the 12' tower structure on 4x4' treated lumber legs. The tower is much shorter than the chimney that the birds used in the past, but that didn't deter the birds from using it almost immediately. Although the tower stands on



Chimney Swift fledgling banded and photographed by Cathie Hutcheson. This youngster was born in a nest inside the nest tower Cathie built.

a concrete pad, southern Illinois is known for its termites, so I put the tower as far off the ground as I could. I also used the same protective stain that was used on the rest of the siding on the house so the tower would look similar to my house.

The plans I received from the Chimney Swift study group was for a double-walled structure, but I didn't think I could afford to spend that much on materials. Since southern Illinois summer temperatures are quite hot, I built a single-walled tower, placing the tower on the north

side of the house to provide some cooling, and leaving the clean-out door ajar at the bottom to provide air circulation. I will put a rain and sun shield on the top of the tower after the birds leave on migration since the birds began using the tower before I managed to get that done.

I hope to build two more towers and attach them to the barns on my property. Though many swifts roost in a tower, only one pair of Chimney Swifts nests in each tower (or chimney). Adding more towers will give swifts more

nest sites, and give me more birds to band!

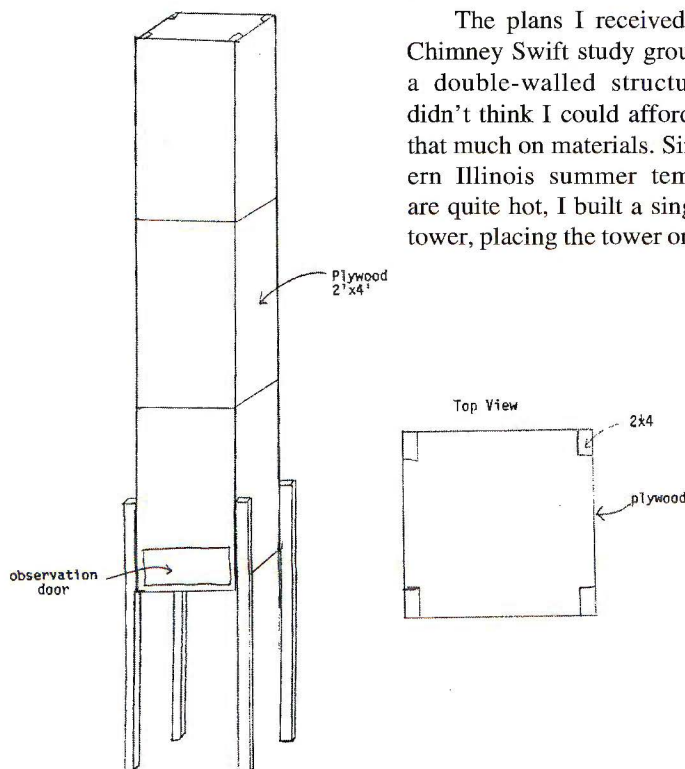
I would encourage any homeowner to build a nest tower for Chimney Swifts, either as an addition to an existing structure or to new construction. The tower could be integrated into the design of the building, or made to fit with the design of an existing house. Though the inside of the tower needs to have the grooved plywood, the outside could match the siding on the house. Having only spent about \$100 on materials and a few hours labor, I was able to watch these fascinating and secretive birds during their nesting.

For more information about nest towers, please contact:
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Editor's Note: Cathie Hutcheson has been a birder and bird bander since 1970 when she helped found the Southern Illinois Bird Observatory. Last year, she began participating in the MAPS banding project, a nation-wide bird population monitoring project.



Chimney Swift nest tower diagram by Cathie Hutcheson.