

Please support the resolution to name the Chimney Swift the official City Bird of Bethlehem

[The Bethlehem Gadfly](#) [Environment](#), [Swifts](#) January 31, 2021

🦉 Latest in a series of posts on the Swifts 🦉



Save Our Swifts

In a letter of January 18 to Councilwoman Negron, advocate Jennie Gilrain laid out the following seven reasons why City Council should name the Chimney Swift the official City Bird of Bethlehem.

The Audubon Society, the Sierra Club, and **Bethlehem's Environmental Advisory Council** (EAC) have endorsed the idea.

Developer John Noble could not be more cooperative in assuring that our Chimney Swifts don't lose their lease.

A resolution to name the Chimney Swift the official City Bird of Bethlehem comes before Council Tuesday night.

We need to step up right away. The number of contributors to the **GoFundMe campaign** is an excellent gauge of concrete general community support.

Please contribute (*or contribute again!*).

Please pass the word to family and friends and through your social media contacts.

There are bird lovers everywhere who will want to help the Swifts survive.

Did you see those **incredibly cute letters** from the Freemansburg 4th graders?

1. **Economic Impact:** Naming the Chimney Swift the Bird of Bethlehem would attract birders to our city. According the 2011 U.S. Fish & Wildlife Services National Survey, “bird watchers spend nearly \$41 billion annually on trips and equipment. Local community economies benefit from the \$14.9 billion that bird watchers spend on food, lodging and transportation. In 2011, 666,000 jobs were created as a result of bird watching expenditures.”
2. **Health and Safety:** Swifts are insectivores. Each bird eats 2,000 insects per day. (2,200 swifts in one Masonic Temple chimney per night X 2,000 insects per swift = 4,400,000 insects consumed per day per chimney roost.) Chimney swifts are a safe and healthy alternative to pesticides.
3. **Historical Significance:** Swifts are part of Bethlehem’s history. They have been living here since the Industrial Revolution, more than 100 years. One elderly retired steelworker who lives in South Bethlehem said that he has been watching the swifts go into the Masonic Temple Chimney for 75 years!
4. **Wildlife Protection:** Swifts are in sharp decline (72% since the mid 1960’s). It is our responsibility to cherish and protect this species that depends on our urban habitat.
5. **Model of Cooperation:** Developer, John Noble’s environmentally conscious response to the swifts that live in the Masonic Temple chimney provides a model for positive relationships between developers and conservationists. Bethlehem could set a precedent of encouraging such cooperation.
6. **Cleanliness:** Swifts are relatively clean birds. They do not cause problems of guano-covered parking lots, walkways and parks. In fact, their droppings are difficult to find. A researcher called Scott Burnet, asking for samples of the chimney swift droppings. Scott builds and maintains hundreds of chimney swift towers throughout Pennsylvania and had difficulty finding any droppings in or around these roosts.

7. **Beauty:** Swifts are beautiful to watch. They fly like aerial acrobats in groups of two and three during the day. When they enter their chimneys in large numbers at dusk, they are a spectacular sight to see.



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