

## Swift Night Out

Five hundred ninety three swifts roosted in McGregor on August 10, with Firefarm in Elkader having 322 on September 13. Firefarm was a busy roosting site in August as well, with 152 and 194 swifts roosting there on two nights. The tower at National was also used as a roosting site, with counts of 13, 20, 18, and 17 on four different August nights. On September 15, 2 swifts flew into the tower at dusk. With six possible fledglings and two parents who lived in the tower as regular tenants, the numbers indicate the tower is used by other birds during migration. What a wonderful possibility! I haven't seen records of roosting swifts in Althea's journals but she would be happy to know they may roost in National now.

## COME VISIT THE TOWER!

Eighty-two visitors from Iowa, Colorado, Canada, Illinois, Minnesota, Oregon, Honduras and Ohio left messages in the Registration book. Thank you for visiting and for leaving encouraging words. The group of 20 OWLS (Older Wiser Livelier Souls) who visited in July asked interesting questions and were able to peek into the ground floor of the tower.

The tower will be open for 2020 tours on May 23rd and 24th and September 5th and 6th, from 1-4 p.m.

You are welcome to visit anytime. There is signage, an audio recording, a monitor to view the interior of the chimney, a rest stop and picnic are along with the National Cemetery where the Sherman family is buried.

Please contact the following for more information: Joyce Schoulte 563.964.2535 or Deanna Krambeer 563.536.2258. We love to share the story.

**FRIENDS OF THE SHERMAN SWIFT TOWER**

18874 Hwy. 52  
Farmersburg, Iowa 52047

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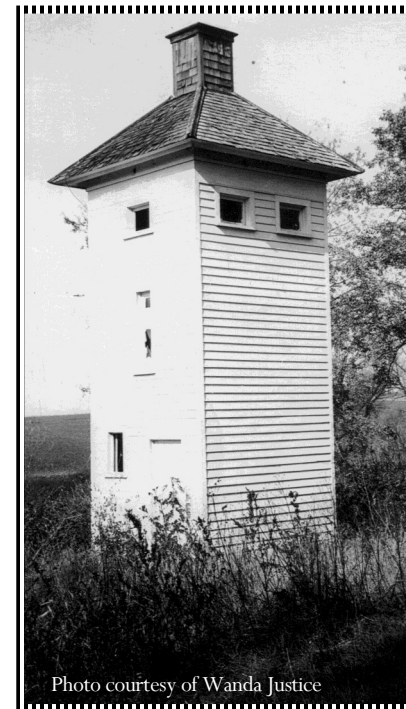


Photo courtesy of Wanda Justice

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*2020 Newsletter*

## 2019 – A better year for Swifts at the National Tower

After the 2018 death of the baby swifts and the possibility their parents died too, we were fearful that no swifts remained that would return to the tower to nest. Fortunately for us, swifts were seen flying in the area in early May and a small nest was constructed. Through the monitor, six eggs were visible on June 21. The monitor failed shortly thereafter, and we viewed the chimney top to see when and if swifts were flying in and out. Throughout the summer, we saw swifts entering and leaving the chimney which indicated adults were feeding young. August 5, we saw 4 swifts fly out of the tower chimney that seemed to be a bit smaller than adults, so we were hopeful it was the fledglings.

Apparently this was so, as a check in late fall revealed only some small feathers and portions of egg shells on the floor of the chimney leading us to believe all six eggs hatched and the swifts fledged.

Our monitor to observe the swift nest from outside the tower did not survive as well as the fledglings. Multiple problems and multiple fixes occurred with a final conclusion the camera in the tower had failed. Installation of a new camera would require entering the chimney and this had the potential to scare the adults from the nest or damage the nest while working inside the small space. We spent the rest of the summer observing swifts flying in and out the top of the chimney which was an interesting experience in itself.

### Other towers

FSST previously helped others erect small towers for individual nesting sites in local areas. Swifts were seen flying into the tower at Founders Park in Elkader, and Dennis Kirschbaum reported swifts nesting in both of the towers at La Riviere Park, Prairie du Chien, Wisconsin. We weren't able to visit the tower in Guttenberg, but it has hosted swifts previous years. The tower erected at Monona Butterfly Trail had droppings this year, so hopefully the tower is being considered as a future nesting site. The lone chimney erected for swifts in Farmersburg has not been chosen for a nesting site yet.



## NOTES FROM ALTHEA...

*Althea Sherman papers, 1902-1936. MS49. Special Collections, State Historical Society of Iowa, Des Moines.*



Special Archives  
State Historical  
Society of Iowa

*Although Althea Sherman is best remembered as an ornithologist, her interests extended beyond birds to the interwoven world around them. She attended a meeting of the Iowa Forestry and Conservation Association July 12-15, 1917, in the Iowa City area. Her journal includes much personal information along with the meeting activities. The following edited items from her journal reflect the activities of the meeting related to her conservation beliefs.*

### Notes from Althea

*Althea Sherman papers, 1902—1936. MS49. Special Collections, State Historical Society of Iowa, Des Moines.*

“July 12: In evening was first exercise of the meeting of the Iowa Forestry and Conservation Association. A thunderstorm raged during most of the picture show which were moving pictures by Herbert K. Job. (She wrote a very descriptive narrative of the storm and how wet she became walking to and from the meeting.)

Friday July 13 was the only day that I was cut off from bird sights. Chimney Swifts and Robins were the only species to be seen. The day was crowded full with the things planned for the Association, Professors Shimek, Pammel, Kay and Dill were most noted of the speakers, James Lieu (?) and Prof. Thomas both spoke in appreciation of the late Dr. R. W. Bailey.

At 9 a.m. on Saturday, July 14, we met...for a trip to the (Iowa) City Park. ...The plant life of the park is kept as near as natural state of growth as possible except in a small place there is a lawn and conveniences for picnicking. At 10:30 a. m. we left Iowa City.....to Oakdale....to urge the effort to attract birds about the sanitarium. The institution and its grounds being State property, resolutions were voted to recommend to the Iowa legislature the establishment there of a bird sanctuary. Next stop was at Midriver... a long walk through the woods and ate a picnic dinner. With Iowa's two most eminent botanists as leaders...the time was given more to botany than to ornithology.

July 15 was to be devoted to the Mesquakie or Fox Indians. Of them I shall write in another note-book.

*(Her bird watching here was impossible because of rain and “swarming mosquitoes”.)*

### 2020 began with sad events for FSST

On January 9, Marlene Doerring, a charter member of FSST died. Marlene was an active member of our group as long as her health permitted. She portrayed one of the Sherman sisters in our presentations to various groups in the area. Hers is the voice on the recording at the tower. She also served as secretary/treasurer of the group and was always willing to do whatever she could to promote the Swift Tower.



On February 11, our resident handyman, Harold Krambeer, died. We'll miss his humor and his ability to find a way to do things that puzzled the rest of us. He can be heard on the audio recording at the tower reciting the poem he wrote about the Shermans and the swifts. He did lots of behind the scenes work, as well as helping to inform the public about chimney swifts. He also helped others build towers for the swifts.

We will miss them.