

SWIFT NIGHT OUT

Migrating swifts used the National Tower again this year. Our Swift Night Out counts were twelve roosting there on August 11 and twenty-one roosting on August 12. Ron Kaiser had sixteen roosting in his home chimney on August 12th. Althea Sherman would be delighted.

THANKS TO:

Corbin Schoulte for taking the cap off the chimney in the spring and putting it back on in the fall. And for help setting up the booth at Osborne.

Scott Chase for connecting the new monitor to the solar panels and discontinuing the units in the fall. He also added the recording to the solar panels, eliminating the need for batteries.

Roger Schoulte for checking the monitor and site frequently and tending to the portable toilet supplies.

All who donated money and support.

TREES

Emerald Ash Borer claimed the ash tree nearest the Tower. The remaining ash tree is also affected. The Swamp White Oak planted in memory of Harold Krambeer struggled through the dry summer. We carried gallons of water and it seems to have survived.

HERITAGE DAYS

Friends of the Sherman Swift Tower again had a display at the Heritage Days event at Osborne October 14 and 15. Many people walked through the display, viewed the slide show on swifts nesting at National, asked questions, put together the swift puzzle, and heard the “song” of the swift. Some had never heard of chimney swifts; others shared their stories with swifts. Children asked great questions and took advantage of several activities. Thanks to the staff at Osborne for making this educational display possible.

FRIENDS OF THE SHERMAN SWIFT TOWER

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Farmersburg, Iowa 52047

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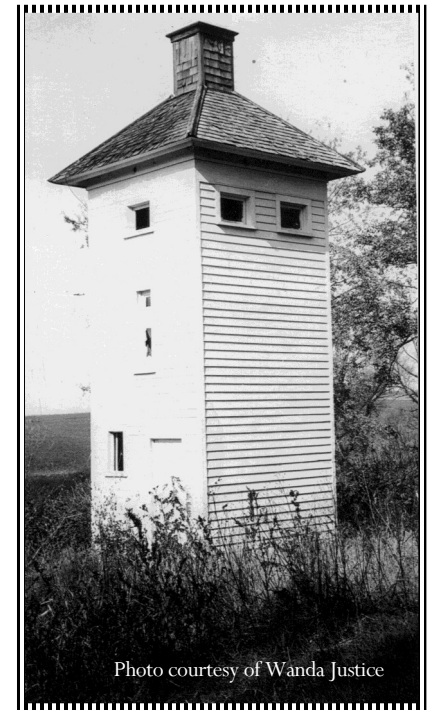


Photo courtesy of Wanda Justice

National, Iowa

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www.shermanswifttower.org

2024 Newsletter

SWIFTS

2023 Swifts at National



Droppings in the chimney announced the arrival of swifts about May 16.

June 11: The nest looks complete. A typical nest consists of about 250 twigs held together by the swift's saliva. How the swift manipulates the sticky saliva to hold the twigs without it sticking to beak, feet, feathers or other areas is a mystery.

June 14: There were two swifts visible, one on the nest apparently moving sticks about, and one on the wall below.

By July 2, there were 5 eggs, and all went on to fledge in August. This brings the total number of swifts who fledged from the Tower to 50.



Elkader swifts

Friends of the Sherman Swift Tower had their September meeting at Founder's Park in Elkader, Iowa, near the small swift tower erected there. We were pleased to see swifts flying overhead while we met!

COME VISIT THE TOWER!

Visitors are always welcome at the tower. An audio recording and sign give information about the Sherman family and the chimney swifts. There is an impressive monument for the Sherman family just inside the gate to the National Cemetery.

Forty plus visitors from Missouri, New Mexico, Kentucky, Iowa, Minnesota, Wisconsin, Germany and England signed our 2023 guest book. We thank them for stopping to see the Tower and leaving kind comments. Over 1000 people have signed the register in the past, representing 32 states and eight countries.

For information about the Tower, tours, presentations or other, please call 563-536-2258 or 563-964-2535. We have not scheduled open dates for the tower for 2024, but we are available to anyone who would like more information or to tour the tower. Tours will only be held if there are no birds nesting.

(Althea's Notes cont'd) *"The work of a Demon wren I am sure."* *"To curtail wren population without killing birds or destroying nest"*, Althea Sherman began taking 2 or 3 eggs from the wren nest, allowed them to cool, and then returned them to the nest to "borrow" some more for "treatment."

June 13, 1921 Regarding removing eggs from the nest to cool, she wrote *"Any genuine scientist must be extremely dull not to treat the house wren in this same and needful manner."* She apparently used this treatment for a number of years to decrease the number of wrens which hatched on her property. She began a campaign to discourage the popular use of wren boxes. Controversy followed. In her 1925 article, "Down with the House Wren Boxes", she labeled those who defended wrens *"ignorant and narrow minded."* Rhetoric about Althea Sherman was likely used in kind.

1928, August 8 *"Read a paper entitled "When we Study Wrens." in McGregor today before Wildlife School and Iowa Ornithologist Union, my object being to again empathize the evil of the house wren and to tell people I wanted to be left alone in order that I might be at liberty to study birds."*

NOTES FROM ALTHEA...

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

Althea Sherman is well-known and respected for her study of the chimney swift, but one bird she studied and found concerning was the common house wren.



Special Archives
State Historical
Society Of Iowa

Items in italics are from her journal on the House Wren.

1911 The small wren depends on finding a pre-existing cavity in which to build its nest and she began putting up nesting boxes for them. She *"suggested Genevive Jones put up a box and at once had wrens carrying sticks."* *"At Wrights another box was put up"*. Eventually she had ten nesting boxes in her yard and barn for study of the wren.

May 12, 1912 *"Two wrens fighting early."* *"Again I saw the Song S (sparrow) flying at wren and driving him away. The little villain has been at some of his evil work about song sparrows nest it would appear."*

June 1, 1912 *"The house wrens certainly are a problem."*

July 13, 1913 She was weighing the "monsters" in a nest she was studying to assess their weight gain.

July 22, 1913 With 8 young wrens in a nest she was observing, she noticed the smaller ones were losing weight and apparently not being fed. She was *"not fast enough"* to catch grasshoppers for feedings, so she took the smallest 4 young into the house and hand fed them canned salmon. Later she removed the four largest young and took them into the house and fed those salmon while the parents fed the other young in the nest. Her study continued; while watching the wren nest three hours on **July 27**, she noted 43 feedings and the items fed each of the eight young.

1915, December 29 She presented a paper on her study of house wrens to the American Association of Science at Columbus, Ohio. She describes the wrens *"bad traits"* and her observation of one destroying the nest of another bird. But no mention was made of reducing the number of artificial boxes provided for nesting.

1919 She reported that *"Boxes (for nesting wrens) closed for most part."* She left two nesting boxes up for study.

1920 *"I have tried to drive off the wrens by not giving nesting places."* When *"witchety"* (yellow warbler) built a nest near a wren box, Althea was concerned when the first egg the "witchity" laid disappeared. *(cont'd on the left)*