



HWCC Humboldt Wildlife Care Center

Living with Swifts-Birds in Chimney or Fireplace

Vaux's Swift is a migratory bird that travels up from Central America to nest in many areas of the western US. They typically nest in hollow trees, but have begun to substitute chimneys for trees. They are small birds about 5 inches in length, and sooty-grey in color. Babies in chimneys are often extremely loud, and sometimes fall down into the fireplace. When a baby does fall down, gently reach up into the chimney and attach it to the chimney wall. Swifts easily cling to vertical surfaces, and even babies can inch their way back up the chimney. Remember to close your flue as soon as the baby is safely in the chimney.

If the whole nest falls, you can place the babies and the nest in a small box or berry basket. Attach the box to a piece of wood about 5 inches wide, and 3-4 inches in length. Carefully raise the board into the chimney, and lean it against the chimney wall. The higher in the chimney you can place the babies, the better. **The parents will come down to feed them, even if you had to handle the babies.** Although the babies can be extremely loud, they only remain in the chimney for a few weeks after they begin making noise. Removing nestling swifts is almost certain to lead to their death. Swifts are highly specialized birds and it is nearly impossible to raise them in captivity.