

(Jeff Lemons)



Apodidae the SWIFTS

Swifts are a fairly large family of birds with 105 species spread worldwide. Each of these birds is a fast-flying hunter of insects. Swifts are known as “strong-winged” but “weak-footed” birds, as many seldom, if ever, perch during the day. Their family name is derived from a Greek word meaning “footless” because their constant flying led early Europeans to believe that swifts did not have feet. Many Swifts build their nests with small twigs glued together with sticky saliva, while some leave out the twigs altogether and sculpt a small nest cup out of layers and layers of nutrient-rich saliva. In China, these saliva nests are considered a delicacy, and they have been dubbed the “Caviar of the East.” They are the main ingredient in “bird’s-nest” soup.

At least seven types of swifts have been documented in North America, but only four breed here, and only one of these, the Chimney Swift, breeds in the eastern United States.