

# New records of Chimney Swift (*Chaetura pelagica*) in Bogotá, Eastern Andes of Colombia

NUEVOS REGISTROS DEL VENCEJO DE CHIMENEA (*CHAETURA PELAGICA*) EN BOGOTÁ, CORDILLERA ORIENTAL DE COLOMBIA

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## Abstract

We report several new records and provide photographic evidence of the occurrence of Chimney Swift (*Chaetura pelagica*) in the city of Bogotá at 2,600 m asl, in the Eastern Andes of Colombia during two consecutive years and during the autumn migration of the Nearctic-Neotropical migration system. These records suggest that this species has previously been overlooked and as a consequence this part of its migration route has been poorly documented.

**Keywords:** Apodidae, migration, urban settings.

## Resumen

Reportamos nuevos registros y evidencia fotográfica del Vencejo de Chimenea (*Chaetura pelagica*) en la ciudad de Bogotá a 2600 m snm, en la Cordillera Oriental de Colombia durante dos años consecutivos y durante la temporada de migración de otoño del sistema de migración Neártico-Neotropical. Estos registros sugieren que esta especie ha pasado desapercibida anteriormente y consecuentemente está pobremente documentada en esta parte de su ruta migratoria.

**Palabras clave:** Apodidae, centro urbano, migración.

The Chimney Swift (*Chaetura pelagica*) breeds in E North America (USA and Canada) and is a regular winter resident and passage migrant in South America (Colombia, E Ecuador, W & E Peru, NW Brazil and N Chile). In spite of this, records of this species have been historically scarce and consequently both the species' South American migration route and wintering distribution are poorly known (Chantler & Boesman 2014). This medium sized swift is characterized by a short square tail, distinctive wing pattern, and overall grey-brown underparts with no obvious contrast other than the grey-whitish throat. The species is easily confused with several *Chaetura* species that occur in South America, which has no doubt contributed to the lack of records.

In Colombia there are very few documented records of Chimney Swift, with just two isolated spring (April) records from the Eastern and Western Andes according to Hilty & Brown (1986). The only specimen in the largest bird collection in Colombia (Instituto de Ciencias

Naturales - ICN, Universidad Nacional de Colombia) was collected in the city of Bogotá, Eastern Andes, by G. I. Andrade on 1st October 1984 (ICN 28613). After that specimen there seem to be no further records in the literature for the Eastern Andes or even other parts of Colombia. Recently, however, the autumn migration (October) of thousands of individuals was documented in two consecutive years in the Darién in NW Colombia, indicating that Colombia is on the main migration route for this species (Bayly *et al.* 2014).

Here we report several recent records of Chimney Swift from the Eastern Andes of Colombia that relate to the southbound autumn migration of the species. On the morning of October 17th 2013 during a birding trip to the Parque Metropolitano Simón Bolívar (4° 39' N, 74° 05' W, ~2,600 m asl), Bogotá D.C, Colombia, PCPR and NJB briefly saw a swift around 07:00 h before locating probably the same individual around 07:30 h. Subsequently, this individual was seen for around 40 min flying in circles, while foraging low (~20-30 m)

over a lake, trees and open areas. Despite the bird's rapid flight, we were able to observe and take several pictures of the bird (Fig. 1). Overall the shape and length of the body and tail, grey-brownish plumage, and the clear throat, with no other obvious contrasts in the rump or

underparts, point to Chimney Swift. Also, the characteristic "bulging midwing cutting in at body" (Chantler & Boesman 2014) with slightly pointed wings was observed.



**Figure 1.** Chimney Swift (*Chaetura pelagica*) foraging at Parque Metropolitano Simón Bolívar, Bogotá D.C. All the pictures are of the same individual (Photo: PCPR).

On October 24<sup>th</sup> 2013, NJB observed two more individuals at the same location, while TE observed a further three individuals on October 30<sup>th</sup> 2013 also at Parque Metropolitano Simón Bolívar. The latter three birds were watched for about 40 minutes as they fed at various heights over the trees and open spaces of the park. The identification of these additional records was based on appearance, time of year, the high variety of other boreal migrants present in the park and the fact that TE (and most local birders and ornithologist) had never recorded any other *Chaetura* species over Bogotá.

During October 2012, TE had also observed a presumed Chimney Swift feeding at near ground level with migrant swallows near Parque La Florida (4° 43' N, 74° 09' W, ~2,600 m asl) on the outskirts of Bogotá. Finally, during the autumn of 2014 TE also located a Chimney Swift feeding over Parque La Florida on at least one date. All our observations are from the October – November period and suggest that small numbers of Chimney Swifts may be regular autumn passage migrants through Bogotá.

Our observations represent an important confirmation of the occurrence of this species in the Eastern Andes during autumn migration and the photographic record may be unique for Colombia and even northern South America. Since this species is currently classified as Near Threatened (NT), we believe that these records are also useful for understanding the migration route and timing of this species in N South America. We encourage ornithologists and bird watchers to look out

for this species during migration (October/November and April) in Colombia, especially during the second half of October.

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