



howard county  
**BIRD CLUB**  
50th ANNIVERSARY • 1972 – 2022

# MEMBERS' MEMORIES

## Annette Allor

**Hundreds of Chimney Swifts!** – On the afternoon of October 11, 2022, I went to the Davis Branch area of the Howard County Conservancy. The day before I had seen a remarkable five American Kestrels there and was hoping to get some better photographs. Unfortunately, not a single kestrel showed itself. I did notice what I thought were a few swallows flying above the swale. I decided to try my luck on the East side and crossed the East Branch a little after 4:00 p.m. As I ventured up the hill, the sight that met me was nothing short of incredible. Hundreds of birds! Some were flying in the sky, but most were gliding low above the fields. I started taking photographs but every single one was blurry. The birds were flying so fast and changing direction, amazing me with their aerial maneuvers. I was thinking, *don't these birds ever land?* The answer was a resounding, *no*. At the top of the hill, I switched the camera to 1080 HD movie mode and took several takes. Then I sat down in the field and enjoyed the show. By this time, the swift birds were becoming comfortable with my presence. They were flying right at me, dodging at the last moment. I could feel the breeze as they flew past me and hear the soft sound of their wings. A small flying insect buzzed off to my left and after a flash it was no more. Time stood still as I watched hundreds of these birds feeding, soaring, and gliding around me. This went on for about an hour before their numbers decreased to around 20 birds. I was sad to see them go.

As soon as I got home, I uploaded the video and sent it to Jo Solem. Since I am an inexperienced birder, Jo has helped me tremendously over the last several years with bird identification. Upon reviewing the video, Jo said they fly and look like Chimney Swifts and not swallows. I extracted several still images from the video, and they were confirmed as Chimney Swifts.

By taking several videos, I can re-experience this wonderful moment in some small way although nothing can compare to being in the field with hundreds of Chimney Swifts swirling all around me. I went back to the field the next day and not a single Chimney Swift was to be seen. Sometimes great experiences are as simple as being at the right place at the right time.