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**CHIMNEY SWIFT TOWER PLANNED FOR SAMS LAKE BIRD SANCTUARY IN FAYETTE COUNTY: ATLANTA AUDUBON RECEIVES GRANT TO BUILD TOWER**

**(Atlanta, Ga.) February 26, 2019** – Atlanta Audubon will be building a 12-foot-tall Chimney Swift tower with a wrap-around educational kiosk at Sams Lake Bird Sanctuary, in Fayetteville, Georgia, thanks to a grant from the American Birding Expo Conservation Fund. Atlanta Audubon was one of seven recipients of grants from this organization.

Atlanta Audubon will partner on this tower project with the Southern Conservation Trust, a nonprofit land trust organization that manages eight public nature areas throughout south metro Atlanta, including Sams Lake Bird Sanctuary. To date, Southern Conservation Trust has conserved more than 32,000 acres across the southeast and is working to certify their public nature areas as Atlanta Audubon Wildlife Sanctuaries. The Chimney Swift tower installation at Sams Lake is part of Atlanta Audubon's effort to conserve and raise public awareness of the habitat- and climate-threatened Chimney Swift.

Still a fairly common sight in Atlanta, Chimney Swifts are being forced to respond to additional threats across their range—from chimney capping, to tree removal, to a decreasing supply of insects due to pesticides, pollution, and climate change. Other issues, such as building collisions and challenges on swifts' wintering grounds are exacerbating population declines. The conservation status of the Chimney Swift was recently updated to Vulnerable on the International Union of Conservation of Nature (IUCN) Red List of Threatened Species.

“The Chimney Swift is Atlanta Audubon's focal bird species for 2019-2020, and we were delighted to receive this grant from American Birding Expo to construct a tower at Sam's Lake Bird Sanctuary,” says Nikki Belmonte, Atlanta Audubon Executive Director. “Capable of consuming up to 1,000 insects per day per bird, Chimney Swifts are an important part of our southern landscapes, and our goal is to create more nesting and roosting habitat for these birds through towers like the one at Piedmont Park and Sam's Lake.”

The American Birding Expo was founded by Bird Watcher's Digest editor and publisher, Bill Thompson, III. The Expo provides bird watchers and nature lovers an opportunity to connect with birding-related companies and organizations, including optics manufacturers, tour companies, bird feeding stores, gift items, birding festivals and clubs, destinations, travel agencies, and more. To promote the conservation of

wild birds and their habitats, The Expo Conservation Fund, supported by Expo raffles and silent auctions, annually grants funds to bird conservation organizations and projects.

"The Southern Conservation Trust is excited to work with the Atlanta Audubon on this project," says Nick Kilburg, Southern Conservation Trust Director of Conservation and Outdoor Education. "The chimney swift tower will help the Trust further educational efforts while providing habitat for this vulnerable and beneficial bird."

*Atlanta Audubon Society is building places where birds and people thrive. We create birds -friendly communities through conservation, education, and advocacy.*

*The Southern Conservation Trust elevates nature through exceptional stewardship of conserved lands and public lands.*

**Media Note:** Photos to accompany this article and a MS Word version of this press release are available for download at <https://www.dropbox.com/sh/y3l9s32oktcs94e/AADL4n1VHbxzzwGhN455VJ-fa?dl=0>.

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