

NOTES FROM ANNESDALE SNOWDEN



Where the sun is warm, neighbors smile, children play, cats purr and dogs wag their tails.
(and birds sing!)

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Swifts on the Wing

Some things just feel like home. Conversely, some places just don't feel like home without certain tangibles. For me, the chittering and aeronautics of swifts in the warm months is my meter of home-ness.

If you look up in the open sky from April to October, you will see small bat-like birds with narrow scythe-like wings and cigar-shaped bodies rapidly coursing through the air in clusters like insects. These are chimney swifts, the only eastern North American species of swift, and they love Annesdale-Snowden. And, in fact, they love insects. These dark charcoal birds, often just specs in the air making insectoid chirps and chatter, are keeping our mosquitoes and flies at bay, feeding like their evening counterparts the bats. And while they may appear to be tiny, their wingspan actually reaches about a foot, quite an optical illusion when viewed in flight.



They come out early and stay out late, and the amazing thing is they rarely perch, flying all day long except for brief stops at the nest to feed young. They can even sleep in flight! When swifts do perch, they only do so on a vertical surface such as the interior of your chimney where they glue their nests with their own saliva.



Chimneys mimic the hollow trees they used before chimneys came along. We tend to cut those down now, but they've found a nice solution to that!

Their sky acrobatics are a living, changing Escher drawing, complete with sound effects! I get a little twinge of sadness every fall when I look up and they are gone, but there is always next year, as long as we take measures to keep their nesting sites accessible. Here is a link where you can make sure your chimney is a safe zone for these summer friends: .

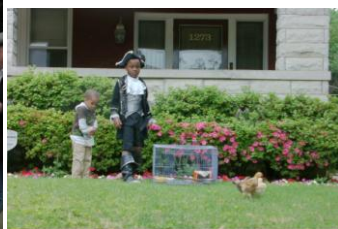
Fields Falcone, Memphis Zoo, Conservation Dept, Sledge Ave resident

Photo credits: <http://www.birds.cornell.edu/> <http://mn.audubon.org/>

Editor's Note: If you have had your interest in birds "heightened" as I have by these articles and the advent of warm weather, try the web site www.allaboutbirds.org. Type in the name of the bird you are interested in, and information about the birds appears. Full color photos and black silhouettes are provided. (Remember the WWII movies when everyone learned to ID planes overhead from their silhouettes? Same principle. In fact, I think my Kitty Kat knows how to do this—I see him watching birds fly over very intently...) I have been trying to identify all the songs I hear in the morning and throughout the day. (I know. I have an exciting life.) The site conveniently has the bird's song recorded! Then I discovered apps for your iPhone that you can download. You enter your zip code and the app downloads birds you are most likely to encounter. When you are out and about and hear a bird song, you can search the app to help identify the crooner! Search for the app you want today! And I want to know why we didn't learn this stuff in school! Hint for listeners: the blue jay's sqwawk is easiest to identify!!

**HOME
TOUR
2011**





Thanks to all the ASHD neighbors, family and friends who helped with the Home Tour. Many thanks to the homeowners who opened their lovely homes to make Home Tour 2011 a success.

It's Mimosa Time



It's mimosa time, and soon the streets and alleyways of Annesdale Snowden will be graced with the pink, yellow-tinged, powder-puff blossoms of this small flowering tree. Although we tend to think of mimosas as quintessentially Southern, they are actually imports from Asia. The tree first arrived in Europe in the 1740s, and made it to the American colonies later in the eighteenth century. Although delicate in appearance, mimosas can spread rapidly thanks to the thousands of seeds they produce every season. They are also surprisingly hard to kill. Over time the tree's range—helped by human hands—has expanded throughout the East Coast, the South, and into parts of the

Midwest. Mimosas, which have strong roots and aggressive growth habits, often colonize wasteland or disturbed areas. They are particularly common along roadways and railroad tracks.

The mimosa's botanical name is *Albizia julibrissin*. Like all scientific names, this one is laden with information about the plant. The first portion refers to Filippo del Albizzi, an Italian nobleman who introduced the tree into Europe. The second half is a corruption of the Persian words *gul-i abrisham*, literally "silk flower"—which perfectly describes the soft, down-like texture of the blossoms. Not surprisingly the mimosa also is called the "Persian Silk Tree." And although it doesn't look like it, the plant is a member of the pea family. However, this relationship becomes clear in the late summer when the trees produce long, bean-like seed pods.

Many people wonder why, if the mimosa's blossoms are **pink**, the popular brunch cocktail of the same name, is **yellow**. That's because the blossoms of several different species of flowering trees are referred to as mimosas. A couple of these, such *Acacia baileyana* (which does not grow in the mid-South), have clusters of bright yellow, powder-puff blooms. The cocktail, with its frothy, bubbly appearance, takes its name from these flowers. If this talk of drinks has put you in the mood for a mimosa, that's easy. It's mimosa time whenever you mix equal parts of chilled champagne and orange juice, and maybe crushed ice or cognac. If you are feeling particularly Southern, and thinking about a pink mimosa instead, try mixing equal parts of bubbly and pink grapefruit juice, along with a shot of grenadine and maybe that cognac. This makes a fine, refreshing cocktail—perfect for sipping while admiring the flowering mimosa tree in Annesdale-Snowden. — Stanton Thomas, Agnes Place resident

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