

21 June 2009

American Kestrel Nest Survey NYC - Issue #12 (2009)

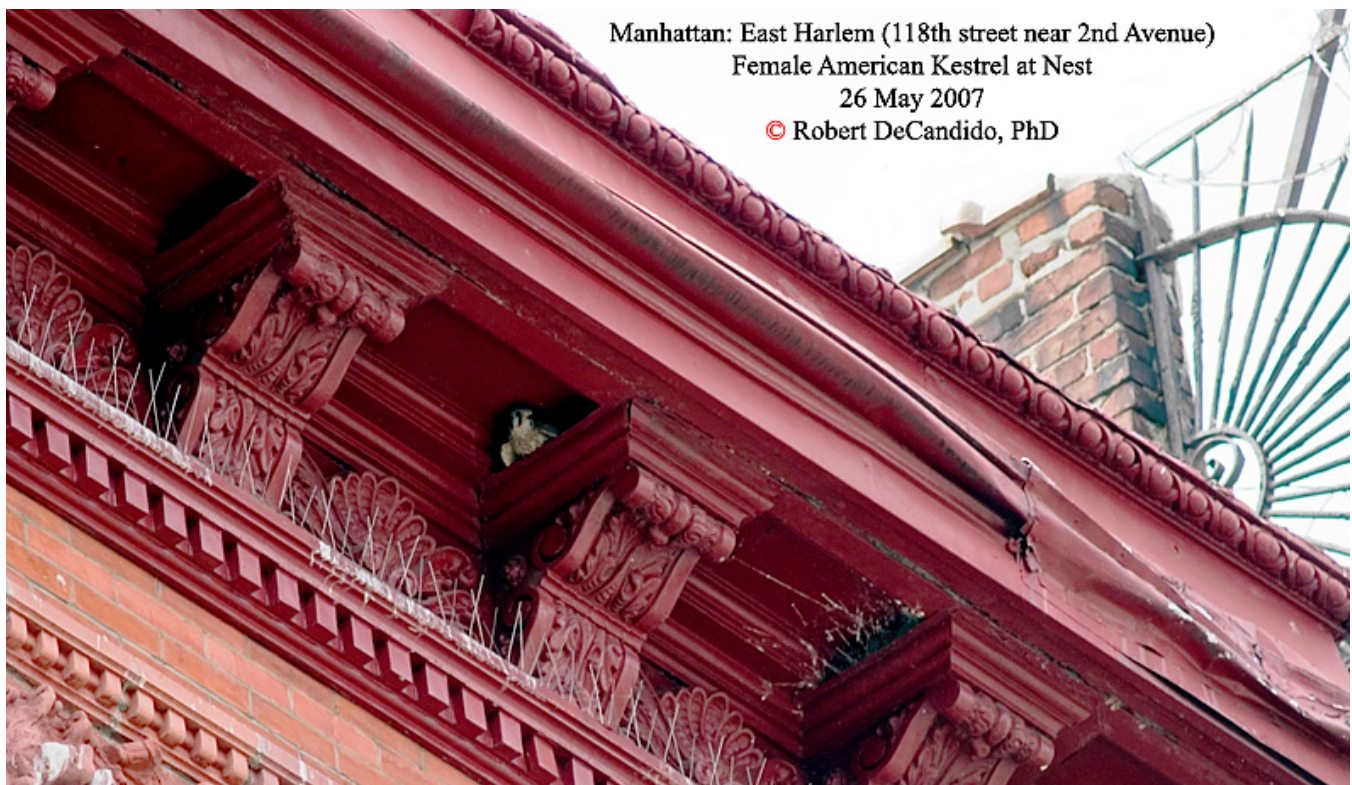
Kestrels are fledging - Part IIIII! - "into the blue painted blue"

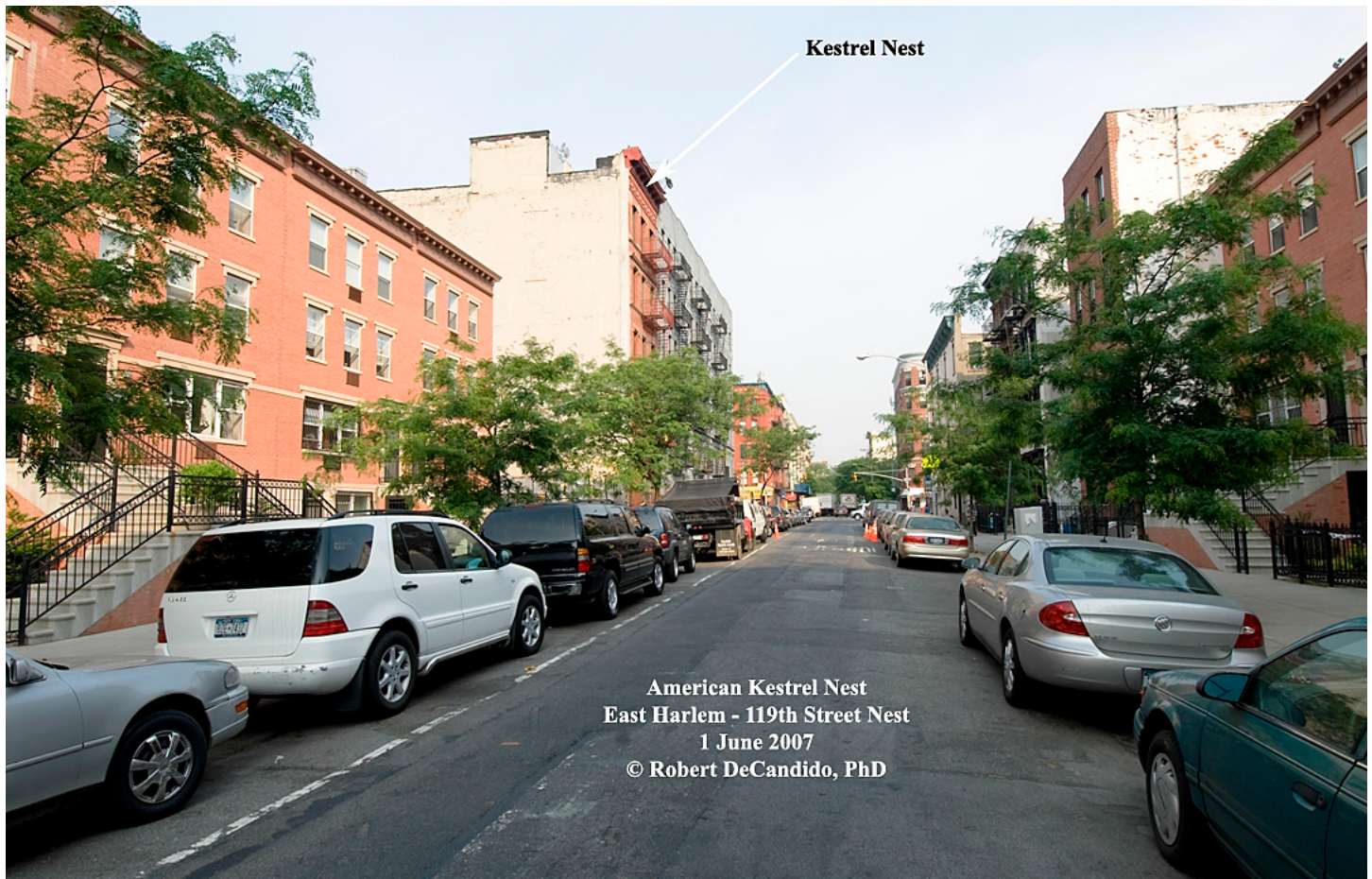
Herein we provide a continuing round-up about what is happening with kestrel nests in New York City - with some analysis of what kestrels select for when choosing a nest site - if given a choice.

In Manhattan, at the East 119th Street nest, at least two, or perhaps three, young fledged in the last week (see photos of this nest site from 2007 below and on next page). Nearby at 116th street at Frank Rutella's site, we could see at least three young in the cornice nest above the MetroNorth train tracks on 18 June. They should fledge in the next 2-5 days. This year in NYC, we believe that the peak of the kestrel fledging season is occurring about a week later than last year, and fewer young per nest have been produced on average as well.

As Brian Haimes reported last week from Sunnyside, Queens - there are at least three young in the nest, and these will fledge between 22 June and 26 June. We had a look at the cornices on the buildings on both sides of the street on 20 June, and we noted several important variables that kestrels had to choose between on the wooden cornices there. First, these kestrels selected a smaller opening vs. larger one. Next, they chose a higher cornice rather than one a few feet away which was about five feet lower in height. Finally, the kestrels chose an east facing cornice - and not one across the street that faced west toward Manhattan. Here in NYC we have found kestrels nesting in cornices that face in all directions. However, we think that west facing cornices must be too warm in most years (unless shaded), since those nests (cornices) receive the hotter afternoon sun. On the other hand, this year we have had much rain from an easterly (northeast and southeast) direction - so perhaps east facing nests have a downside in certain years too. Indeed last year we had several kestrel nests that produced five young - this year no kestrel nest has produced five (and only one that we know of produced four).

And we are taking bets as to just when Anita Randolfi will finally see young leave the 9th Street nest in the East Village. Don't give up hope just yet! Anita is our favorite recorder player - when she plays, we listen: [Volare'](#)





Above: View (looking west) at the 119th street nest site. The nest bracket (called a Modillion in architectural terms) used is shown on page 1. In that photo, the female is peering out from the Modillion next to the actual nest modillion to the right (note white wash from the young above). The male and female cached extra prey in the Modillion where you see the female peering from. One last note - kestrels raised five young here in 2007; no nesting was noted in 2008; and 2-3 young this year - Thanks to Barbara and Dick Ward.

Kestrel Reports from the Field:

From: Maggie Medina

Subject: GRAND TRIO UPDATE (Amsterdam Avenue kestrels)

Date: June 17, 2009 (Wednesday)

Hi Bob,

I went to see my favorite Kestrels to see three of my babies. They were feeding on what appeared to be a mouse (thought I saw a tail on the prey item). One of them seems to be the last fledgling since I kind of noticed more white fluff on the thigh area and it seemed smaller. I observed the feeding dominance between two of them, but the smaller one stayed away on its own. I think they know about human presence because they flew away as soon as they noticed me. My binocs are great but my cam is not so good - I almost had great pics for you today. I think they were all chicks since they were pretty stationary for a while where they landed and the two huddled puffily after feeding. I'll keep my binocular eye on the small one later. Have a great day!

Maggie

From: Pat Dubren
Subject: Bleeker and West 3rd Kestrels (Manhattan)
Date: June 18, 2009 (Thursday)

Hi Bob,

FYI--on 6/16 (Tuesday) while I was watching/photographing the Riverside Park Red-tailed Hawks at their nest, a jogger who paused briefly to talk while running in place in front of me said--he'd recently seen a Kestrel eating a sparrow on his rooftop: Where? -- located at Bleeker and W. 3rd St. Photos? Yes, and so I asked him was he going to post them and he said he would, most likely on flickr but just google "MacDougal Kestrel" and then before I could inquire further he was off and gone like the wind. Is this in any way useful info? [*Yes! - anyone know of a kestrel nest in the lower West Village? See page 6.*]

Regards,

Pat

From: Ben Cacace
Subject: 75th St. Kestrels - Change in Behavior
Date: June 18, 2009 (Thursday)

Bob,

The female has been behaving differently over the past three days. Two days ago she and the male were perched together on the antenna near me for well over an hour.

On two separate occasions she cached some food on a nearby fire escape and some spot that was out of sight. After caching she returned back to the antenna as if waiting for something to happen. One of the cached items was brought to the nest cavity and then shortly after was brought back and placed on the fire escape.

This morning there was a continuous series of calls from the female. As you know it was raining in the a.m. and she was doing the calling from under the eave on the nest building. This went on almost constantly for the time I was at the apartment which was around 45 minutes.

I decided to take a walk along 75th St. to see if one of the young had fledged onto the sidewalk. No sign of this on either sidewalk or on the street itself.

I'll let you know if I see any young.

Ben <http://novahunter.blogspot.com>

From: Bobby Horvath
Subject: Kestrels Upper East Side
Date: June 19, 2009 (Friday)

Hi Bob,

2 more fledglings I picked up yesterday (Thursday 18 June - that really rainy day) from Park Avenue and 77th st., Manhattan. [*Yes we have seen a male kestrel catching prey in a school yard on 75th between 1st and 2nd Avenues...and then heading east away from the other nearby kestrel nest on 75th street near 1st Avenue. And*

note that these two young birds were picked up on a very rainy day - young kestrels get waterlogged and cannot fly well - ending up on the ground...Anyway, we think this kestrel is from a different nest than the one Ben Cacace monitors.]

Bobby and Cathy Horvath

=====

From: John Wender

Subject: Red-tailed Hawk turned out to be a Kestrel (Chelsea)

Date: June 19, 2009 (Friday)

Hello Bob,

I'm the guy who found the kestrel chick in the middle of 7th Ave near 17th street. We took him to the Animal Refuge place on Columbus and 87th. They said he would be taken to the raptor rehab in NJ. We are grateful we found him in such great shape - smack in the middle of 7th Ave - he couldn't have been there long. Please send along links and info about NYC raptors - thanks for the offer. My 8yo son is really the serious birder, but he has gotten me hooked. [***Editor's Note/Opinion** - as much as we admire and respect The Raptor Trust in NJ, and its founder, Len Soucy and all of the fine people who work there, we do not recommend sending NYC kestrels to them for re-hab. The reason is very simple: once the kestrel(s) are ready for release, The Raptor Trust will not bring them back to release in NYC... Basically they feel that urban areas are not fit for living things - this despite the fact that kestrels in NYC are doing better than kestrels in NJ. We need to sustain and augment the population here, rather than exporting NYC kestrels to somewhere else - where they are in decline for unknown reason(s). Instead, we recommend all downed NYC kestrels go to Bobby and Cathy Horvath for re-hab. These kestrels are then released back into the city. Just the Editor's dos pesos here - and it is fine to disagree with these ideas.]*

Regards,

John Wender

Sent via BlackBerry by AT&T

=====

From: Bobby and Cathy Horvath (+ Christopher and Sadie)

Subject: Queen's nest info (Astoria)

Date: June 20, 2009 (12:50am Saturday morning)

Hi Bob,

Today we got another fledgling from Queens (19 June 2009). It came from a teacher who confirms the nest is in the molding along the roof line on the school where he teaches in Astoria. It's the Mt. Carmel School at 2540 Astoria Blvd. and Crescent Street intersection. It's three stories tall, he said. The baby came down and was out all day, didn't move and sat very close to a film crew that was working at the area filming a movie.

=====

From: Anita Randolfi

Subject: Re: E 9th St. kestrels

Date: June 20, 2009 (Saturday morning before the rains)

Visited the E 9th St. kestrel site at 6:45am, and stayed for an hour. After a half hour, saw the two kestrels together in the willow tree for a very few minutes. Then the female went to the antenna, and the male entered the nest. After another half hour the female was still on the antenna and the male was still in the nest. There was no sign of baby kestrels. --- anita randolfi

From: Ben Cacace
Cc: Christina Reik
Subject: Re: 75th Street Kestrels
Date: June 20, 2009 (Saturday)

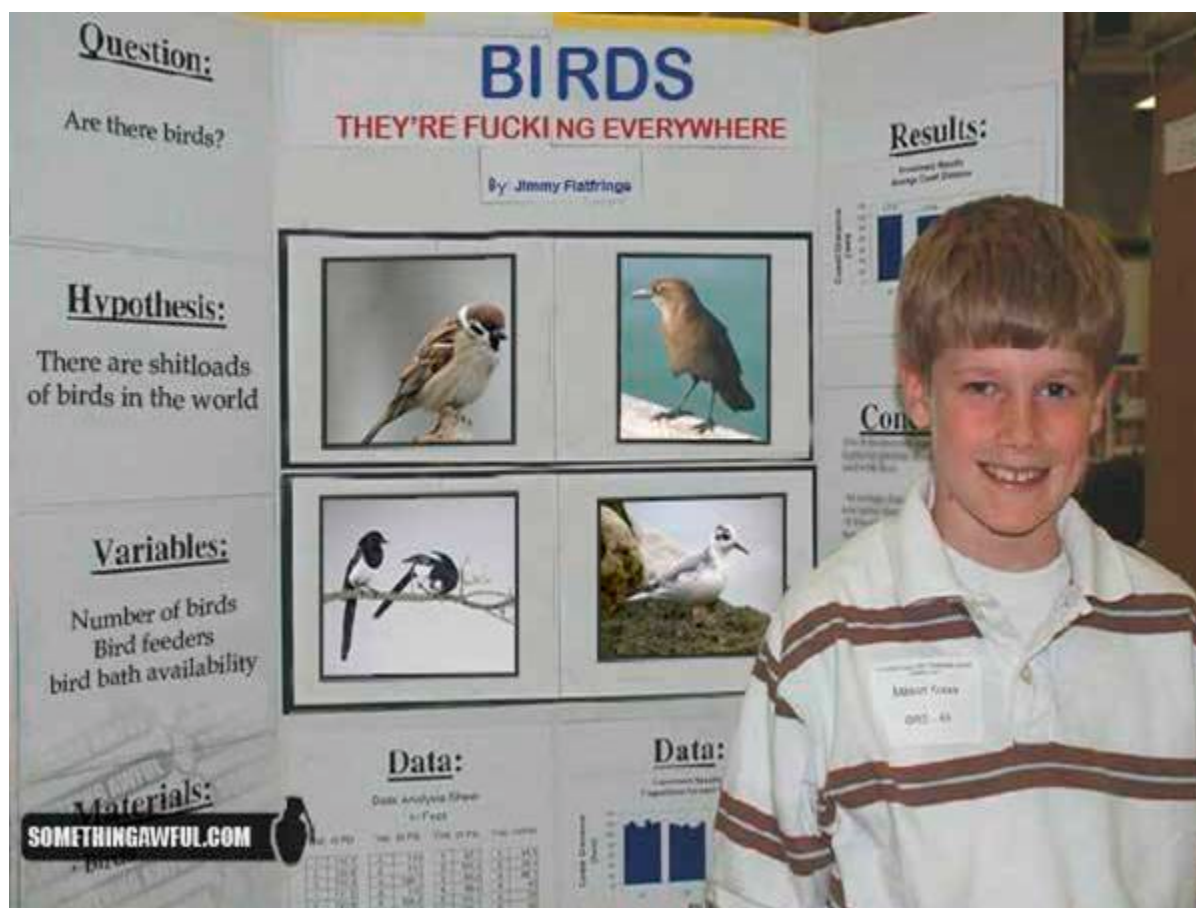
Bob,

Thanks for these details and thanks for mentioning that the young in the 75th St. nest are still small. Male and female are still seen daily and the food is being brought directly to the nest and nest exchanges are commonly seen with the female heading to the nest entrance relieving the male who perches on an antenna on the nest building that isn't visible from the street.

I've been watching the male going to roost in the evening and 3 out of 3 occasions he has headed west along 75th St. and appears to spend the evening west of the nest possibly along 1st Ave. or along one of the side streets.

All the best.

Ben <http://novahunter.blogspot.com>



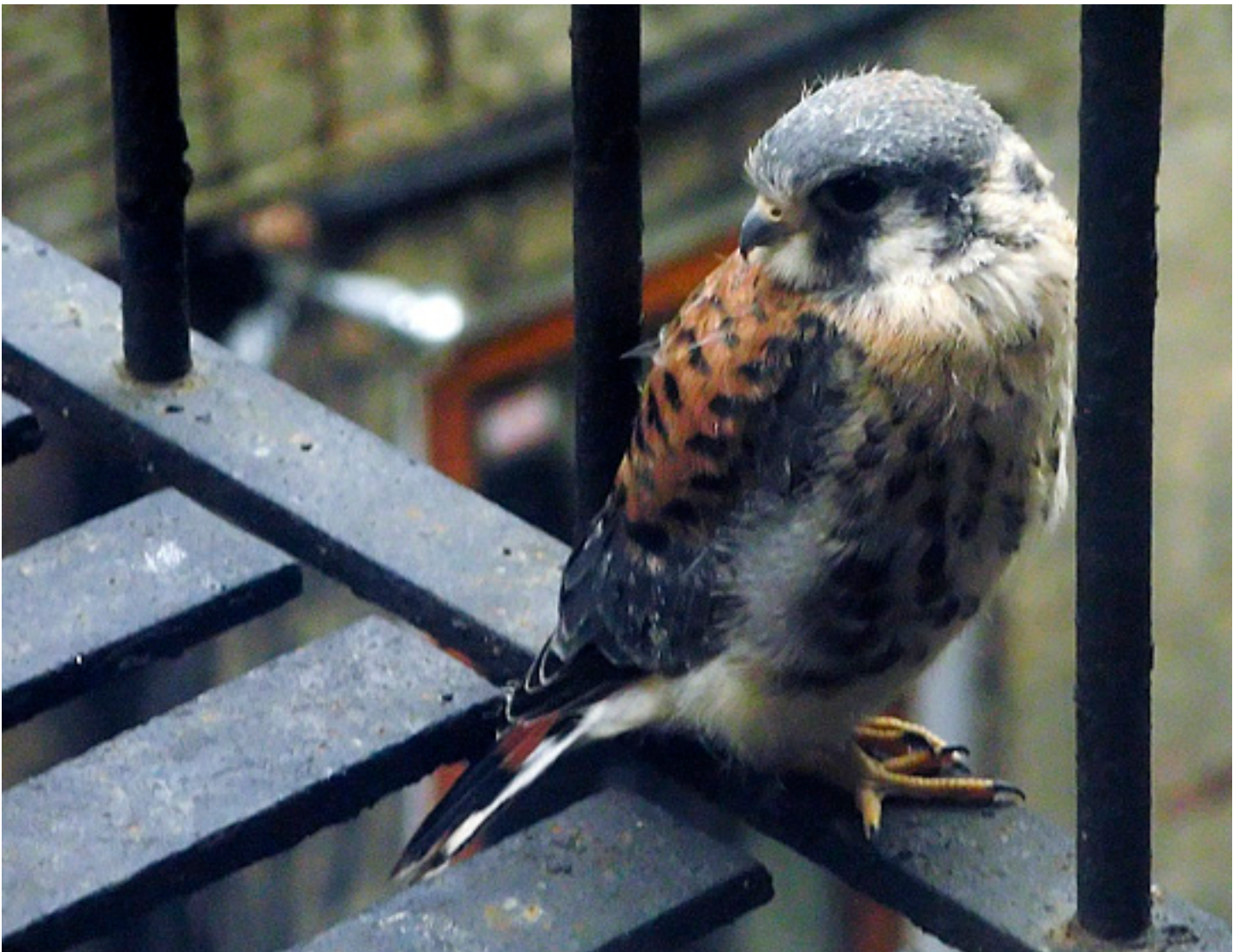
Above: Bob in his younger days before he met his future wife. His grade school teacher at the time (Paul Kerlinger) gave him an "F" for this poster presentation. He then began hitch-hiking around the USA, working in construction - and fishing in his free time. Photo by a young Chad Seewagen - just before he began working at WCS - and got his PhD!

Historical Note/Kestrels

Dear Marge and Margaret,

Thanks for the note about (and photo of) the fledgling Kestrel [*See below.*] Kestrels have been hanging around the meat market for some time -- perhaps because of the large rodent population? Back in the late '80's/ early '90's Joanne and I would occasionally see a Kestrel hunting on the Hiline outside our window (the Hiline then still existed between Gansevoort street and Westbeth). More recently (perhaps 7-8 years ago?) we saw an adult Kestrel on our fire escape (on Washington St. between Horatio and Jane), and would occasionally see either that same Kestrel or its mate flying above the meat market. It's nice to know they have apparently come back! And I hope they don't eat too many poisoned rodents...

Zack [*written in June 2007*]



Above: just fledged male on a rear fire escape on Jane/Horatio Streets, between Hudson St. and Eighth Avenue in the West Village.
Photo taken on 10 June 2007 by Mark Segall.

From: Jelmer Steenhuis
Subject: Brooklyn Kestrels
Date: June 20, 2009 (Saturday afternoon)

My address is driggs avenue in williamsburg, brooklyn. I see these guys through my back window quite frequently now. It may be a mother and possibly two little guys, but I can only confirm one. I would check on the roof for a nest, but there is an alarm that was recently installed. *[No need to look on the roof Jelmer - check the cornices of the buildings on your block!]* - -Jelmer

=====

From: KA Peltomaa
To: Robert DeCandido, Deborah Allen, Pat Dubren
Subject: Re: Kestrel's Eye
Date: June 20, 2009 (Saturday afternoon)

Hi Bob Deb and Pat,

Yesterday [*Friday the 19th*] I went over to Amsterdam (the Avenue) at about 6pm. I was let in by a tenant, got up on the roof and stayed until 7:30. Not much action, the young ones have quickly honed their flying skills and were not in a group on the roof as on Tuesday. At ca 6.40 or so, the adult female made one fly-in from the tallest building NW corner Bway/85th street. She flew straight from perching at the top of the water tower to the nest and went inside. Why would she do that? [*Good Question...*]

I waited for her to come out again but she stayed inside (at least until after I had left). As I walked home - one of the young males had landed and was perching on one the cell phone antennas on top of the nest building. I will miss bird walking and Kestrel watching with you guys.

- Anders [*who is off to Sweden with his wife for the summer - do visit Falsterbo for us. Meanwhile, are you kestrel fanatics aware of this film about a pair of Eurasian Kestrels (Falco tinnunculus) - filmed in Sweden?*]

<http://www.reelmoviecritic.com/2000/id106.htm>

=====



Above: Eurasian Kestrel in Beijing city, China. Photo by Aihua Zheng, a Post-Doctoral student here in the Bronx (Albert Einstein School of Medicine) working on the epidemiology of Dengue Fever.

From: Christina Reik
Subject: Another pair Upper East Side Kestrels
Date: June 20, 2009 (Saturday)

Hi Bob,

Up until a few years ago kestrels frequented the rooftop of the building on the northwest corner of Madison at 74th Street. Once the building put up scaffolding and started a long repair project of the roof and walls, the kestrels disappeared. At the same time there were reports of a hawk attack on a kestrel in this area.

I am enjoying your kestrel newsletters!

Christina

=====

From: Eileen Jones
To: Robert DeCandido PhD <rdcny@earthlink.net>
Subject: It's raining little girl kestrels
Date: June 20, 2009 (Late Saturday Night)

Hello Robert,

Friday night, I got a female fledgling from the Manhattan CACC, it was found on Lexington and 78th St. You should have heard the local mockingbird kvetching and dive bombing it as it was turned over to me on my porch. An adult robin joined in on the alarm calls. The kestrel fledgling didn't know what all the fuss was about.

This morning (Sat) I got a female, little too young, and too fat to fledge female from 180 Ocean Parkway, around the corner from me, a block west of the local chimney swift colony. This nest or one in approximately a 2 block radius of it has been active for over 5 years. Unfortunately, the weather is not cooperating on trying to reunite the families. Paul's photo of the young in the nest box is just what I need for the flyer, do you have his contact info so I can ask him about using his shot in the wildlife flyer?

Eileen

=====



Above: Eurasian Kestrels about to fledge in Budapest, Hungary.
Photo by Paul Morandini.



Above: "Bucket o' Kestrels" - to go...for banding. Then Volare' - Photo by Paul H. Karner on 15 June in eastern Pennsylvania. These youngsters are about 30 days old, and ready to fly. How many females vs. males do you see in this photo? Hint: see color below.

Here's looking at You from Anita, Howie, Debs, Pat, Anders, Ben, Jelmer, Randy, Lincoln, Christina, Cathy and Bobby and their kids - and I think I see David Bird's blue pen too.

Toxicology studies of NYC kestrels are underway.

Send any kestrel reports this way - we'll work them in somehow.

Volare! (Nel blu di pinto di blu) - and don't worry Anita!

Robert DeCandido PhD - 718-828-8262 or rdcny@earthlink.net
<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=oNgSeJzLJFc>

24 June 2009

American Kestrel Nest Survey NYC - Issue #13 (2009)

Kestrels are fledging - Part IIIIII!

In this issue we provide information about a Kestrel fledgling in Greenpoint, Brooklyn from Eileen Jones (pages 3-4); an update from the 9th street (Lower East Side) kestrel nest from Anita Randolfi (below - with photos on page 2); a brief note on an American kestrel release by Bobby, Cathy and Sadie Horvath from James O'Brien; and information about **Frounce** - a significant disease of urban (+ suburban) raptors in North America.

Briefly, at the 9th street nest in Manhattan, Anita Randolfi had not seen the adults for three days or so - but with some collaboration with a fellow raptor biologist (and sitting together in a community garden for two hours), we saw the adult female come to her usual perch. We suspect both adults are often away hunting these days since the young are big enough to deal with starlings that might enter the nest accidentally. We estimate young will fledge in 10-12 days or so (approx. 6-8 July). Meanwhile a few re-habbed kestrels (originally from NYC nests) were released by the Horvaths in Van Cortlandt Park in the Bronx this afternoon (24 June 2009).

Frounce (pages 6-9) is caused by a flagellated protozoan called *Trichomonas* that lives in the crop, sinus, mouth, throat, esophagus, and other organs of birds, especially pigeons (though we suspect House Sparrows are the primary vector for kestrels). Contaminated water (especially in drier years when standing pools of water are uncommon), is also a problem since many pigeons, sparrows, etc. are attracted to these infrequent puddles in dry years - and pass the disease to one another. The typical signs of frounce are white spots in the mouth or crop of a raptor, often described as "cheesy" or "white plaques." Other signs are head flicking, difficulty breathing, or even regurgitation of food. Bobby Horvath provided a nice photo of what frounce looks like up close in the mouth of a kestrel on page 7. Only one kestrel has been lost to frounce so far this year - and the disease is easily cured if caught in time.



Above: Adult male American Kestrel exiting the nest at the East 75th street site in Manhattan, 22 June 2009. (rdc)



Above and Below: Two Views of the 9th Street nest site and surrounding habitat; above looking east across Ave C on 9th street towards Ave D; below looking west on 9th street towards Ave C. Note Willow tree in both photos for reference. This is the only kestrel nest location where we could regularly see adult kestrels perched in a tree - the willow was a favorite place on sunny days. Nest is directly across the street from that willow. Both photos are composites or "stitches" of several digital images to make the panorama Photos by rdc in the spring (May) of 2009.



Kestrel Reports from the Field:

From: Jane McCall Politi
Subject: Kestrels: Amsterdam and NYU
Date: June 21, 2009 (Sunday)

Hi Bob,

I stopped by the kestrel nest on 84th and Amsterdam yesterday and to my astonishment saw two kestrels fly in from the west and perch on the antenna. They then flew into the nest. Only one flew out. There still must be something going on in there. I didn't have my binocs. [*Well - it might be that the female is getting ready to lay a second set of eggs - they can raise two broods in a season...So we should keep an eye out on that nest - and in that area. In other places, where kestrels have re-nested after raising a first brood, they will sometimes use a different (but nearby) cavity...Great sighting and thanks! I bet these were the kestrels that used to nest on 86th and Central Park West. According to published research - most kestrels that raise a second brood fledged their first set of youngsters in May. The adults spent about 14 days bringing food to them...and then the female began laying the second clutch. The youngsters had to find food for themselves and were pretty much on their own.*] Yes, that may be it because I saw them mating when they were on the antenna. They must love that spot - or each other!!!!!!

I forgot to mention earlier. I was at a meeting high up in a building on the east side of Washington Square. In the distance I saw a kestrel fly in a perch on one of the four turrets on a building on the west side of the park. At one point it flew off, but then came back. Are there any nests anywhere in the vicinity? [*Anyone?*]

Ciao,

Jane

=====
From: Eric Salzman
Subject: Newsletter #12
Date: June 21, 2009 (Sunday)

Hi Bob!

I'm enjoying the Kestrel newsletters. One small comment. Eileen Jones' letter mentions a "local chimney swift colony". Is that possible? I always thought that chimney swifts nested one pair to a chimney? Maybe there are flying young from the nest that return to the chimney at night which makes it look like a 'colony?'

Eric

--

website: <<http://ericsalzman.com>>

=====
From: Eileen Jones
Subject: Swift Oops and baby pix
Date: June 23, 2009 (Very Early Tuesday Morning)

Hello Robert and Eric,

When I typed in chimney swift colony, I thought -- nest? colony? At this point in baby season, my brain starts

to fry, check me in two weeks, I won't be able to spell my own name.... It only makes sense, they would be territorial at nest, does seem like a waste of good chimney space though, I must have been thinking of the nightly roosting pictures for migration. One more thing for my winter reading list...

Most of the info I found on the internet when the swift came in was for rehabbing nestlings. When a new bird comes in for rehab, I want to know what it is, what to feed it, how to house it, is it an adult during breeding season, and can I get it back out fast enough to take care of its young. This one was lucky, had less than a 24 hour turn around. Oh, and I get to see their ridiculously tiny feet, the little pins on the ends of the tail feathers for bracing against the chimney walls and feel his wrath, what a temper, when I fed it.

The Johnny come lately male American Kestrel from Greenpoint, came in Sunday morning. He was playing in traffic on Clay St between Manhattan & McGuinness Aves.

Eileen [*Eileen is a superb, licensed wildlife re-habber living in Brooklyn.*]



Chimney swift from E 7th St (Brooklyn)



Male kestrel (fledgling) from Greenpoint - details above

From: Beth Goffe
Subject: City College Kestrels
Date: June 21, 2009 (Sunday evening)

Hey Bob,

Stopped briefly by the 133rd St. nest today at about 12:45 pm. I didn't see anyone go in or out but I did see some movement through the little slit to the right of the nest hole. Some downy feathers also wafted out the hole. I'm looking forward to seeing nestlings! [*Beth - we think you are going to have UFOs soon - as in flying across the street to the trees in front of the "Projects" on that corner.*]

Beth

From: Rob Cicchetti
Subject: Kestrel Activity: West 68th street Nest
Date: June 23, 2009 (Tuesday - late afternoon)

Bob,

I have some good kestrel activity to report this evening. All activity took place between 7pm and 8pm between

67th st and 71st street at least from what I was able to see with my naked eye, my binocs and my scope. Luckily I had the scope handy and my 400mm/1.4x tele already mounted on a tripod ready for anything! I was fortunate to have front row seats to where most action was happening (on the nest building)

I first noticed a female with a kill on her favorite perch, and from its confident movements and balance, I assume this was the "regular" female adult. I was not able to identify the prey, other than being a small bird. After a few minutes, she was disturbed by another kestrel flying to the same perch. After a little jockeying for position, there was some attempts at copulation, then the intruding male flew away on top the tall, newer building at 68th/Bway, south side.

A female (juvenile) flew into the scene and landed on the nearby water tower, with something small in its talons and proceeded to feed-if it was a kill, it was partially eaten or something very small-it was perched, looking a bit wobbly while feeding. There was then another female who flew in, somewhat clumsily, and landed on what appears to be a little roof top structure adjacent to the smaller water tower on the same nest building. She also had a kill in her talons and began feeding on it. Their juvenile status was clear based on their scruffy look and lack of confidence in flight/perching. They also appeared to have longer tail feathers.

At the same moment, in the distance (70th st building with the white tarp on it) there was another kestrel on that water tower - I looked through the scope and it was a male-could not determine if it was a juvenile or not. I turned to position my camera towards this last one and it took off to someplace unknown.

I came back to the window a few minutes later and saw three kestrels on the building at 71st st - too far and too dark at this point to see what they were, but I was able to see one (physically smaller falcon) deliver prey to a larger one and the larger one flew away, acting seemingly like a mating pair from their actions based on how I've seen mating pairs behave in the past... These last two sightings may be overlap from the earlier ones I saw, but in all I saw seven kestrels, (five simultaneously) consisting of 3 confirmed females and two confirmed males. [*Great Info Rob! We might be "double-brooded" at two locations...stay tuned.*]

STOP

The Next Section of the Newsletter is too technical - and is meant for scientists only. We strongly advise you to close this file right now and do something interesting instead.

You have been warned.



Above: Kestrels, about 20 Days old. When young birds of prey are frightened, they "get their hackles up" and present their talons to the threat. Photo on 22 June by Paul Karner at one of the many kestrel nest boxes he has monitored through the years in eastern Pennsylvania. Kestrels occasionally use nest boxes here in NYC - on the order of once every 2-3 years at the Pelham Bay Park landfill in the Bronx. More recently, James Quadrino received an award in circa 2000 from President Bush for building and placing kestrel boxes in many locations on Staten Island. However, we don't know of a single pair of nesting kestrels on Staten Island...yet.

Frounce in Kestrels

From: Lukasz Rejt, PhD

Subject: Re: Frounce in Polish kestrels?

Date: July 21, 2008

Dear Rob,

As far as I understand you wrote about trichomoniasis (am I right?). I have never seen Warsaw kestrels suffering from it. It is quite common, however, among goshawks and time to time occurs also in falcons in captivity - as falconers told me. Our kestrels hunt young pigeons only in extremely rare occasions - in winter for example (I was informed about specimens trying to reach pigeons in dovecots - sometimes successfully).

I think that it will be good to ask two other urban-kestrel-fans - Stefan Kupko from Berlin (stefan.kupko@web.de) and Alexander Minich from Brest (Belarus) (ornitophylus@tut.by). They have contact with many kestrels every year, so maybe can help.

Unfortunately during next long months it will not be possible to go anywhere - in October our second child is going to be born, so there will be a lot of work.... not in science field.

All the best to you,

Luka

--

Lukasz Rejt, PhD
Museum & Institute of Zoology - Polish Academy of Sciences
Wilcza 64, 00-679 Warsaw
POLAND

From: Eileen Wicker
Date: Thursday, July 10, 2008
RE: NYC Kestrels

"The Hawk Mt Conference was interesting, expensive and enjoyable but I felt a general disapproval for rehabilitators from many of the attendees. I assumed it was the biologist viewpoint. What I found funny was they declared the decline of the kestrels and the increase in Coopers Hawks after many costly and time consuming studies. The information might not have been achieved scientifically but by questioning a few rehabilitators we could have told them that information. A good year for me on Coopers Hawks used to be 5, that was extremely high compared to some years. Last year we admitted 55, the majority of them window strikes. On the kestrels a normal year was around 50. Last year we admitted I believe 19. After questioning friends across the country they have all had similar experiences.. "

Eileen Wicker
Raptor Re-habber, Kentucky



Above: Cathy and Bobby Horvath treating a fledgling American Kestrel for frounce; photo by Bobby Horvath

From: [Stefan Kupko <stefan.kupko@web.de>](mailto:stefan.kupko@web.de)

Subject: Re: Frounce in Eurasian Kestrels

Date: July 22, 2008

Hello Robert,

Thanks for the mail and the interesting Newsletters. I study kestrels in Berlin, for more than 30 years in Berlin. This year we have more than 250 breeding pairs in Berlin! We ring the young kestrels (400-500 per year), built nest boxes (more than 320 in the moment in Berlin), have a falcon hospital and a station for kestrels for make them healthy and let them free. We also made studies about the prey (many house sparrows in the city area), genetic studies (with Luka from Warschau) and so on... But I have never found "Frounce" by my kestrels, this will be found by my colleagues which are ringing goshawks (*Accipiter gentilis*). They have some cases every year, all the birds must be euthanized in the hospital. Sorry for my bad English, but I do my "kestrel job" only honorary on my free time, my real job is in an hospital (emergency room). I hope we will keep in touch, I am very interested about your work in NYC, I will send you some pictures and results from Berlin later,

best regards,

Stefan

=====

From: Lesley Lee

Subject: Re: Frounce in URBAN kestrels

Date: July 28, 2008

Hello Robert,

I am a licensed wildlife rehabilitator in Phoenix, Arizona. I am licensed with AZGF and USFWS. I work almost exclusively with American kestrels, and have done so for a decade. We are a very large city (ranked 7th in population nationally), and have large numbers of American kestrels in all areas, rural and urban alike.

Trichomoniasis is common in American kestrels here. We average an intake of between 50 and 100 kestrels a year, and though this year has been fairly quiet, prior years have had the disease ranked at 90% of intake. I'm afraid we take it for granted that they will have it and don't think much about it. Our ambient climate makes it easy for the protozoan to flourish, and because kestrels here are fairly small (average weight of male - 90 grams; female average weight - 110), their prey consists of the smaller songbirds and doves which are the frequent carriers of the disease. They drink infected water and, because they are flocking birds, they pass the disease routinely at feeders where kestrels are likely to hunt.

It is easily treatable, even in advanced stages, as long as the bird is not below 45% emaciation. We use Spartrix (carnidazole) with great results. Most recover with no ill effects, though sinus cavities, beaks and throat are often the areas of greatest damage.

If you have any specific questions please feel free to contact me any time.

Lesley Lee

Arizona Go Wild

American kestrels/Greater roadrunners

AZGF/USFWS

=====

From: [Gary Siftar <okraptors@hotmail.com>](mailto:okraptors@hotmail.com)

Subject: RE: Frounce in URBAN kestrels

Date: July 23, 2008

Robert:

We have been doing Raptor rehab in N.E. Oklahoma for about 17 years and prior to last year had never seen a case of *Trichomoniasis*. Starting last August 2007 most of our birds came in with it. We first had it in 4 Kestrels. By the time we received the Spartrix we had to euthanize two. A single 10mg pill seemed to cure them. Almost every other Raptor last fall came in with it. Same treatment for all, regardless of the size. We'd keep longer than usual and inspect carefully to make sure it didn't present itself again. None did. We'd give another dose (Prophylactically) upon release.

We are rural but take in birds from urban and rural areas. I'll check on Kestrel numbers, but I believe we had at least four and all four had it. We have had no cases this year.

Gary Siftar

=====

From: [Sigrid Ueblacker <raptor@birds-of-prey.org>](mailto:raptor@birds-of-prey.org)

Subject: RE: Frounce in URBAN kestrels

Date: July 23, 2008

Dear Dr. DeCandido

I presented a paper on *Trichomoniasis* in American Kestrels and Screech Owls at the International Conference on Raptor Biomedicine in Midrand South Africa in 1998. The paper was published in Raptor Biomedicine III.

Much has changed since then. In the past 10 years have seen *Trichomoniasis* in Great Horned Owls, Red Tailed Hawks, Barn Owls, Coopers Hawks and Sharp-shinned Hawks, and this year (so far) in 2 Golden Eagles. In addition the incubation period has changed from 10 to 12 days to 18 days and more.

As you will read in my paper many other birds have been encountered with *Trichomoniasis*, such as songbirds, doves, and especially corvids. I am still using the same treatment of 10 mg Carnidazole for 100 gram of bird weight. In severe cases I administer antibiotics due to the increased production of mucous that may cause respiratory distress. I now use Baytril instead of Tribissen. If I have to administer a hyperalimentation diet I now use human baby food, such as pureed chicken or turkey, until the bird can eat on its own. I do not use lactated ringers anymore, just plain tap water.

I hope this information is useful to you.

Sigrid Noll Ueblacker
Birds of Prey Foundation
2290 S. 104th Street
Broomfield, CO 80020

<http://www.birds-of-prey.org>

"The language of birds is very ancient, and, like other ancient modes of speech, very elliptical: little is said, but much is meant and understood" - Gilbert White, The Natural History and Antiquities of Selborne 1778



Above: Deborah Allen looking for another kestrel to photograph - **Volare'**!

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=oNgSeJzLJFc>

You Survived (Congratulations) - due, in part, to our local raptor re-habbers:

Cathy and Bobby Horvath (+ Christopher and Sadie)

Eileen Jones

"Nel blu di pinto di blu" - into the blue painted blue

Robert DeCandido PhD - rdeny@earthlink.net or 718-828-8262

3 July 2009

American Kestrel Nest Survey NYC - Issue #14 (2009)

Kestrels are fledging - Part IIIIIII-B!

We continue to be surprised at new kestrel territories being discovered on Manhattan Island. First (p. 8), Louise Neri reports several young kestrels, and gets us a step closer to finding the actual nest near New York University (NYU!). Ms. Tricia Frost reports important details about a family of kestrels in the area of 38th street and Third Avenue. And we'd like to add our dos pessos too: despite our best attempts to overlook activity at nests used in prior years, we were alerted to at least one young kestrel fledging from the nest at 86th street and Central Park West (28 June) - thanks to Howard and Anita Stillman for the "heads-up." This nest site has been occupied for at least 10 years at least...and originally pointed out to us by Miriam Raikowski. And on 25 June, in the early evening, some of us (including Sharon Berlan and Rob Strauss) discovered that the 57th street and Third Avenue kestrels seem to be nesting again - the female is entering and remaining in a nest cavity in that very urban location.

Closer to home, Beth Goffe reports that the City College area kestrels fledged in the last several days (see photo of nest habitat below and her descriptions in the "**Reports from the Field**" section beginning on page 3). Deborah Allen sends an amazing photo (p. 11) of a female kestrel trying to snatch a sparrow meal from a traffic light support on West 85th street....And Carol Wood provides intriguing confirmation that Kestrel adults are copulating again (p. 8) on Broadway, and perhaps we should be on the lookout for second broods at several locations in NYC.

Speaking of home, Laura Meyers allowed us access to hers near Loisaia ("Lower East Sida") Avenue to photograph the kestrel habitat in the area of the East 9th street and Avenue C nest. We'd like to thank her, and everyone else - without your help there would be no kestrel newsletter and no story to tell. Thank You all for allowing Debs and me into your world - we feel truly lucky to receive your words, ideas and photos.

Robert DeCandido PhD - rdcny@earthlink.net or 718-828-8262



Above: City College area American Kestrel nest site - panoramic stitch. The nest is monitored by Beth Goffe. June 2009



Above: Male American Kestrel delivering food to the 75th Street nest, Upper East Side, in late June 2009.

Below: Can you find a kestrel nest in this photo? There are likely several... Hint, this is a view of the lower east side, looking south from 10th street. Avenue C runs North to South at the right. Photo thanks to Laura Meyers who granted us permission to photograph from her home. The kestrels (primarily the female) hunt in the small Community Garden with the willow tree at center, and to points unknown to the east (left) - in the urban environment. Anita Randolfi and a number of us are waiting for young to appear at the front of the nest entrance here...see next page for closer view of the area.





Above: The kestrel nest building on Avenue C and 9th street - thanks Laura! For "the big picture", see bottom photo, previous page.

Kestrel Reports from the Field:

From: Beth Goffe

Subject: City College Kestrels!

Date: June 25, 2009 (Thursday afternoon)

Hi Bob,

I'm at the nest and one of the birds (nestlings) has its head out and bobbing up and down, looking around. Think it's ready to fly?

So cute! I need to return with my tripod.

Beth

Sent from my iPhone

From: Carl Howard

Subject: West Village Kestrels

Date: June 25, 2009 (Thursday)

Possible kestrel nest on Greenwich Avenue, by Jane Street. Young already fledged. Carl

From: Adrian Benepe
Subject: Re: NYC American Kestrel Newsletter #13
Date: June 25, 2009 (Thursday)

Bob:

Very interesting stuff and great photos. I love the idea of kestrels in "Alphabet City". I also liked the photo of the chicks "getting their hackles up" in the nest box. You do great work--thanks so much.

Adrian
=====

From: Laura Meyers
Subject: 9th Street Kestrels
Date: June 25, 2009 (Thursday)

Hi Bob,

I read your newsletter last night and realized that the East 9th Street Kestrel Nest is right across from my bedroom window [*Small World...*]. Actually a block away from my 12th story bedroom window. I am on East 10th Street facing south and pretty much in line with the nest on 9th Street. I got some shots on a dark hazy morning of the Kestrel perched on the antennae and of the nest.

When I woke up at 6:30 the Kestrel was perched on the antennae and stayed there for about 45 minutes took off I caught of glimpse of "her" going into the nest at about 7:15am. I am shooting with my long lens as you call it 100-400 with a 1.4 extension.

BTW - I am the person that you see at the Bronx Botanical Gardens and travel with Alan and you call us the people with the long lens other than Deb.

Regards,

Laura
=====

From: Stella Moon (**Part A**)
Subject: Kestrels on Avenue C
Date: June 27, 2009 (Saturday)

Hello,

In case you are interested, I live on the corner of ave c and 3rd st for 15 years now. I have plants and a bird feeder on my fire escape, don't tell! [*Our lips are sealed.*] Every year for the past 6 years or so the kestrels come around December to start to feed on the finches and sparrows. This year they were around for months. Also, we see red tail hawks all the time, there is something about the air current here or something. We have seen a red tail kill even, about three months ago and it wasn't quick and dirty for the poor pigeon. We even see red tails just perching on fire escapes and roof tops in the neighborhood including ours. We have also seen what we think is a coopers hawk on our fire escape sitting one day for about two hours 6 months ago. Our bird feeder has been attracting amazing things too. Sparrows, finches, cardinals, blue jays, doves, starlings, red wing blackbirds, even a ring-necked turtle dove one year and a baby parakeet last year we tried to catch and save but were unable. There is always something to see from our perch and we are just thrilled to be a part of it. We have some good photos but not too many. I'll try to attach some.

Thanks and enjoy your day,

stella moon

From: Stella Moon (**Part B**)

Sent: Sunday, June 17, 2007

Subject: kestrels on Avenue C

Hello, my name is Stella Moon and I've lived on the corner of Ave C and 3rd st in Manhattan for 13 years. For the past 3 or 4 years every Christmas and around New Years kestrels would come and eat the birds at my bird feeder. The first year I couldn't believe it, I even have photos. They would strike and all the birds would go crazy and I would hear a loud bang on the window [*Janet Bachant, we hope you are reading this.*]. I've actually seen them eat a finch before my eyes. They never stayed around past this time of year though. They returned though year after year and this year was especially neat. A male and a female would perch on top of a light on a building across the street while hunting. I have very good pictures of them both. I hoped and prayed they would build a nest since they stayed there off and on until march this year, well beyond their normal pattern. But no nest and no more sign of them. They are so beautiful and I feel so lucky to be witnessing these magnificent creatures while it seems no one else notices. I live on the top of the 6th floor building and we also see a lot of hawks and cardinals and jays etc. I have a small bird feeder and lots of plants so it's inviting for the birds big and small. I hope this helps in your quest and let me know if you would like photos or more info,

Sincerely,

stella moon



Above: Red-tailed Hawk (Sub-adult - note red eye) on Avenue C terrace. Photographed by Stella Moon in 2009.

From: Beth Goffe
Subject: City College Kestrels
Date: June 26, 2009 (Friday afternoon before the thunderstorms)

Hi Bob,

12:55pm: I'm here again. I saw 2 nestlings and a bird on the cell phone thing on the roof. I can't tell if it's an adult or newly-fledged. And now it's gone...

1:55pm: Unfortunately, I had to return to work but I'll be back tomorrow and will be able to spend a lot more time (assuming they're still around!).

The roof bird returned and I'm thinking it's a male fledgling. It hopped from one structure to another and seemed fairly unbalanced (but had beautiful plumage). Prior to today, I have not seen a bird perch on the roof - the parents were always on the move. That would make 3 young seen today. How could you tell the bird in my picture is a female without seeing the wings? *(It looks like the upper breast is heavily streaked...a male would have spots. See Beth's photo below of a young City College kestrel about to fledge below.)*

I am having fun with "my" kestrels!

Beth

=====



Above: so, is Beth's young kestrel a male or a female?

From: Beth Goffe
Subject: City College Kestrels
Date: June 29, 2009 (Monday)

Hi Bob,

I stopped by the nest today and no kestrels in evidence at all. I hope they all survived their first few days of flight (one of them scared me on Saturday). I have TONS of pictures and am still going through them. I'll forward when I can.

Is it possible this pair might nest again? [*Possible but almost all re-nesters are those pairs that fledged young by 20-25 June - but we have to stress that for NYC - we just do not know...stay tuned!*]

Thanks,

Beth

=====

From: Beth Goffe
Subject: City College Kestrels
Date: June 30, 2009

Hi Bob,

Ah, I can only wish for another brood... I'll keep checking, though.

So, attached is one of thousands of pictures I took. This is a female, correct? I'm not sure any of the fledglings were male, actually, but I haven't been through all of the pictures yet. I'll send more when they're ready. This one hung out on the same fire escape for the 3 hours I was there and then, just when I was ready to leave, I looked at my camera for a second, looked up and it was gone! I couldn't relocate it but I wished it well. A number of kids enjoyed the view through my camera.

A couple of neat things I saw on Saturday: one of the fledglings (not the one in this picture) flew at the nest hole building, I guess trying to get back to the hole. It ended up stuck to the side of the building like a bat. I'll send you a picture of that when it's ready. The male parent was in evidence through the day and, at one point, grabbed prey out of the nest hole and gave it to the bird on the fire escape. The baby ate a bit of it but dropped it to the ground when it changed position. I checked later and it was a house sparrow.

More later...

Enjoy!

Beth

=====

From: Robert DeCandido
Subject: East 57th Street Kestrels (Re-nesting?)
Date: 25 June 2009 (Thursday afternoon - late)

Kestrels seem to be re-nesting at 57th street and Third Avenue where a couple of young were recovered this spring from a nest that was in a building cornice on Third Ave that was undergoing renovation.

From: Carol Wood
Subject: 69th Street kestrels
Date: June 29, 2009 (Monday)

Hi Bob,

I went up to the roof terrace this evening around 7:30 [*Broadway at 69th street*]. There was a female kestrel on a ledge near the top of Rob's building. I next located a male on the water tower on the building on the SE corner of 70th & Broadway. I thought at first that it was a young male because the chest didn't appear to be very buffy, but he surprised me a few minutes later (unless he's really precocious). I looked away and when I looked back he had moved down around the side of the water tower, and was up to something. I moved to get a better view and saw that he was copulating with a female. The female I saw initially was still on Rob's building. After a while, that female took off and flew north out of sight. I then saw a fourth kestrel (gender undetermined) fly in and land on a construction cable on the building on the NE corner of 70th & Broadway. A few minutes later that bird took off and caught a small flying bird or insect. It took the prey back to that building and landed where I could only see the kestrel's tail. I suspect the prey was an insect, because I didn't see any feathers scattering because of plucking. Meanwhile, the pair I had seen copulating remained on their water tower.

Carol

=====

From: Louise Neri
Sent: June 29, 2009 (Monday morning)
Subject: NYU area - Kestrels in New York

Hi Deborah--

I live on University Place on the top (22nd floor) of a pre-war building. Lately I have noticed a din in the early mornings and now I realize that there are several kestrels taking up residence here! When I have my doors open, they are quite bold, coming and sitting on the railing and looking straight in at me or arguing with each other on the balcony. A couple of them (young ones) have been fighting and leaving their fluff around.

The birds tend to be there from 6am to about 8.30am. I have four at the same time. Two obviously younger as they don't have completely developed tail feathers (they are the two that squabble a lot and peck at each other).

Let me know if you are interested....[*Yes - see below for more info about NYU kestrels.*]

=====

Subject: Extralimital - Kestrels in NYC (NYU area)
From: Kathy
Date: Monday, 29 June 2009

I had an interesting experience as I looked out a 12th story window off Broadway near 4th St in Manhattan. I initially was looking out the window observing the rooftops and water towers when my son said "there's a bird on the top of that water tower." Without binoculars I could see the "sideburns" of a beautiful male Kestrel. After I took a couple of pictures with my small digital camera the bird took off. It flew to another nearby water tower and landed just as another Kestrel took off. What a treat a pair of Kestrels in the middle of Manhattan! I am sure they find plenty to eat.

30 June - I was visiting my son on Friday June 26th and we were up on the 12th floor of 721 Broadway looking west. A pair of Kestrels were perched on top of two water towers. They were probably in the vicinity of Mercer

St between Washington Pl and Waverly Pl. I do not know if there was a nest in the vicinity. Pretty exciting for me who is used to seeing them in the fields of PA.

I had posted my sighting on PA Birds and someone sent me your newsletter.

Kathy Stagl
Emmaus, PA

Subject: Re: Extralimital- Kestrels in NYC
From: Dallas DiLeo
Date: Monday, 29 June 2009

There is a vast network of citizen scientists watching and documenting kestrels all over NYC. The NYC Kestrel Newsletter is sent out by email with lots of pix. If you'd like the most recent forwarded to you for a look-see, email me off-list.

<http://www.cityislandbirds.com/kestrel%20advert2.pdf>

Dallas DiLeo
Pittsburgh



Above: "Cavity Nesters of Pennsylvania and NYC" = Kestrels; Photo by Paul Karner

From: Paul H Karner <paulban@epix.net>
Subject: Pennsylvania Weekly Kestrel update....
Date: June 29, 2009 (Early Monday morning)

Hello Robert,

Weekly Report on the Kestrels in my study area.

The past week was very exciting as I went over 200 young Kestrels banded for 2009 in my study box area. As I checked the boxes I found K's ready to fledge and some that were just starting to hatch. Also I found a few pairs just going down on eggs. I do think these are the K's that had failed eggs due to the bad weather we were having in June and recycled. I had three different boxes last year that recycled and only banded 4 young out of these boxes total. I still have over 12 boxes that I know have young to band.

Next week I'll have some outstanding information on how many adults I have banded for 2009 and how many returning banded adults I found. Since I have Kestrels that nest in my boxes from Hawk Mt. (42 miles as the bird flies), there is a good chance that one of my banded Kestrels could be nesting in your city. Also I could be getting your young Kestrels nesting in my boxes since none of your Kestrels get banded. The amount of unbanded adults that are nesting in my study area every year COULD be from your "city" pairs!

Till my next report,

Keep up the great work all of you guys are doing in NYC!!!!

Paul

=====
From: Anita Randolfi
Subject: Re: E 9th St. kestrels
Date: June 29, 2009 (Monday evening)

dear Bob,

Today at 7:45pm was the first time I've seen the female since we saw her last week. Marta, one of the gardeners, said that both were around the usual spots on Sunday, but I did not see them. There is still no sign of activity or new life at the nest, but, there is no sign of decay either. I watched the female for about ten minutes and then she flew off eastward toward the river.

If you and/or Debbie plan to be in the neighborhood, let me know & I'll try to meet you.

anita randolfi

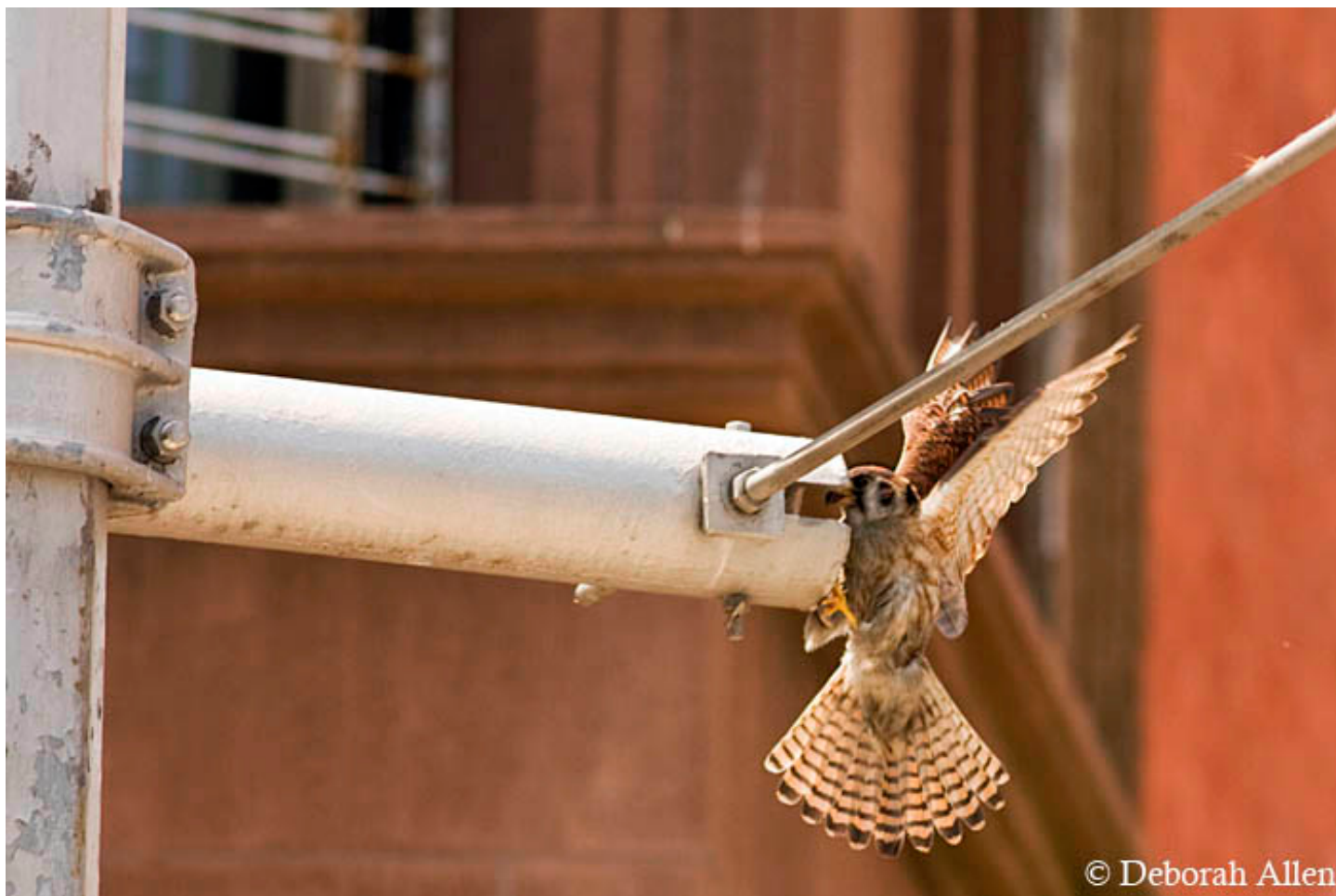
=====
From: Anita Randolfi
Subject: Re: E. 9th St. kestrels
Date: July 1, 2009 (Wednesday Night)

dear Bob,

Watched from 4:40 to about 6:30 pm ... fortunately the Garden was open and I could sit and watch. After about forty minutes the female came to the antenna and stayed there for about a half hour. Then she flew to the nest and stayed inside for another half hour. Every once in a while she would peek out of the nest hole and have a

look around. It was very sweet to see. Then she left the nest for the antenna, but only stayed there a few minutes before flying toward the East River. No sign of the male, or of young that I could see.

anita randolfi



Above: female American Kestrel trying to snatch a European House Sparrow on the southwest corner of 85th Street and Central Park West at about 1pm on a Sunday afternoon (28 June 2009) - see report below from Brooklyn, May 2000.

DATE: Sunday, 7 May 2000

SUBJECT: American Kestrel Tale

REPORTED BY: "susan m choi"

hi all.

you know those horizontal pieces of pipe at the top of the traffic light poles, the ones sparrows like to nest in and are popping in and out of all the time? over the weekend we saw a male kestrel clinging to the end of one such, at the corner of union and 8th ave in park slope, and literally trying to yank forth a meal for himself. in the end he left empty-clawed, but it was a dramatic spectacle, and smack in the middle of busy weekend pedestrian and wheeled traffic. - susan choi

From: Tricia Frost
Sent: June 30, 2009 (Tuesday night)
Subject: kestrel sighting - 38th St and 3rd Avenue

Dear Ms Allen,

I don't know if you are still interested in kestrel sightings in Manhattan. I have just moved into a 26th floor apartment on 38th and 3rd. I am watching 4 birds that frequent the rooftop across the street. They seem to be kestrels as best as I can identify. I do not have binoculars to see how many are male/female. They light on a cage that covers a chimney. One sits often on or near the cage, while the other 3 come back and forth.

The building they frequent is on the northwest corner of Third and 38th.

Tricia Frost

Date: July 1, 2009 (Wednesday)

Hi Tricia,

Thanks for the report. From your description it sounds like you have two adults and two fledglings, or possibly one adult and three fledglings. The birds may have been on the roof of the building they nested in. They typically nest in a hole in the cornice of a 19th century building. Most of these buildings are 4 to 6 stories tall. This is very exciting since we haven't located a nest in your neighborhood yet. If the birds didn't nest in the building where you saw them, the nest is still probably within a block or two. Either Bob (cc'd above) or I will try to check the area for possible nest sites in the next two days (Thursday/Friday). It will probably be me, since Bob is re-building his computer right now (fried motherboard).

Meanwhile, I've attached the last two issues of our Kestrel Newsletter (pdfs). Please let me know if you'd like to see more.

We get most of our reports from people who see something while looking out the window, either at home or at the office. If you see the birds enter a hole in a cornice, please make a note of the location. That may be the nest.

Again, thanks, and I'll let you know if I/we discover anything in the next couple of days.

Best wishes,

Deborah Allen

"The time to save a species is while it is still common."

Rosalie Edge, Founder of the Hawk Mountain Sanctuary



Don't you wonder sometimes
'Bout sound and vision?

Blue, blue, electric blue
That's the color of my room
Where I will live
Blue, blue

Pale blinds drawn all day
Nothing to do, nothing to say
Blue, blue

I will sit right down, waiting for the gift of sound and vision
And I will sing, waiting for the gift of sound and vision
Drifting into my solitude, over my head

Don't you wonder sometimes
'Bout sound and vision?

David Bowie, © 1977 - <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=wdxIhNOgwBE>

7 July 2009

American Kestrel Nest Survey NYC - Issue #15 (2009)

Kestrels are fledging - Part IIIIIIIII-BII!

If nothing else, our American Kestrel research in NYC has been a journey of discovery. To highlight this, we begin this issue with a quiz. In the photo below, Deborah Allen provides concrete evidence that at least one pair of Manhattan Island nesting kestrels is feeding upon a novel (and non-native) food source. Can you identify what the male kestrel is transferring to a youngster? Hint: it is not an endotherm (warm-blooded animal), and it is not an insect. More information about this prey species can be found in observations made by Eric Cohen in Queens in 2008 (p. 5), and by Ben Cacace - he has been studying this pair of kestrels that nest on East 75th street for a few years now - some of for Ben's comments can be found on pages 3-4; finally, see pages 8-12 of this very **Newsletter #15** for a fascinating article about this prey item (an ectotherm with a long tail).

We are slowly wrapping up the 2009 season for NYC kestrels. In this issue we feature information from two nests sites in Manhattan, and one territory in Queens (Jackson Heights area) that Mike DiPrima has been watching for a couple of years now. Thank You.



Above: Food transfer from the adult male to a youngster at the East 75th street nest site.
Can you identify what prey is being transferred???? Photo on 4 July 2009 by Debs.



Above: East 75th street site that Richard Schwartz oversees - our great thanks to him! The arrow points to the nest entrance on the black metal cornice. To the right is east, and the view is looking directly north. (Manhattan Island is "offset" - not directly aligned N-S.) The lizard prey transfer in the photo on Page 1 was made right at that arrow. Panoramic Stitch of several photos (rdc).

Kestrel Reports from the Field:

From: Mike Maurer <treeswallow5@aol.com>
Subject: Re: NYC American Kestrel Newsletter #14
Date: July 3, 2009 (Friday morning, early)

Hi Robert.... It always strikes a small nerve with me when people see me putting up nest boxes and banding young kestrels, bluebirds and tree swallows or crossing spotted salamanders on wet spring nights, and one of their first questions is "why are you doing this? are they rare?" Why does everyone think we should wait until things are "rare" before we do something? thanks again for sending me your newsletter.

Mike Maurer - Marion, MA

"The time to save a species is while it is still common" Rosalie Edge, Founder of Hawk Mountain Sanctuary

From: Anne Lazurus
Subject: NYC Kestrels - Manhattan
Date: July 2, 2009 (Thursday afternoon, late)

On Thursday, July 2, in between the thunder storms at about 4:45pm I saw on the cell-phone antenna of the building on the south-west corner of East 14th St. and First Ave a male American Kestrel and a frantic Northern

Mockingbird flying near it. The E. Starlings sat on their respective antennas watching the avian interaction. There are American Kestrels nesting in the East Village. reported by Anne Lazarus, on July 4, 2009.



Above: First fledgling (a female) to leave the East 75th street nest. Photographed early Saturday morning (4 July 09).

From: Ben Cacace

Subject: Watching Female Fledgling on Porch West of Nest Building

Date: July 3, 2009 (Friday Night)

From 7:50pm tonight. Good news! The female fledge (downy head, awkward short flights, short primary projection with light edges to the primaries) bobs her head a lot and makes very short hop flights on the fencing around the blue fenced building one [building] west of the nest building. She has settled on the west facing wall at the base of the porch just below the level of the nest building roof. [*See Deborah Allen's photo above.*]

The adult male and female are around and were looking for the youngster. The adult female appears to have a bead on the fledgling and flew to the north end of the "antenna" building (icon 2 on the Google Map I produced).

The young female actually tried to land on the wall of the porch building like a Chimney Swift ... she fell to the porch shortly after looking for a way up but eventually settled for the area around the west facing wall.

It's 8:40pm and no sign of the adults and the fledge appears to be hidden on the porch somewhere.

Ben

From: Robert DeCandido
Subject: 75th street (Upper East Side) nest update
Date: 4 July 2009 (Saturday)

As Ben observed and reported previously (+ photographed - see: <http://novahunter.blogspot.com/>) - the 75th street kestrels (well at least the male) is/are capturing **lizards** - but we don't know from where. We suspect from Roosevelt Island or somewhere in western Queens...or perhaps from the area along the East River (Manhattan Side) where we can see the Smoke Stack(s), or perhaps Carl Schurz Park, etc...anyway we don't know. Here is some info about the species of lizard - the Italian Wall Lizard (*Podarcis sicula campestris*) from Ben:

http://people.hofstra.edu/russell_1_burke/HerpKey/regional_lizards.htm

Deborah has photos of the male kestrel bringing one directly to the nest at about 11:00am on Saturday morning [see Page 1 of this Newsletter]. We can see the green of the lizard clearly in her photo. Both adult male and female Italian Wall Lizards have green on their backs.

It would be interesting to see the times of the day when lizards are captured...Ben has seen/photographed at least four occasions when the male has brought lizards to the nest.

Note: It was Eric Cohen who first reported Kestrels (in Sunnyside, Queens) capturing and eating lizards - in the NYC Kestrel Newsletter #3 (22 April 2008):

<http://picasaweb.google.com/ericmarccohen/SunnysideKestrels?authkey=Q4kfiH3uZQ#5190292701433741362>



Above: adult male American Kestrel photographed by **Mao Ouyang © 2009**

From: Eric Cohen

Subject: Lizards and Queen's Kestrels (Sunnyside)

Date: *July 31, 2008*

Our kestrels (a pair that I've been watching since May; we live in Sunnyside, 47th Ave. and 41st. St.) must have bred because, for at least a month straight, we could see them with **lizard prey** in their talons every single day, perched on an antenna visible from our kitchen window. We still see them everyday up there, but there hasn't been a lizard meal in sight for weeks. I can only assume that they don't need as much bulk right now.

Unfortunately, I haven't seen sign of any young. I'm fairly certain that we pinned down their nest site, a typical spot (according to the reports in your excellent newsletters) in a rusted out cornice of a building within easy sight and reach of the antenna perch. But alas, no young.

Still: Kestrels in Queens! It adds spice to life.

Eric Marc Cohen



Above: adult female American Kestrel photographed by **Mao Ouyang © 2009**



From: Laura Meyers

Subject: 9th Street and Ave, C - female kestrel in nest [*photo above - typical metal cornice nest in NYC!*]

Date: July 4, 2009 (Saturday evening)

Hi Bob,

When I saw the Kestrel on the antenna tonight, I decided to try to get a better shot from inside the garden since it was open later for July 4th. Of course it had disappeared by the time I got downstairs. After waiting and intensely looking with camera and binoculars in tow for about an hour, a neighbor who works in the garden asked if I was looking for the falcon. I described the location of the nest to her and another person in the garden and shared my binoculars in order for them to get a look at the small hole. Then one person in the group spotted the Kestrel through the binoculars coming out of the hole. We were all very excited. Here are the a few shots that I was able to get. Once again it was still a distance away and a bit dark out so they are not great pictures. I was not sure which of the two holes was the correct one the pictures answered that is the larger hole on the top.

Laura Meyers

From: Anita Randolfi
Subject: E 9th St. kestrels
Date: July 5, 2009 (Sunday morning)

dear Bob,

Will not be able to make the Central Park bird walk this morning, so will keep you up to date on the E 9th St. pair by e-mail. Yesterday I sat in the Community Garden from 5:00 to 6:30pm. After about a half hour the female showed up on the antenna. I have the feeling she was on the hunt because I noticed that the other birds were quite alert and when she made any move, they sounded alarmed and flew for cover. Then I noticed that the male was sitting in the willow tree. They didn't seem to pay any attention to each other and neither made any move to go to the nest. By 6:30pm they had both flown off. There was no sign of activity or of decay at the nest. Do you think it's possible that this pair had young that fledged before we started watching them? *[We'll definitely know for sure as events unfold this week and next...but if the adults are still entering the nest cavity (see Laura Meyer's observations from 4 July) - we can be cautiously optimistic. My guess is that young will fledge from the East 9th street nest about 11 July.]*

anita randolfi

=====



Above: Kestrel perched atop a chimney screen in Jackson Heights, Queens. 5 July 2009. Photo by Mike DiPrima

From: Mike DiPrima
Sent: *July 30, 2008*
Subject: Kestrels in Jackson Heights, Queens [*photo above*]

i wrote to you about seeing a kestrel in Jackson Heights. when i woke this a.m. i went to look and there he was

across the street but to my surprise he was joined by two others sitting 3-6 ft away i guess there is a nest around.....mike

5 July 2009: he was in my face last night. i was sitting on the terrace and it hovered above me vocalizing and then went on the roof,,a few minutes later it left giving chase to a larger bird when it caught up to it the kestrel went off to the left and out of my line of sight

Regarding NYC kestrels capturing lizards - here is an article about these lizards (Italian Wall Lizards) from *Newsday* we originally ran in NYC Kestrel Newsletter #3, April 22, 2008:

<http://www.newsday.com/other/special/naturalworld/ny-walllizard3272636may11,0,5447771,full.story>

The Lizard King

The Island's only such species, the Italian wall lizard rules the roost - and imaginations of its host
By Bryn Nelson | Staff Writer [Newsday]

May 11, 2003

Two years before astronauts walked on the moon, a few dozen colonists took their first small steps onto another foreign landscape. The exact details are lost to legend, but the settlers soon discovered that Garden City wasn't such a bad place to land.

For a lizard.

Various tales have sprung up to explain the emigration of a small group of wall lizards from the north of Italy to the suburbs of Long Island. The most likely story involves a 1967 shipment destined for a now-defunct pet supply store that was waylaid by a minor accident, a broken crate and some very swift escapees.

No one knows for sure how many of the cold-blooded reptiles are now basking in the sunshine of suburbia. But they have adapted remarkably well to their adopted homeland, and they've extended far beyond Garden City.



As in their native precincts of Italy and southern Europe, the lizards are thriving in landscapes shaped by humans, in pockets of Nassau County as well as in Queens, Brooklyn and the Bronx. A diet of spiders and crickets and other small invertebrates, a sunny spot to provide warmth and aid metabolism, a haven in the cracks and crevices of walls and gardens - all are abundant here.

The lizards have proliferated along the grassy corridors of railroad tracks, drainage ditches, and power lines. Others have likely hitched rides to new homes in the pockets of admirers, or even in piles of mulch.

"I'm sure there are tens of thousands, and they're spreading fast," says Hofstra University herpetologist Russell Burke.

Despite the advance, the tale of New York's Italian wall lizard population has not followed the familiar plot line of an invasive species wreaking havoc on the natives. Long Island has no lizards of its own, and the wall lizards seem to have filled an environmental niche that was previously vacant. As far as anyone can tell, they have yet to cause any harm.

Instead, their impact is perhaps most apparent in the childlike wonder that follows in their wake. A biologist laughs at their antics in a nursery school garden. A father eagerly maps their spread. Children clamor to glimpse them on a playground.

Sometimes nature's lessons come in unexpected ways.

Burke has picked a warm September day for fishing, though his black fishing pole seems strangely out of place among impatiens and ornamental shrubs. The small noose dangling from the pole offers another suggestion that this will be no ordinary fishing expedition.

Burke is after the wall lizards, a source of both academic research and personal fascination. He has conducted many of his field studies here, in the three-tiered side garden and spacious backyard of the Garden City Nursery School.

At first, the garden appears deserted. Then a single lizard scurries across a railroad tie retainer and behind a small evergreen shrub. Within seconds, the creatures known as *Podarcis sicula* are everywhere. Grass-green backs. Mottled black and brown patterns with turquoise spots on either side. Basking on ornamental rocks, guarding bits of territory, surveying the scene from the safety of cracks in the garden's lower echelons.

With a fisherman's patience, Burke moves the noose ever closer to the head of a wary lizard. A quick jerking motion and he's made his first catch of the day, a 5-inch-long juvenile male with a dull green back, caught harmlessly around its head.

Burke paints the lizard on each side with a red marker, just as he's marked others with identifiable combinations of blue or black or green. His next catch - a 7-inch-long adult female with a typically narrow head - receives two red blotches on each side.

After another few minutes, he's caught the one he's been after all day, an elusive adult male that measures about 8 inches in length and has his own territory near the far end of the garden. The lizard promptly rewards Burke's efforts by biting him.

"Oh, that's enough of a pinch to hurt." He laughs as the lizard glares at him.

The herpetologist points to a row of scales where the lizard's hind legs intersect its abdomen, a region identifiable on males by a brown spot. It's from the femoral glands here that the male secretes its distinctive pheromone, a chemical calling card of sorts.

"It's probably like, 'I'm a big tough guy and this is my territory,'" Burke says of the scented message. A male lizard basking in the sunshine to regulate his body temperature and synthesize Vitamin D also may be marking his territory as he lays flat against the railroad ties, but Burke can only speculate.

The big male gets two blue marks on each side.

This temporary labeling system will help Burke study how the lizards feed and mate, and how they defend their territories. Some have done so for seven years or more - a ripe old age for a lizard.

He has already determined that they are almost genetically identical to one another, a hallmark of a population founded by a few individuals. Yet the New York settlers are, surprisingly, free of common parasites such as lizard malaria, and are reproducing even faster than their closest genetic kin in Italy.

The Italian group remains active year-round, but their New World cousins stop virtually all activity in the winter. Since Burke has discovered that the lizards cannot tolerate freezing temperatures, he would like to answer the question that's been nagging him for years: How do they survive the winters?

In Topeka, Kan., Larry Miller wonders the same thing. Related lizard species have ventured into Cincinnati and Victoria, British Columbia, and observers recorded a colony of Italian wall lizards in Philadelphia that petered out several decades ago. But active populations of the creatures also known as ruin lizards now inhabit only two known regions of North America: Long Island and Topeka.

Miller, a biology teacher at Topeka's Northern Hills Junior High School, also is mystified as to how they behave during the coldest weather. He hopes to answer some of the lingering questions by establishing a lizard study area near his school.

"I've been teaching science for about 30 years," he says, "and they're one of my best teaching tools."

Again, the details of the Topeka introduction are somewhat hazy, but a pet supply store and an absent-minded owner figure prominently. Miller estimates the lizards have expanded at least a quarter of a mile in all directions from their suspected release site in the late 1950s.

"They've moved in well and they're an animal that has managed to fill a niche that was created by humans," he says. Their urban success story is perhaps best documented by Topeka's prime lizard vantages: outside an auto parts store, a KFC restaurant and a Dimple Doughnuts shop.

It's about three-tenths of a mile from Long Island's Hempstead Turnpike to the generally agreed-upon point where the store-bound lizards made their escape - a site known to a few enthusiasts as Ground L. This stretch of Cherry Valley Avenue runs past ball fields, a bus depot and the municipal yard of Garden City.

The village's composting program at the municipal yard delivers rich black mulch to golf courses, recharge basins and residents, all of it free of charge. The "black gold" is full of nutrients, and lizards, who may be getting a free ride across the county.

Just down the road, the village's community park includes three landscaped pools, a miniature golf course, and other favorite spots for lizard-catching. A wall lizard has escaped on more than one occasion by relinquishing its twitching tail to the sweaty grasp of a young pursuer, a defense mechanism that also helps it evade cats and birds. The loss is only temporary, however. The lizard will soon grow another tail.

Nestled between the community park and the mulch piles lies lizard paradise - the 1-acre site of the Garden City Nursery School, which has harbored the creatures for more than two decades.

"They became such a fascination to the children and parents and teachers that the curiosity just increased tremendously," says school director Ann Amengual.

The lizards have since become the school's unofficial mascots. A green lizard thermometer commands a prominent position on a pillar by the entrance, the parents have produced several versions of lizard T-shirts for the children, and even the school's board has gotten into the spirit.

"We have a tradition now where the outgoing president gets a gold lizard pin," Amengual says.

Springtime at the school arrives with the wall lizards. "Science for young children is not about learning facts, but it's about stirring curiosity and learning about their life and their world," Amengual says. "That's what happens here. It's contagious - everyone loves these lizards."

Rob Alvey's love affair with the lizards began in 1985. As a teenager in the summer of '68, he had mowed the school's lawn, but it wasn't until he returned as a parent that he first saw them. Lots of them.

The collector of more than 10,000 frog-related items soon found room in his life for yet another small green creature. Alvey, a geologist, even got his daughter involved in an early tracking project using color-coded beads sewn onto the back of each lizard.

When he was appointed to the Garden City Environmental Advisory Board in 1992, Alvey promptly launched a project to trace the background of the lizards. In 1993 he appealed to residents to help him track the reptiles by reporting sightings. Thanks to the Garden City Lizard Watch, he was able to map their expanding range and estimated that they were advancing by a block to 1 1/2 blocks every year.

"I was concerned whether this was a good thing, a dangerous thing," he recalls. "And the more I learned, the more I discovered that this is not something that we need to worry about."

At his home in Garden City, Alvey unfolds a rumpled map of the New York City metropolitan area on his dining room table. With a green highlighter, he marks some of the other known colonies that have radiated from Garden City: Planting Fields Arboretum. The Carle Place Water District. Mount Hebron Cemetery in Flushing.

In 1994 Alvey introduced four lizards to another one of his projects, the Garden City Bird Sanctuary near his home. Now, they abound throughout the 9-acre site. "They're prolific," he says. "They have a natural Viagra in them somewhere along the line."

Another lizard aficionado, Queens College associate biology professor Jon Sperling, remembers collecting lizards of his own at the Garden City municipal yard 12 or 13 years ago.

Perhaps not coincidentally, separate colonies have thrived at his home in Floral Park and at Queens College for the past 12 years. Unlike many of the students, the campus lizards prefer to hang out by Rosenthal Library, where they dart among the prostrate red cedar planted on an incline near the entrance.

"You can see them sunning themselves either on the plants themselves, or on the decor on the incline and on the stairway," Sperling says.

He has integrated the lizards into some of his lessons, asking students whether they've noticed them. Many haven't.

"It's a matter of observation," he says. "People could live next to them all their lives and not see them. Some people are blind to things like that."

In the winter months, few New Yorkers have seen the lizards. One of the few exceptions was when a Long Island homeowner spotted several huddled together beneath a lifted slab of sidewalk.

Last fall, Burke designed a project for high school student Allison Goodman to find out where Italian wall lizards go when the temperature falls below freezing. But neither electrician's tape nor glue held his tiny radio

transmitters in place, and the mystery remains - at least for another year.

Despite an unseasonably warm afternoon that bathes the nursery school's garden in light, the wall lizards refuse to stir from their seclusion on St. Patrick's Day. But the following afternoon, a few emboldened members of a colony residing in the Hofstra University greenhouse venture into the adjacent yard to enjoy the sunshine. By the next week, a few more make brief appearances near the biology building at Queens College. They begin showing up in scattered yards around Garden City, and then at the nursery school itself.

At the far end of the school's garden, a mid-sized lizard ventures out on a railway tie before its courage falters and it scurries between the cracks of the wooden tier. Then a tiny lizard with only a hint of green on its back makes its afternoon debut - a summer hatchling with spring fever. But its day in the sun is quickly curtailed by an aggressor twice its size that is in no mood to share its garden fiefdom.

Amid the patchy afternoon sunshine and chatter of small children arriving for school, the wall lizards of spring have returned.

"I didn't see one, but I thought I heard one," says a little girl with a blond bob. Her two friends quickly join her, shushing one another as they tiptoe toward the near end of the garden. Three pairs of feet shuffle around a bush and curious hands pry through the greenery, but no lizards turn up.

"I think we scared it away," the little girl says as they head back inside. Moments later, the lizard reappears just where she said it should be, with a nearby cascade of ivy providing a hideout.

Later that afternoon, Burke and a pair of lizards join a group of schoolchildren for a session of show and tell.

Who's seen a lizard?

Hands shoot up and several kids have stories.

What eats them? Burke asks. Snakes? Cats?

"Lions," offers a boy.

"Cheetahs," says a girl.

For the afternoon lizard hunt, 18 young assistants peer into the garden, around the plastic border of the playground, between the cracks in the back fence. But the wall lizards, perhaps sensing the commotion, have apparently called it a day.

It doesn't matter. The lizards will be out again next week, and for many more weeks after that. Until cold weather forces a temporary retreat, they will be playing hide and seek, scampering across the fence ties and delighting a few dozen young naturalists eager to see, to touch, to learn the simple lessons that nature - and fate - have brought to their own backyard.

=====

This is likely the penultimate NYC Kestrel Newsletter for spring-summer 2009. In the next issue we will wrap up happenings at the East 75th street nest site; and work with Anita Randolfi and Laura Meyers to tell the story of the Avenue C and East 9th street kestrels. Meanwhile, Deborah Allen is off to visit her mom in the state of Washington.

17 July 2009

American Kestrel Nest Survey NYC - Issue #16 (2009)

Kestrels are fledging - Part IIIIIIIIIIIII-BIIBIII!

This is the final newsletter for 2009, and a couple of items stand out: first. several of us are involved in a spirited discussion, and research, into how far NYC kestrels travel to find prey (food). This is important because the male at the East 75th street nest brought several Italian Wall Lizards (*Podacris sicula*) back to the nest. The closest *known* colonies of these lizards are about 7.5 miles away (one direction) in Queens (Queens College) and in the Bronx (at NYBG in the Japanese Rock Garden). That is a long way to travel for a lizard meal, so some of us are thinking that there is a closer, undiscovered colony of lizards in eastern Manhattan or far western Queens...Stay Tuned! We hope to solve this mystery in 2010. Our second intriguing lead comes from Mike DiPrima in Queens - he is seeing his adult male and female kestrel active at dusk. Could at least one pair of NYC Kestrels be active at night? This would also be a new discovery in North America - again, stay tuned for more research on this in 2010.

Finally, Thank You all for your help, advice, criticisms, suggestions - we feel lucky to collaborate with so many people near and far - and look forward to 2010.



Above: Food (lizard) transfer from the adult male to an adult female kestrel in the western USA (not NYC!)



Above: Adult male American Kestrel leaving the East 75th street nest site after a prey delivery.

Kestrel Reports from the Field:

From: William Conway
Subject: Re: NYC kestrel Newsletter #15
Date: July 7, 2009 (Monday afternoon)

This is splendid stuff! Congratulations to all.

Bill Conway

[Bill Conway is the former Director of the Bronx Zoo - he began as an animal keeper, then became director of ornithology - but is most famous for hiring a young Eric Edler who was the Director of the Bird Exhibits for many years - now retired and living in Florida.]

=====

From: Robert DeCandido
Subject: East 75th street Kestrels
Date: July 7, 2009 (Early Tuesday morning)

I went to photograph the family of kestrels this morning - but by 7:30am, the three young females and one male (four total youngsters) had moved a block south - and out of range. They sat around most of the morning trying to balance on the railings, satellite dishes and antennas. The adult female caught a "water bug" (aka roach) from a roof top and delivered it to the oldest fledgling (a female) - who ate it with great gusto.

This concludes the East 75th street saga for 2009 - a very positive outcome here = four fledges, all healthy.

From: Don and Carol McCartney

Subject: Kestrels n' lizards

Date: July 7, 2009 (Tuesday)

Hello Dr. DeCandido,

I don't know how you found my internet address, but I'm glad that you did. I have a large Kestrel nest box project [*in Oregon*], with 54 active boxes out of a total of 95 in '09. I had to smile regarding your newsletter that featured the Italian wall lizards. I started my project 10 years ago, and I soon learned that that the western fence lizard and sagebrush lizard are important components of the Kestrels' diet, especially in the early spring, when large arthropods tend to be scarce. (*Yes in the western USA, several lizard species are native to the area and are an important component of the diet of many raptor species. Here in NYC, there is no native lizard - snakes yes, lizards, no. So it was a novel find for us here to discover that a few kestrels in at least two boroughs capture these non-native reptiles.*)

We use a "standard-size" wooden nest box with a 2-inch layer of wood shavings on the floor. In the cornices, on what material or surface do the Kestrels incubate their eggs?? [*Good question - in some of the cornices we have been able to look into, we have seen nest material from sparrows and starlings. This year, a rainy and cool one, the most number of fledglings we have seen at any one nest is four; in prior years, we have had several nests produce five each.*] I had read somewhere that bare wood flooring would decrease the success of hatching, as the eggs may roll out from under the incubating parent or conduct heat away from the eggs.

Thank you for your efforts, as it is very interesting learn about Kestrels in an urban environment.

Don McCartney

Bend, in the high desert of central Oregon

From: David Rosenfeld

Subject: Re: NYC kestrel Newsletter #15

Date: July 7, 2009 (Tuesday)

...regarding the lizards. That helps solve my own personal mystery. My brother first noticed the lizards here [*Brooklyn*] when he walked through Washington Cemetery on the way home from work. I investigated a couple of weeks ago on a warm, sunny afternoon, and--sure enough--the cemetery was filled with striped lizards with green tails. I know that five-lined skinks are our only native New York lizard and this was definitely not a skink. I couldn't identify if on-line or using field guides. My brother says that he has seen the same lizard in other cemeteries on Long Island. It must be this lizard. I'm surprised the article didn't mention cemeteries as a favorite hangout. The Washington Cemetery is in the Midwood section of Brooklyn between Ocean Parkway and McDonald Avenue and between about Avenues J and L. Gates close daily at 3:30.

David Rosenfeld, Brooklyn

From: Rob Cicchetti

Subject: Broadway and 69th street kestrels

Date: July 7, 2009 (Tuesday)

Interesting about the lizards. If you remember, on one of the videos on that CD I gave you last year from my observations in 2006 has a kestrel eating a lizard! I'll dig around and see if I can find any pics I took of it.

Rob

From: Russell Burke <Russell.L.Burke@hofstra.edu>

Date: Wednesday, July 8, 2009 at 10:26 AM

Subject: Re: FW: NY birds eating lizards

This is extremely interesting to me and I'd like to hear more details from anyone who has observed lizards being eaten by birds in NYC or Long Island. I have been studying the Italian wall lizard invasion for >10 years and have never seen a bird take one. We have speculated that this occurs, but documentation would be important. Also, if anyone has a clearer photograph, I would be extremely grateful if you would send me a copy. They may be publishable in a scientific journal article, so of course all appropriate acknowledgment of sources would be made. Also if you have made direct observations (locations, number of lizards, sizes of lizards, behaviors), your information would be very helpful.

(Dr. Burke studies turtles, snakes, lizards and amphibians in our area. He does the research on Diamondback Terrapins at the Jamaica Bay National Wildlife Reserve. Contact him (and cc me too!) at his email above, if you have any kestrel-lizard info to report from NYC and vicinity.)

=====



Above: Female American Kestrel in soaring flight in the western USA (not NYC!)

From: Beth Goffe
Subject: Kestrels / City College area
Date: July 11, 2009

Hi Bob,

Finally, I managed to choose and work on another kestrel photo. This is the one that attached itself to the side of the building I think with the intention of returning to the nest hole. It never made it and, instead, flew very low across Amsterdam and made it to one of the London Planes on the project property. Scared me for a minute - I thought I was going to have to rescue it from the traffic!

Beth

Bird Photography - www.pbase.com/bgoffe/birds

Blog - <http://eclecticbeth.wordpress.com/>



Above: Just fledged female American Kestrel near City College at the Amsterdam and 135th street nest. Photo © Beth Goffe 2009.

From: Anita Randolfi
Subject: East 9th street Kestrels
Date: July 7, 2009 (Tuesday)

dear Bob,

Just to keep you up to date. I was in the E 9th St. Garden yesterday (Monday) from 6 to 7pm. The female kestrel was on the antenna when I arrived and stayed there for a full 45 minutes. Then she entered the nest and stayed in for 10 minutes. Then, back to the antenna for a few minutes, then flew east ... but by the time I got to the west side of Ave. C & E 9th, she was back on the antenna. Still no sign of young in the nest.

anita randolfi

ps: the photo of the female peeking out of the nest is wonderful.

=====
From: "Karner, Paul" <pkarner@mc-2.com>
Subject: Adult Female Kestrel at a nest box.
Date: July 6, 2009 (Monday)

Hello Kestrel Friends in the city,

This is a female kestrel that I banded in '07 that was in one of my boxes on 5 eggs. I do know that she was at least a year old when I banded her. She fledged 5 young in '07, 4 young in '08 and this year 4 young. The interesting data that I collect is she nested in different boxes each year in my study area.

I do find that they have a new mate each year either one of my banded males from other years or a new unbanded one. Very seldom do I ever find the same pair nesting in the same box the following year.

As of 2009 nesting season my oldest banded kestrel is a female that I banded on New Year's Day in '06 that has produced young in '06, '07, '08 and this year in '09. She laid six eggs this year but only 5 hatched. Since she was an adult when trapped and banded I have no idea just how old she is. Every year she had a different male and she has nested in different boxes within one mile of where I first banded her.

I'm so interested in your city kestrels. I do wonder what pattern your nesting Kestrels follow?

Good luck and keep up the great data I enjoy reading weekly.

Paul H Karner
Cavity Nesters of Northampton County, PA.

=====
From: Don and Carol McCartney <dcmmcarty@earthlink.net>
Subject: Re: NYC American Kestrel Newsletter #14
Date: July 9, 2009

Hello Bob,

Thank you for sending me issue #13 of '08. I am finding that reading about NYC Kestrels to be quite fascinating.

I am intensely interested in learning about the population trends of the Kestrel in N. America. I currently compare notes with Steve Simmons in Merced, CA and Paul Karner in Pennsylvania. Both are having "banner years" with Steve's 80 active nest boxes, plus 22 pairs nesting for a second time. Paul will be reporting to me in the near future. However, that is only a tiny slice of the area populated by Kestrels. I have heard that Kestrel populations are on the decline in many areas of the U.S. and Canada. And I am frequently questioned by landowner nest box-hosts and people that attend our educational banding sessions about their possible decline. My answer to them is that "populations appear to be stable on the West Coast, but I am unsure about declines on other areas of the continent". Can you point me in the direction for information on population trends in other areas??

I would be most appreciative if you could. *(OK in a nutshell, the population of the northeastern USA kestrel seems to be on the decline in the last 10 years or so. We attribute this to changes in habitat - open fields and meadows maturing into shrub land and forest; and the increase in predators and other animals that prefer that type of habitat including Cooper's and Red-tailed Hawks; and an increase in squirrels/raccoons and other species that utilize tree cavities (where kestrels prefer to nest). We have the same difficulty in re-establishing Eastern Screech-owls in Central Park - for this and other reasons - too many species interested in a limited resource - those tree cavities and even nest boxes. Here in the east where nest boxes have been provided in areas adjacent to farms, kestrels continue to do quite well. And on NYC streets, where there are no squirrels and raccoons, kestrels do quite well nesting in the cornice cavities of buildings 60-120 feet in height.)*

Cheers,

Don
Bend, OR

=====
From: Anita Randolfi
Subject: East 9th street Kestrels
Date: July 7, 2009 (Tuesday night)

dear Bob,

I watched at E 9th St today from 6:15 to 6:37pm. The female was on the antenna all that time. Then she flew off to the south east. She never approached the nest during that time, nor did I notice any activity in the nest, alas.

anita r

=====
From: Jane Lynn
Subject: Western Pennsylvania Kestrels
Date: July 10, 2009

Hi Bob,

I have so enjoyed your newsletters and the information you have provided. The Kestrels I am documenting here in Pennsylvania are now about ready to disappear for another season. They did fledge about 2 weeks earlier than last year and since there were only 4 versus 6 though I think they were stronger and healthier this year.

They immediately were flying around from tree to building and further away than last year's crop of birds. I have it all documented on my blog <http://windowonnature.blogspot.com/> The last several posts were nothing but Kestrel happenings.

The question I have is where do they go when they leave the nesting site? (*Good questions...our kestrels hang around the area of the nest for about a week, and then once they can fly well, begin to disperse in the area. Generally, they can hunt for themselves as early as two weeks after leaving the nest, but more often, about four weeks after fledging. My guess is that some of our kestrels go south beginning in August, and some stay. Some of those that go south return to nest...but I don't have any data to back this statement up. We see some pairs of kestrels remaining here in NYC throughout the winter; other pairs seem to re-appear in late January or so - but from where did they re-appear from? And my hunch is that other individuals return later, in March, and begin nesting then...but have no hard data to support these ideas just yet.*)

I did see two Kestrels last year about 2 miles away perching on wires in our Veterans Home Property. I saw them during the winter but haven't seen them since nesting began this year. I still have a lot of questions concerning these birds but you have answered many by your participation and your audience in NYC.

I also enjoyed seeing Deborah's pictures and comparing your Kestrels to mine..

Thank you again!

Jane Lynn
Hollidaysburg, PA



Above: Food (lizard) transfer from the adult male to an adult female kestrel in the western USA

From: Mike DiPrima
Subject: close encounter of the kestrel kind (Queens)
Date: July 12, 2009 (Sunday afternoon)

it is 4:45 and i'm on the terrace

papa makes his presence know vocally and i see him trying to land on the nearest building
but he changes his mind and flies to the right, dead sparrow in tow

about 10 seconds later he reversed direction and flew past me in the opposite direction..
dinner in tow and then he went up... most likely to the roof

neat

=====

From: Eric Cohen
Subject: Re: Lizards and Kestrels in Queens (Sunnyside)
Date: July 13, 2009

Bob,

Sorry I've been out of touch this season till now. A pair of kestrels came back this year to breed, but they're so restless it's been difficult for me to get any worthwhile photographs of them, so I never bothered submitting any info. Here's my annual report:

This spring, which follows the same pattern as last spring, a pair of kestrels came to the antennas of our neighborhood (Sunnyside, Queens). I've never been able to locate their nest site, but the birds themselves are very visible (and audible; their daily screeching has actually really gotten under my skin this year) for much of the days of late May and June. They perch on an antenna on the roof of my 6 story building, visible about 20 feet diagonally up from my kitchen window. I get good views of their undersides as they perch there, and get to see their prey, which seems to consist of mice and lizards. Last year I took good enough photographs to show that these lizards are probably the Italian Wall Lizards (*Podarcis sicula*). I'd say that I saw lizards in the kestrel's talons about five times this year, probably more times last year. I don't spend as much time staring out the window as I would like to these days, so I can only extrapolate from my sightings that there's a steady supply of these lizards nearby. We live less than 10 blocks (really nothing to a kestrel) from two cemeteries; I truly wish I had family buried in these cemeteries! Google Map my address with "satellite view" and you can see how close the cemeteries are Sunnyside, NY 11104.

As of July their activity has tapered off considerably (possibly because our building had roof access for the 4th of July, possibly scaring the birds off this preferred perch), but again, I'm not home much of the day to witness their potential activity.

If there's any more information I can provide, don't hesitate to ask.

Cheers,

Eric

last year's pictures: <http://picasaweb.google.com/ericmarccohen/SunnysideKestrels?feat=directlink>

=====

American Kestrel Nest

South Bronx - 153rd Street

21 June 2007

Robert DeCandido

Kestrel Nest 2006-07



Above: nest site and nearby habitat of a pair of kestrels in the South Bronx (Melrose Place) first showed to us by Father Tom Deely.

If you have read this far - thanks. There are many people we need to thank - the photographers who supplied us with great images including Lincoln Karim, Rob Cicchetti, Paul Karner, Mike DiPrima, Anders Peltomaa, Deborah Allen, Laura Meyers, Beth Goffe, Janet Bachant and Ben Cacace - and I am sure a few others are missing from this list (apologies from bob!).

Bobby and Cathy Horvath continue to do a superb job getting injured NYC raptors up and flying again in our city's skies. And not to be forgotten in Brooklyn is Eileen Jones - equally good, caring and concerned. We really are all working towards the same thing.

Thank You to everyone who reported information, no matter how brief - it gave us a lead, an idea - a hunch. Your information is key to solving this puzzle: How do urban kestrels make a living in New York City? And thank You for always asking, "OK, so why is this important and worth my attention - Who cares?" Good questions - I hope these Newsletters have partially answered those concerns.

Thank You to people who gave us access to places and spaces where we could watch kestrels intensively: Richard Schwartz, Maggie Medina, Jack Rothman and Carol Wood.

And for Anita Randolfi and the rest of the East 9th street Community Garden people waiting for fledgling kestrels there, we go to press with yet another question: What's goin on? Yes another question to solve - perhaps to be answered in a different way in 2010. We solved some mysteries this year, but others must wait for another season. Meanwhile, Thanks Deborah and Thanks Chad - VOLARE' with a strum from Scott Wiley's guitar...