# 6 April 2010

### **American Kestrel Nest Survey NYC - Issue #6 (2010)**

NYC Kestrels have begun to nest

Reports of kestrels hanging around nest sites have slowed down - we suspect that at some locations, female kestrels are sitting on eggs. Males only visit to deliver food and then are off again. Kestrels tend to be secretive around the nest...



**Above:** News in Kestrel-land must be slow...that is no April Fool's story. The image above was done by Derek Jensen, one of the many talented people working in David Bird's lab at McGill University in Canada. Dr. Bird has published a few articles about kestrel behavior, biology and ecology - and has inspired a generation of researchers to study these falcons too. (If you look closely you can see him waving from the torch.) Meanwhile, this female kestrel is in hunting mode. She is hunting for clews - they swim up the East River each spring. Clews must be rare because bob is having a heck of a time finding any. So if you do see one, send details his way. What do they look like? Well clews are usually obscure, and most people do their best to ignore them. One was found dead on the shores of the Bronx River not too long ago...Anyway, doing a Google search might turn up a film about these creatures starring George Clooney - see images therein. Despite his best efforts, bob remains clewless. Do enlighten him.

From: Matthew Wills Subject: Brooklyn Kestrels Date: March 25 (Thursday)

Not a moment too soon! I just saw my very first kestrel of the year, a long time coming. Female, in Green-Wood Cemetery, high atop a tulip-tree. Two were reported there yesterday. \

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From: Joen Nie

Subject: Kestrels on Staten Island

Date: March 25 (Thursday)

Bob

saw my first kestrel of the season this morning at Miller Field, Staten Island -- a female flying up toward in your direction [the Bronx!]

Regards,

Joen

[Joen is strongly suggesting his Staten Island sighting was of a migrant. We believe that SI has the fewest number of nesting kestrel pairs of the five boroughs. Back in 2005, James Quadrino of Staten Island was given an award by then President George W. Bush for his efforts in putting up nest boxes on SI. But getting kestrels to nest in them has been difficult.]

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From: Todd Olson

**Subject:** Manhattan Kestrel sighting! **Date:** March 25, 2010 (Thursday)

Hi Bob,

The kestrel observation I mentioned was from yesterday, March 24th. I did not actually see the bird, but heard the "killy killy" vocalizations while I was working inside (trying to finish off a term paper). This occurred at about 6:40 p.m., and the location was close to intersection of Bank Street and Washington Street in the West Village neighborhood, Manhattan. My hunch is that kestrels nest on the WestBeth building (West Street between Bank & Bethune):

http://www.flickr.com/photos/masck/3520488064/

... alas, I don't have a good vantage point to really assess the situation

I will be more vigilant as the season progresses!

Cheers and thanks again,

Todd

From: Matt Fuller

Subject: Manhattan Kestrels

**Date:** March 25 (Thursday afternoon)

Bob,

I enjoy reading your newsletter. It's inspiring. Just to let you know my brother-in-law and I saw a kestrel buzz by our roof deck twice last Friday (19 March) around 615pm. That's 21st street between 6th and 7th Manhattan. One headed north, then again headed southeast

A side note: the peregrine falcons are back on their nest downtown at 55water street.

www.55water.com/falcons ... although the live camera doesn't seem to be working today.

thanks,

Matt

[In 2009, Matt first spotted kestrels in that location on 30 March.]

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From: Chad Seewagen

Subject: Manhattan Kestrels (from 2008)

Date: April 2008

Hi Bob,

The man who is assisting me in the field this season mentioned this morning that he sees kestrels from his apartment window almost daily. He lives on **123rd b/w Broadway and Amsterdam**. He's not sure where the nest is, but he says they regularly perch on a TV antenna on the roof of the building right out his window on the 21st floor. He says he has a perfect view of them eating and so forth on an almost daily basis. Just thought I'd pass that along to you. The building they perch on is 70 LaSalle St. (that's the equivalent of 124th St., but it's called LaSalle for some reason). He also mentioned that a few years ago when he lived on 100th St and Broadway, he watched a kestrel one morning sitting on the sidewalk calmly eating a house sparrow it had just caught. He said it was just sitting there on the ground picking at it for a while.

### Chad

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From: Francois Portmann Subject: Manhattan Kestrels Date: March 28 (Sunday)

Hey Bob,

Re: kestrels on 2nd ave & 3rd street

My friend Dennis is giving you the details but if you need more info let me know, I live 1 block away from the scrape and have seen them every day on their favorite perches. Keep up the good work! Greetings

Francois

http://www.fotoportmann.com/birdblog/

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From: Dennis Edge

**Subject:** Lower East Side Kestrels (Manhattan)

Date: March 29 (Monday)

Kestrel Nests (2009):

- **a.** 50 Second Avenue = 3rd Street and 2nd Avenue (see info from Francois above)
- **b.** Kestrels perched at 10th St. and Ave. A that is where I've seen male and female Kestrels perched on the Russian Orthodox church (St. Nicolas). I don't think they are nesting in the church but nearby on 10th St.
- **c.** A nest in Chinatown No location given, have to investigate... I haven't seen my friend to get a precise location. More later.

See you,

Dennis

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Above: Female kestrel in "hover" flight.

From: Anita Randolfi

**Subject:** Re: Kestrels for you! **Date:** March 30 (Tuesday)

Thanks Bob ... I'll check out these places, if it ever stops raining. I have seen Red-tails atop the steeple of St. Nicholas ... they were clearly obeying the Biblical injunction to increase & multiple. As for the E 9th St Community Garden, I stopped by last week and found some gardeners that I knew. They reported no sign of kestrels, alas.

Hope to see you & Debbie soon,

anita randolfi

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From: Jim O'Brien

Subject: Harlem Kestrels (Manhattan)

Date: March 30

Pair in the area of 123rd street and St. Nicholas Avenue - seen mating (24-25 March).

They nest on 119th and Morningside. I just found their scrape on Sunday. I'm waiting for the next nice day to get some more pix, but let me know if you want to meet up and scout it out. Thurs or Fri are best.

### James



From: KA Peltomaa (Anders)

Subject: Anders' AMKE report March 31st

**Date:** April 1 (Thursday)

Hi Bob,

Yesterday at 9:45am I saw the female kestrel at CPW and 85/86th streets dive bombing a Red Tailed Hawk that was perching on the building. The female Kestrel established a sort of "horizontal figure 8" above the RTH and flew it 5-6 times, i.e. she passed by the RTH 10-12 times in a swoop from above. The RTH kept its position and the female AMKE flew away. I hadn't brought my camera with me out, so I have no photos from the exciting event.

When I passed by Zabars in the late afternoon I saw the female Kestrel perching on the first lion head from of the SW corner of the nest building Zabars'. [See photo below]

### - Anders



**Photos (above):** This is perhaps the "highest" kestrel nest in Manhattan at approx 125 feet above ground level. This nest faces west, but the overhand of the cornice protects these falcons from the afternoon sun. Here we have seen the female kestrel swoop down and try and catch House Sparrows feeding on breadcrumbs just outside of Zabar's - even on busy Saturday mornings! We have seen the male dive into the "islands" of Broadway to capture same...Inside, Zabar's sells the best Pickled Clews I have ever tasted...

← Photo (page 5 bottom): Nest site (cornice) and habitat of Harlem Kestrels 2009. The pair Jim O'Brien has located this year is nesting in a similar situation - overlooking a park (Morningside about 30 blocks south of Jackie Robinson Park on the left side of this photo). The Morningside Park nest is also in a cornice of a late 19th century apartment building. Photos to follow (soon).

**From:** Tom Deely

Subject: RE: South Bronx Kestrels

**Date:** April 1 (Thursday)

Some friends told me that there are kestrels nesting at E.156th St and 149th St in the Bronx. They are not birders. But they are persons who "remember" when we were checking out that area a few years ago.

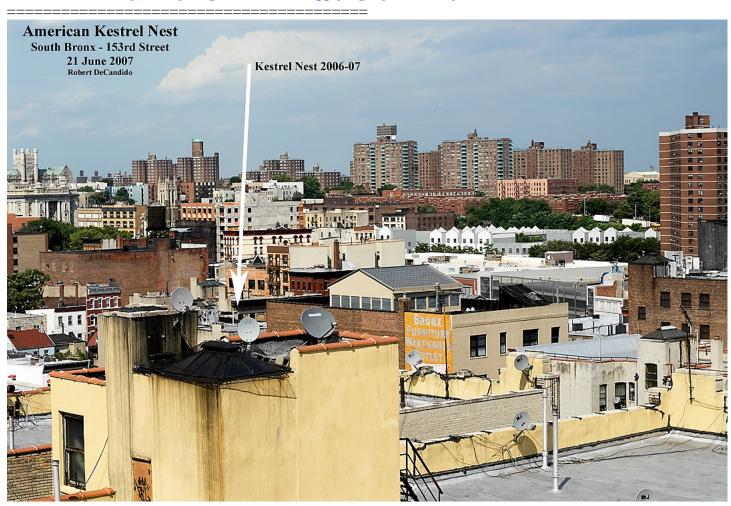
Tom Deely

The link below takes you to my blog- THE HUDSON RIVER BIRDER

Si quieres ver mi "blog" en el Internet oprima el eslabón abajo

http://thehudsonriverbirder.blogspot.com/

[For about ten years, Fr. Tom Deely was a Parish Priest in the South Bronx (and for 27 years in the Caribbean). Tom showed us one of our first kestrel nests (he always called the "Melrose Place" kestrels) in 2006. More recently, Marty Rogers has been supplying information from that area.]



**Above:** Nest and surrounding habitat of the South Bronx Kestrels 2006-07. The "older" sections of NYC such as the Lower East Side (Manhattan), Bedford Stuyvesant (Brooklyn) and the "South" Bronx feature many 2-3 story buildings of late 19th century origins These have numerous cornices that are in various states of disrepair = perfect for a cavity nesting species...These sections of the city (along with the Upper West Side of Manhattan) are some of the last strongholds for kestrels here in Gotham.

From: William Schiller Subject: South Bronx Kestrels

**Date: 21 June 2007** 

Good to hear of a kestrel nest on 153 Street. That is just a few blocks from 336 East 156 Street, where as a boy I saw my first kestrel, perched atop a washline pole.

[For almost 50 years, Bill Schiller taught in the Education Department of the American Museum - after graduating from City College in circa 1960.) So Bill likely saw his kestrels in the South Bronx in the late 1940s to early 1950s. NYC kestrels are a long-standing breeding population - not a population "sink" as some have suggested, but a source population instead.]

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From: Isaiah Wender Subject: Kestrel in Village

Date: April 5, 2010

The kestrel (seen about 1 April) was perched about 50 feet away from our living room windows, on 11th street between Bleecker and Hudson, in a tree mid block. It was live as day. It had blue wings, you could see three rows of black dots going up the bird, and then some areas of buffy down before you got to the bird's head. When it turned its head I could see its orange backside, two lines across the back of its head, and another mark in the middle. On its lower tail there were two splotches and then a bar. It was magnificent. As soon as it flew away the pigeons came back.

Isaiah Wender

# **Kestrels - North America**

# NEST BOX TEMPERATURE AND HATCHING SUCCESS OF AMERICAN KESTRELS VARIES WITH NEST BOX ORIENTATION

ABSTRACT.—We studied orientation-dependent differences in nest box microclimate and American Kestrel (*Falco sparverius*) reproductive parameters in Idaho, USA. Unoccupied nest boxes facing west were approx. 0.6 C cooler than boxes that faced south or east and had an approx. 20% lower relative humidity levels than boxes facing all other cardinal directions. Clutches in occupied boxes that faced southwest had a proportionately lower chance of hatching success (12 of 21 nests were successful), defined as having at least one egg hatch, than boxes that faced northwest (9 of 9 nests) or southeast (9 of 12 nests). The possible link between orientation-dependent differences in microclimate and hatching success, and the question of whether American Kestrels may select for orientation adaptively requires further investigation.

The Wilson Journal of Ornithology 121(4):778–782, 2009

# **Kestrels - International**

For a Eurasian (Common) Kestrel rescue at 10 Downing Street, UK, see this video:

http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=F S5iJY9Mjw&NR=1

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Geo-environmental influences on breeding parameters of the Eurasian Kestrel (Falco tinnunculus) in the Western Palaearctic

Jose Carrillo & Enrique Gonzalez-Davilla

Geographic location largely determines environmental factors such as photoperiod and primary productivity. Breeding effort in birds may reflect different responses to these geographic-related conditions. We studied geographic variation in mean laying date (LD) and mean clutch size (CS) of the Eurasian Kestrel (*Falco tinnunculus*) in relation to photoperiod, seasonality of resources, temperature and rainfall during the previous winter and breeding season. We assumed that actual evapotranspiration (AE) varies in direct proportion to primary plant production and food resources. Using published data on 23 Western Palaearctic regions (2865 N) we found that variation in LD was related to photoperiod. Also, Kestrels bred earlier where winter and spring temperatures were higher, spring rainfall was lower and winter AE was higher. The variables that most affected CS were nest type (box/natural), winter AE and spring temperature. CS was directly related to the ratio between spring and winter AE. Moreover, CS was unrelated with spring AE but inversely related to winter AE. The effect of scarce resources (low AE) during the previous winter on CS supports Ashmoles hypothesis (Ashmole 1961). The data available are not sufficient to verify the influence of density of breeding adults on CS.

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# 12 April 2010

### **American Kestrel Nest Survey NYC - Issue #7 (2010)**

NYC Kestrels are sitting on Eggs (Some but not all)

Some New York City Kestrels are now sitting on eggs - as Anders Peltomaa is reporting (page 6). Don't be surprised if kestrels are scarce to absent in your neighborhood for the next four weeks or sofemales are on eggs, and males don't hang around the nest area. In the meantime, Keir Randall and Mohammed Alomeri provide superb kestrel reports from Brooklyn and Manhattan.

With this issue we feature the first scientific publication on our research (pages 9-10): predation upon non-native Italian Wall Lizards by American Kestrels in New York City by Dr. Russell Burke of Hofstra University and colleagues.

From western Pennsylvania, Barbara Dunn raises the issue of the effect of European Starlings upon kestrels - specifically can starlings evict (or outcompete) kestrels for nest cavities on buildings? Good questions! What have you folks seen? And do see Barbara's observations on page 3-4.



**Above:** Last week we asked folks for clues about kestrels - and we received a bucket full! In this issue, we present the best. In the photo above (from "J.D." of Manhattan) we ask you to think like a female kestrel. You have a couple of choices for where to nest on this cornice. Why did you select the smaller opening? The photo was taken in Spring 2008 at the nest on 105th street between Amsterdam and Columbus Avenues. In the larger opening a pair of pigeons would raise two young. The kestrels fledged five young from their nest that year, but have not nested at the site in either 2008 or 2009. Bill Benish has been watching this site again this year and has not seen any kestrel activity there.

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

Subject: RE: NYC Kestrel Newsletter #6

Date: April 6, 2010 (Tuesday)

Please put out the word that I'd like to hear about any kestrels seen with lizards! I'd like to hear more details from anyone who has observed lizards being eaten by birds in the NYC or Long Island area. I have been studying the Italian Wall Lizard invasion for >10 years and have never seen a bird take one.

Dr. Russell Burke Department of Biology - Hofstra University

### See pages 9-10 of this issue.

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From: William Hyman Subject: Manhattan Kestrels Date: Apr 6, 2010 (Tuesday)

We were heading up Central Park West on a sunny Sunday afternoon two weeks ago and think we saw a kestrel sitting on a quite low statue in front of the American Museum of Natural History amid the hubbub of Museum pedestrian traffic.

From: Keir Randall

**Subject:** Brooklyn Kestrels **Date:** April 6 (Tuesday)

So as well as my SE Asian adventures, I'm also a Brooklyn Kestrel watcher!! In fact they were an impetus for ending my lapsed birder status 5 or so years ago :)

I'm at Lawton Street/ Broadway, Bushwick - southern Bushwick, just north of Bed-Stuy. I regret not keeping perfect records (and of course I'm liable to leave the country for months at a time) but the bottom line is:

- A regular hunting antenna perch visible from my fourth fl window. Usually daily but seems to be a post breeding absence and return by December(?) The male is most visible, sometimes the pair together. I've seen dive displays but didn't record date...
- 3 fledged young (always 3) for past 5 years (August? I'll try to keep exact records). For last 2 years the fledged birds have congregated at a different nearby antenna spot which I assume is near to the nest I'll try harder this year to find the nest. As you mentioned in the earlier newsletter, there's lots of suitable alcoves for nesting in housing in this area.
- I've tried to identify prey items but only come up with unidentified small bird (presumably House Sparrow) and, I think, a small mammal (mouse?). Again, will try to find out more.

Any ideas on site fidelity and post breeding dispersal? I've made assumptions that it is the same returning pair and that they're not migratory (always back pre Spring). Agree?

I'll let you know if I come up with more.

Cheers,

Keir

From: Carol Wood

**Subject:** 69th St. kestrels (Manhattan)

Date: April 6, 2010 (Tuesday)

I was having lunch outdoors at a restaurant on Columbus between 70th & 71st St. yesterday, when I looked up and saw a kestrel flying north and then turning to the west. I don't know if it was one of the Broadway kestrels or one of the Amsterdam pair.

I later saw a kestrel entering the nest on Broadway, and another flying east along 68th St. The latter appeared to be landing on the east side of the Food Emporium building.

Regards,

Carol

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From: Barbara Dunn

Subject: Western Pennsylvania Kestrels

Date: April 6, 2010 (Tuesday)

Bad news in Hollidaysburg, PA. Our kestrels have been evicted by a couple of darling starlings :-( We can't believe it!!! We don't know if they actually started a nest - or if the starlings just beat them to the punch...

Wouldn't you think that the kestrels could have kicked them OUT?

Last sighting of our male kestrel was March 14, 2010. Have you any other reports of starlings taking over kestrel nests with success?

There is really no way of knowing for sure - maybe our female was killed and our male just went elsewhere???

Jane hasn't seen either the male or the female perching in the favorite tree across from her office building - such a big fat bummer!

Any thoughts? I'm attaching the last pictures with sadness.

Barb

Barbara Dunn http://mybirdtales.blogspot.com/ http://barbi.smugmug.com/

Here in NYC we have seen, on at least three occasions at different sites, female kestrels chasing away starlings from kestrel nest cavities in a building cornice. Early in the nest season, females will sit from 10-100 feet of their future nest site - and watch for starlings in the area - if the starlings get too close, the female kestrel dashes over and chases them off. Female kestrels are so good at shaping the behavior (and "flight path") of starlings around building faces, that both species sometimes nest within 10-15 feet of one another. Starlings "learn" to fly a route to their nest that avoids the space near the kestrel nest to get to their own, and aggressive interactions become much less frequent. It is possible that several starlings can work to exclude a lone kestrel from a nest but we have yet to see that...So we think that you saw a lone adult male waiting for a mate to return to nest...when no female arrived he went elsewhere to find a mate. We think the rule is that kestrels can take and hold a nest cavity from starlings - but we would not be surprised if there are exceptions, especially with first-time nesting kestrels. As an aside, female kestrels will occasionally take adult starlings as prey; and adult kestrels of both sexes will raid starling nests to take nestlings. This is an area that needs more study, starling-kestrel interactions in urban areas.







From: Mohammed Alomeri

**Subject:** NYC Kestrels (Brooklyn and Manhattan)

**Date:** April 7 (Wednesday)

If Over the past 4 weeks I've been seeing a Kestrel near the intersection of West st. & Charles st (Manhattan). I recall seeing it 3 times. Once just flying around giving its call then perching on a building. Next time was during the half marathon it flew from the west end of pier 45 towards the intersection carrying prey which a gull was trying to steal. Last time I saw it was early in the morning where it was chasing a Robin through the air but gave up and went towards the buildings.

2/ About 2 weeks ago I saw a Kestrel land into what I think might be a nest because it looks so similar to all the pictures in your newsletters. It was in Brooklyn just before exiting the Prospect Expy onto Ocean Pkwy. So the building is on the west side of Ocean Pkwy, and the cross street is Albemarle Rd. I just can't remember if it was south or north of the intersection.

3/ I was just out birding today at Owl's Head Park in Brooklyn where I found a juvenile Red-Tailed Hawk perched on a Ginkgo. It was being mobbed by a Mocking Bird. I was in the area for a little while and heard a Kestrel. I ran back just in time to catch a picture of the Kestrel mobbing the Hawk. I've attached a photo [see below].

Sorry I didn't send you this info sooner. I ran into a friend of yours, Randolph Schutz, and he encouraged me to contact you with any info. I would have eventually sent you this info, but running into Mr. Schutz was such a cool coincidence so I just did it now.

Good luck with the research!

### Mohammed Alomeri



**Above:** Kestrel (adult male) dive-bombing a Red-tailed Hawk (juvenile) in Brooklyn. Photo by Mohammed Alomeri whose report on kestrels in two boroughs is absolutely stellar. Mohammed - Thank YOU!

From: Louise Weinberg

Subject: LI City (Queens) Kestrel nest

**Date:** April 7 (Wednesday)

The nest is on 10-16 46th Avenue next to the Able Steel Building. There are two 4 story brick buildings on the north side of 46th Avenue. The nest is on the side of the yellow building closest to 11th Street right under the roofline.

I see the father, and the mother less often, on the top of a ladder on the roof of the white building closer to Vernon Blvd.

Good luck,

Louise

Registrar/Archives Manager Queens Museum of Art, New York City Building, Flushing Meadows Corona Park "Adopt A Building on The Panorama of the City of New York"

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From: Alexander Kalogerakis Subject: Broadway Kestrels

**Date:** April 8 (Thursday afternoon)

Just heard a killy-killy, and there was one of the 80th & Broadway kestrels perched on a gargoyle. Couldn't tell if it was the male or female without binocs. The kestrel newsletters are great - thanks a lot.

### Alexi

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From: KA Peltomaa

**Subject:** Anders' AMKE report (Upper West Side)

**Date:** April 8 (Thursday afternoon)

On a later afternoon Kestrel spying tour to Amsterdam Ave/84th and Zabars (6-7pm) I found the male perching on the building west of Amsterdam/84-85th Streets. After a couple of minutes he flew over to the perch on the SW corner of nest building. Then he flew up to the really high perch on the building NW of Amsterdam/85th street. It was the first time that I have seen him up there this year. He seemed to be surveying and scanning their territory quite intensely. I was thinking that the female has gone into the nest cavity to lay the eggs. It should be about time, right? [YeS Yes YES YES YES YES YES YES YES YES]

Nothing to be reported from the other 2 nest sites in my hood.

#### - Anders

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From: Paul Tartter

**Subject:** Upper East Side Kestrels **Date:** April 9, 2010 (Friday)

Two Kestrels just mated on my deck on E 79th Street!!!

We are between 2nd and 3rd avenues

From: Rob Cicchetti

Subject: Upper West Side Kestrels

Date: April 10 (Saturday)

Hey Bob,

The 68th st falcons have been active this weekend. Both male and female have been around and hunting. I've attached a couple of photos that I took this evening of the female consuming a kill from the ledge under the nest-quality wasn't so great, as the light was poor after sunset, but it clearly shows the female eating a small bird; prey species unknown.

The male and female have been in close proximity to one another, similar to the behavior they've exhibited in the past three years as they've raised a new brood. I am not able to confirm if the nest is occupied or not at this point, we'll have to wait and see.

### Rob

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From: Rob Cicchetti

To: Robert DeCandido <rdcny@earthlink.net>

**Subject:** UWS Kestrels **Date:** April 11 (Sunday)

Hi Bob,

The male adult was spending time around the nest this afternoon (no sign of the female today). I didn't see him with any kills, but he seemed to be perch hunting.

Below is a photo I took this afternoon (11 April - Sunday) on the west side of the nest building (on Broadway).



From: Michael Wang

**Subject:** kestrel 8th ave and 23rd (Manhattan)

Date: April 12 (Monday afternoon)

Dear American Kestrel Survey,

At 2:00pm today I sighted an American kestrel at 8th ave and 23rd street. It was being harassed by 4 or 5 pigeons. It swooped down to the east side of 23rd street and then into the air to the north before appearing, followed now by 2 pigeons, above 8th avenue. I believe this is likely the same bird, or one of a pair, sighted on your survey on March 19 on 21st street between 6th and 7th avenues?

### Michael

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From: Keir Randall

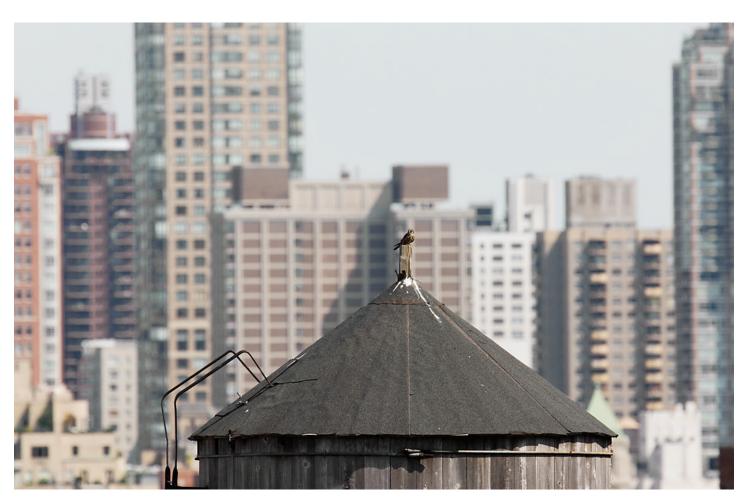
**Subject:** Kestrels in Brooklyn **Date:** April 12 (Monday evening)

We have copulation in Bushwick tonite!! (Kestrels that is:)

Will keep notes and update re nest/fledging etc

K

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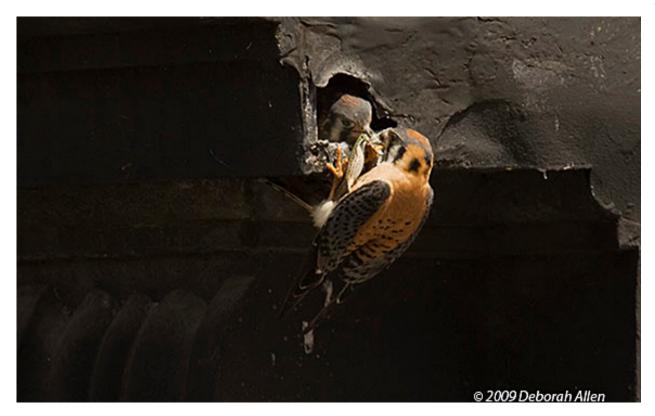
Above: adult female American Kestrel on her favorite perch near the 68th and Broadway nest.

# **Kestrels - North America**

*PODARCIS SICULUS* (Italian Wall Lizard): PREDATION. *Podarcis siculus campestris* is a medium-sized Italian lacertid lizard that has been introduced into at least four states (NY, PA, and KS, Burke and Deichsel 2008, Pp. 347-353 *In*: Urban Herpet., Herpetol. Conserv., Vol. 3, SSAR; NJ, Burke, unpub. data). Here we report on the predation of this introduced species by a native species.

At least three different American Kestrels (*Falco sparverius*) were observed feeding on Italian Wall Lizards (*P. siculus campestris*) in New York City. One *F. sparverius* was an adult (sex undetermined) at a nest on Broadway between 68<sup>th</sup> and 69<sup>th</sup> streets, Manhattan, observed clutching a lizard in the summer of 2006. Two male *F. sparverius*, one at East 75<sup>th</sup> Street, Manhattan and another in Sunnyside, Queens, were observed bringing *P. siculus campestris* to their mates and young. Although observations were not systematic in any of these cases, the East 75<sup>th</sup> Street male was observed with at least six different lizards between 8 June and 6 July, 2009 and the Queens male was observed with at least five different lizards during the spring of 2009, and five lizards in spring of 2008. A photograph, (*Fig. 1 - next page*) taken 4 July 2009 at the East 75<sup>th</sup> Street nest, is clearly that of a gravid female *P. siculus campestris* being passed from an adult male *F. sparverius* to a juvenile. Male-biased foraging is not surprising because female *F. sparverius* are largely dependent on their mates for provisioning during the last few weeks of incubation and until hatchlings are about ten days old (Smallwood and Bird 2002 Birds of North America Online http://bna.birds.cornell.edu/bna/species/602).

Although there may be others, we are aware of only five *Podarcis siculus* populations in the area, at Queens College (Queens), Bronx Botanical Gardens and Pelham Bay Park (Bronx), and Washington Cemetery (Brooklyn) and Baker Field (Manhattan). These populations are a minimum of 13 km from any of these nests, thus we suspect that there may be other *Podarcis* populations closer to the nests.



Falco sparverius are common inhabitants of urban, suburban, and rural habitats of North America and South America and feed on a wide variety of small vertebrates and invertebrates (Smallwood and Bird op. cit.). Falco sparverius have not been previously reported to predate Podarcis, but they have been reported to consume Anolis lizards (Adolph and Roughgarden 1983 Oecologia 56: 313-317) and Sceloporus occidentalis, S. graciosus, and Elgaria coerulea (Balgooyen 1976 Univ. Calif. Publ. Zool. 103:1-87). The natural range of P. siculus is restricted almost entirely to Italy. There Podarcis spp. are predated by Falco tinnunculus (Eurasian Kestrel) (Martín and López 1990, Smithsonian Herpetological Information Service No. 82 1-43, Costantini et al. 2005, Behavior 142:1409-1421), but P. siculus has not specifically been positively identified as Falco prey.

This is the second report of predation by a native predator on *Podarcis* in New York (see Mendyk 2007 Herpetol. Review 38:82); introduced *Podarcis* in Kansas are predated by Great Plains Skinks (*Eumeces obsoletus*) and Blue Jays (*Cyanocitta cristata*) (Burke and Deichsel *op. cit.*). Should populations of *Podarcis siculus* expand, it is likely the list of species that prey on this non-native lizard will increase.

Burke, R.L., Allen, D., Cacace, B., Cicchetti, R., Cohen, E. and DeCandido R. 2010. Herpetological Review 41(1): 85-86, 2010

# **Kestrels - International**

# Responsiveness of Nesting Eurasian Kestrels (Falco tinnunculus) to Call Playbacks.

Journal of Raptor Research (2000)

Luca Salvati, Alberto Vanganaro and Simone Fattorini

Results (excerpt) - A total of 26 of 36 playbacks resulted in responses by kestrels. Eight (88.9%) of 9 playbacks performed in April, 10 (62.5%) of 16 playbacks performed in May, and 8 (72.7%) of 11 playbacks performed in June resulted in responses. Four playbacks (44.4%, N = 9) in April, 5 (31.3%, N = 16) in May, and 4 (36.4%, N = 11) in June resulted in responses by male kestrels. Seven playbacks (77.8%, N = 9) in April, 7 (43.8%, N = 16) in May, and 4 (36.4%, N = 11) in June resulted in responses by female kestrels. In some cases, males and females of the same pair responded together to the stimulation. Thus, the same playback could have produced a double response. Likewise, multiple types of behavioral reactions were sometimes elicited by a single stimulation All the individuals responded within 5 min from the start of playbacks and the difference between male and female latency was not significant (z = -1.06, P = 0.29, N= 31). During incubation and brooding, females appeared at nest entrances and called regularly for about 1 min, but rarely flew from nests rapidly reentering nests after this display. Males seldom appeared at nest entrances throughout the study period. When males were inside nest-holes, they showed behaviors similar to those shown by females, appearing at nest entrances and excitedly calling, but rapidly reentering nest cavities. At all nests where young birds were observed, young kestrels never responded to taped calls. Instead, they always hid themselves in an internal corner of the hole during playbacks.

**Discussion** - The broadcasting of taped calls is a useful tool in locating nesting raptors in woodland settings (Fuller and Mosher 1981). The technique used in this study may represent a first time such a technique has been used to detect nesting pairs of nonforest species. We found that, after occupation, both male and female kestrels defended nest sites from neighboring and intruding kestrels. Because of this, vocalizations of breeding kestrels could be easily elicited by broadcasting a taped call, such as the "signal call," especially in the first stages of the nesting period. Although kestrels are not highly territorial (Village 1990), their response to playbacks was relatively high compared to other diurnal raptors (Mosher et al. 1990, Cerasoli and Penteriani 1992), indicating that the playback method may integrate other field techniques in locating breeding pairs of Eurasian Kestrel. The playback method may be particularly useful in high density populations where observers must check the occupation of two or more neighboring nest sites. As kestrels are very versatile in their choice of nest sites and their identification can be very difficult (Shrubb 1993), this technique may also be a practical tool in low density situations. For example, in cases where kestrels have a scattered distribution, this technique can be used to cover relatively large areas in a short time and it is a faster method of surveying for kestrels when they nest in uncommon sites and habitats (e.g., crow nests in pine plantations). Nevertheless, because playback methods are invasive, researches should minimize disturbance to the pairs studied by performing playbacks only in the first stage of the breeding season and each nest should not be visited more than twice during the breeding season. Finally, playbacks should not be used in counting fledglings because they do not respond to playbacks and seem to be disturbed when adults respond to calls.

Salvati, L., Vanganaro, A. and Fattorini, S. 2000. Responsiveness of Nesting Eurasian Kestrels (*Falco tinnunculus*) to Call Playbacks. **Journal of Raptor Research** 34(4):319-321

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**Photo above:** *Male Eurasian (Common) Kestrel (*Falco tinnunculus) *at nest in Beijing, China (Liuliyu - she is finishing her dissertation on urban kestrels in Beijing under the direction of Dr. Zhang Zhengwang*).

Photo below: Newly fledged Eurasian (Common) Kestrel in Beijing (Aihua Zheng).



# **26 April 2010**

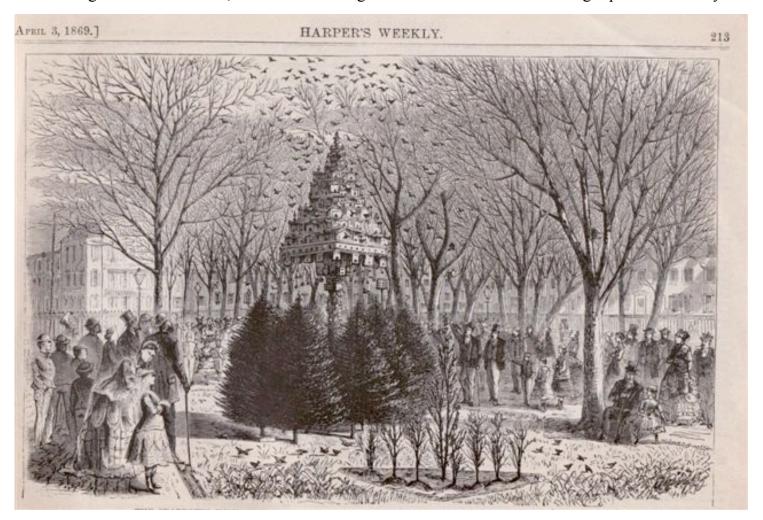
### **American Kestrel Nest Survey NYC - Issue #8 (2010)**

NYC Kestrels are sitting on Eggs (most but not all pairs)

NYC kestrels are in a "holding pattern" - and so is the Kestrel Newsletter. Females are sitting on eggs now and activity near the nest is minimal. You will probably get the next Newsletter (Issue 9) in another two weeks, just after the first kestrels hatch. In NYC, the first fledglings leave the nest about 20 May. Here is an active nest cam on a Eurasian Kestrel (*Falco tinnunculus*) female, sitting on her eggs in the country of Belarus (and the city of Brest):

### http://birdwatch.by/pustalga\_brest

New York City Kestrels could benefit greatly from an active nest cam or two. Most New Yorkers know about Peregrines and Red-tails, but almost nothing about the most common nesting raptor in their city.



**Above:** Kestrels are not called Sparrow Hawks for nothing! The above illustration (from 1869) shows a grand English House Sparrow nest box in Union Square Park (14th street) - for an explanation of why sparrows were welcomed to NYC, see **page 6** of this issue. If you want more kestrels in NYC, increase House Sparrow numbers. Providing kestrel nest boxes is good, but educational outreach and a substantial prey base are best.

From: Eric Salzman

Subject: Kestrels on eastern Long Island

Date: April 13

Hi Bob,

I gave your e-mail address to Michael Lotito. He is a resident of Aquebogue (next to Riverhead) on the North Fork of LI. He wrote to me to tell me that he saw 20 Am Kestrels at ex-Grumman (= EPCAL) on or about April 1 and subsequently has seen up to a dozen birds on the site. Apparently he has access only to the western runway and does not venture on the eastern runway so this adds up to a lot of birds in a relatively small area of concrete plus adjacent grasslands. In my experience, there are at least two pairs of kestrels that nest here during the summer (usually one pair that frequents each of the runways and presumably nests in the old Grumman buildings) but 11 or 12, let alone 20 individuals makes for a lot of birds. Perhaps they are wintering birds (but it's kind of late for them to be hanging around) or perhaps they are migrants making a pit stop on their way north. In any case, (and considering how rare kestrel migrants have become down on the shore), I thought the observation(s) was/were of note.

Best,

Eric

Eric Salzman Brooklyn, NY www.ericsalzman.com

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From: David Schenfeld

**Subject:** LI City Kestrels (Queens)

**Date:** April 13 (Tuesday)

I walked over for lunch and I see the father on the ladder on top of the white (Able) building. Thanks so much for the info. Unfortunately I didn't bring a camera today. (*But David did on a subsequent visit...*)

### David Schenfeld

\_\_\_\_\_



From: Paul Kerlinger

Subject: Re: NYC Kestrel Newsletter #7

Date: April 13, 2010 (Tuesday)

Great newsletter. What wonderful work you are doing!!! Great success story.

Paul

\_\_\_\_\_

From: "E. J. McAdams"

Subject: Re: NYC Kestrel Newsletter #7

**Date:** April 13 (Tuesday)

The kids and I have gone by 133 W. 116th a couple of times and tonight we confirmed that there is a starling using that hole. I still see the kestrels in the early morning on the aerial across the street so they must have another hole. Have you gotten any new reports of where they might be nesting? Or could they still kick out the starlings? (See next email from James O'Brien who is the "original" kestrel researcher in NYC. Jim has found more kestrel nests in Manhattan than anyone.)

Thanks,

E.J.

\_\_\_\_\_

From: James O'Brien

To: "Robert DeCandido, PhD" <rdcny@earthlink.net>

**Subject:** Morningside Kestrels **Date:** April 19 (Monday)

They're on 119th just around the corner from Morningside Park. They nest in the pink cornice on the south east modillion. I see them on the antenna of PS 180 (Hugo Newman) all the time. [*This is the east side of Morningside Park - the "lowland" side.*]

For photos, see:

#### http://vojimbot.blogspot.com/

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From: Rob Cicchetti

**Subject:** Cicchetti Kestrels [on 68th and Broadway]

**Date:** April 13 (Tuesday)

Bob,

Today was a repeat of the weekend. Female adult was consuming a kill and the male was flying around the building and seemed to have landed on my building though flew out of sight. This was happening around sunset.

Their behavior, which is very similar to those years they successfully raised young, would suggest they are doing so again.

Rob

\_\_\_\_\_

From: Annie Barry
To: rdcny@earthlink.net

**Subject:** Warblers that nested in NYC

Date: April 14 (Wednesday)

I have yet to see kestrels in Inwood this spring. And have never been able to locate a nest.

#### Annie

\_\_\_\_\_

From: Art Gingert

Subject: NY City kestrels / chance to observe?

Date: April 14 (Wednesday)

Dear Dr. DeCandido,

You may recall me as the long-term American kestrel nest box project operator (33rd year) from northwest Connecticut who sent you a PDF file of my nest box design & construction notes document last spring, for your possible interest and use with your NY City kestrel monitoring and research project. I'd very much like to be able to spend a couple of hours tomorrow observing one or two nesting pairs of kestrels in Manhattan and wonder if you would be willing to offer some guidance on how best to do this.

I'm working with the good folks at the Audubon Sharon group (Nat'l Audubon Society) in Sharon CT, and we're adding about 20 new nest boxes to our project right now, which will make a total of some 75 nest boxes in northwest and north-central CT. Last year, we worked with 19 pairs of kestrels, banding a number of adults and most of the nestlings. I'd love to be able to help out with your project regarding the careful placement of some of my nest boxes, if that would be beneficial, especially in some areas where traditional building nest sites are disappearing.

Many thanks in advance and good luck with all that you are doing for NY City kestrels!

my best, Art Gingert West Cornwall CT

(Art and I did spend the next morning together, observing several Manhattan kestrel nest sites.)

\_\_\_\_\_

From: Maggie Medina

**Subject:** AMSTERDAM KESTRELS

**Date:** April 20 (Tuesday)

Dear Bob,

What has happened to the kestrels above my window? I have not heard their shrieks for about 2 weeks or so. Have they moved their nest or what became of them? Hoping for their return. (*Not to worry: See Anders' comments on the next page about activity at this nest = female likely sitting on eggs.*)

Regards,

Maggie Medina Amsterdam Ave. UWS

From: "K A. Peltomaa"

Subject: Re: AMSTERDAM KESTRELS

**Date:** April 20 (Tuesday)

Yesterday on my bike ride home from work I saw a kestrel sitting on the roof of one of the buildings by the court of the High School on W84th. The sun had dipped low and I did not have my binoculars with me so I cannot say if it was the male or female, but it was perching on one of the pairs favorite perches so it was definitely one of the pair that nests in your building Maggie.

### Anders

From: François Portmann

**Subject:** East 3rd Street Kestrels **Date:** April 21 (Wednesday)

Hey Bob,

I'll be here later in the afternoon (better light, bldg faces west). Call me when you get there, I'm 1 block away! The nest is in the cornice (green) of bldg at SE corner 2nd ave & 3rd street. Haven't seen any activity for awhile, as you mentioned the male is very discrete during incubation.

#### Francois



**Above:** Infra-red photo of the nest site/habitat of the East 3rd street kestrels that Francois Portmann has been watching for several years. Where do the kestrels nest? Look in the cornice in the building above Enzo's Pizza..The Lower East Side is a stronghold for nesting kestrels - many house sparrows and good nesting habitat.

# **Kestrels - North America**

### **Explanation of Page 1 Illustration - "The Sparrow's Home"**

The beautiful half-page sketch of the English Sparrow House in Union Square appeared in the April 3, 1869 edition of Harper's Weekly: A Journal of Civilization (sic).

It is accompanied by a little bit of text entitled "The Sparrow's Home"

"During the past few years our city and those immediately adjacent have been interested in the introduction of the English sparrow. In the parks of New York, and in the tree-lined avenues of Jersey City and Brooklyn, the superabundance of insects, and particularly the annoyance of worms [= Geometrid Moth caterpillars, aka "Inchworms"] hanging from the branches and continually dropping down upon passengers, became such burdensome nuisances that any means of relief was welcome. This relief was found in the sparrow. A few were imported, but they increased so rapidly that it is now becoming a question in some localities whether they are not likely to become a nuisance themselves. They certainly are preferable to the worms, and our city government has done well, we think, in encouraging the sparrows to take up their permanent abode with us by affording them such pleasant homes as that on Union Square, which we illustrate.

"It may be well to suggest to our readers in this connection that while it is wise to feed these birds in the winter time, it is better in all other seasons to turn them adrift to shift for themselves. The very object of their introduction into this country would be thwarted by any other treatment."

\_\_\_\_\_

For anyone interested in House Sparrow conservation:

http://worldhousesparrowday.org/How.html

### **Bird Bandits in Park**

New York Times - 19 March 1922, p. 120 Henry Marion Hall

Few people know that any predatory birds infest Central Park. They may see them occasionally, but they know them not for what they are, and so the feathered bandits go quietly about their nefarious trade with no fear of interruption. "Oh, see that dear little swallow playing with those pigeons!" I heard a mother exclaim to her son one afternoon near a western exit from the great playground. The "dear little swallow" which had attracted this woman's attention was a vagrant sharp-shinned hawk, which made a swoop at peanut-crammed pigeons on a lawn. Missing its quarry, the falcon flung up into the air and scaled to the top of a broken pine near the main driveway.

On this eerie perched his mate, a much larger female hawk, and, looking closely at her, I noticed she was standing on the corpse of a small bird, from which every little while, she would tear a shred. She made no sound when the male approached after his unsuccessful, "stoop," yet her glance said plainly enough, "Pigeons are too quick. Why don't you stick to a diet of sparrows?"

And this particular pair of sharp-shins made things hot for the sparrows and starlings that lived in that locality. They roosted by night in the architectural convolutions beneath the cornice of a hotel apartment house on Central Park West. On several occasions I saw them scaling up to this donjon keep, carrying their prey, though this did seem like carrying coals to Newcastle, in that the housetops thereabouts bear a plentiful crop of

sparrows.

Another pair of sharp-shins spent most of the month of October in the woods of the "Ramble," no doubt devouring many an unwary migrant, as well as those sturdy alien rogues, which we have with us perennially. The eerie of these falcons was a lofty apartment house on the corner of Fifth Avenue and Seventy-first Street. From a ledge near the summit of this building, the little rascals would peer forth as from a beetling cliff, hundreds of feet above the stream of automobiles below. Often I noticed them darting down into Central Park, and heartily hoped that they might strike English Sparrows, but leave the song birds in peace.

Still another hawk of this species lived for some days last Fall in the cornice decorations of the building at the corner of Fifth Avenue and Forty-second Street, where I make no doubt that he feasted royally on the sparrows. I saw him sidle right up to one bird on the foot of an electric sign, seizing him as easily as the setter that snaps the fly that alights on the tip of his nose in dog days. In many parts of the city, these hawks were to be seen during the migration last Fall, and within a few weeks we shall have them with us again, but they are always most numerous in the park and along the avenues and either flank.

Their more gayly tinted cousins, the sparrow hawks too, make a rendezvous of Central Park during the migrations. They have the same habit of perching under the cornices of very lofty buildings, and they leave only when the humbler birds of the area have left the region for Southern climes. Like most falcons they accompany the migration, and help preserve the balance set by nature.

Occasionally one sees larger hawks cross Central Park but they do not linger there as do the sharp-shins and sparrow hawks. Only one of these bigger fellows invades the park on plunder bent, and this is the duck hawk, or peregrine falcon, a truly formidable bird. A few pairs of these true falcons still nest along the Palisades, and once in a while, one of them dashes across the Hudson to the Park in quest of prey. Twice this year I positively identified this hawk flying from our woods in the direction of New Jersey. In all probability he had come in quest of pigeons of which he is extremely fond. It is a peregrine falcon which made such a stir this Fall by attacking the pigeons which roost in the steeple of a Fifth Avenue church.

The goldfish of Central Park certainly lead the most calm, uneventful lives, yet twice a year they have felt their bit of excitement during the migrations. Then it is that *Ceryle alcyon*, our belted kingfisher, springs his rattle over the park lagoons, and pounces on the unwary golden carp. The kingfisher, however, seems to wander into our park only by rare mistake, and seldom lingers there for any length of time.

On the 15th of last September, a Northern Shrike sat like a robber on a lofty Tulip tree in the park. Nobody seems to notice these, "butcher birds," during the migrations, owing to their plain grey and white of their plumage and their quiet ways. They will bear watching, nevertheless, for more bloodthirsty creatures then they do not levy toll on the thousands of feathered mites that swarm along the vast area of migration.

The guardians of Central Park spend much time on "tree dentistry," filling the accessible cavities with cement to prolong the life of the trees. But little "scops asio," our common screech owl, finds plenty of holes to creep into, despite these sylvan dentists. He sometimes perches on a stunted tree in the yard of an apartment house on East Eighty-seventh Street, and joins his melancholy quaver with that of the local cats.

Only a week ago, I saw two screech owls perched in a tree directly over the heads of the pedestrians near the Metropolitan Museum. Nobody seemed to notice these birds, and they remained undisturbed for hours. There is something peculiarly tramp-like in the appearance of an owl by daylight. Those half-closed slits of eyes have a sinister look about them; those ear-tufts, though not truly auricular appendages, appear to listen covertly, and everything says plainly enough that the bird knows that it is a mere vagrant from the realm of darkness. Several screech-owls live throughout the year in the northern part of the park, where there are plenty of hollows in the big trees.

By dusk, no doubt, the wanderer was flitting moth-like over the woods of New Jersey, for he would never stay with us. But during the night, our resident screech-owls doubtless prey upon the small birds of the park, and also, it is to be hoped, on the mice and rats, which are getting all too common there.

And so, even to the most casual observer, it is evident that our warblers and other tiny passers, en route for the Carolinas, or northward bound on the wings of Spring, are not safe, even in Central Park. They are always in danger of, "the arrow that flieth by day," and that is the sharp-shin or his like; and of the "pestilence that walketh in the darkness, and that is none other than quiet, little "scops asio."

### **Kestrels - International**

From: Marcel Gahbauer

Subject: American Kestrels - Urban!

Date: June 24, 2007

Hi Robert,

Kestrels are quite common in Toronto. Around 2000, Don Heintzelman asked me to write an article on the status of raptors in Toronto for International Hawkwatcher, and at the time I believe I estimated there to be around 50 active pairs in the city. I'm in the field at the moment and don't have access to that article, but if you want more details I can look it up when I get home some time in July.

I'll add that in the years since I wrote that article, I've lived in Montreal, Ottawa, and Calgary, and kestrels appear to be considerably less common in all those cities - though to be fair I haven't made the effort to search them out as I did in Toronto. But in Ottawa at least I'm pretty certain that merlins now outnumber kestrels.

Marcel Gahbauer Calgary AB / Goose Bay NL marcel@migrationresearch.org



# 10 May 2010

### **American Kestrel Nest Survey NYC - Issue #9 (2010)**

NYC Kestrels are sitting on Eggs (most but not all pairs)

In this issue we feature information about the history of the English House Sparrow in New York City - and some first- hand observations about kestrels and sparrows on busy NYC streets. (See Deborah Allen's photo below.)

Dr. William Hyman sent us this link to a webcam of a nesting pair of Eurasian (Common) Kestrels (*Falco tinnunculus*) in Israel. Live young are clearly visible (when she isn't sitting on them):

http://video.tau.ac.il/General/birds/2010/Nir David f.html

For information about urban raptors, see:

http://www.theworld.org/2010/04/27/protecting-beijings-raptors/ (= Raptors in Beijing). If you can properly navigate your web browser through that story, you can also track down Dr. David Bird discussing urban raptors...



**Above:** Kestrels are not called Sparrow Hawks for nothing (Part Dos)! This adult female kestrel is trying to capture a House Sparrow that had just entered its nest on Central Park West and 85th street in June 2009. House Sparrows nest in such structures throughout the city - and are the keystone prey species for kestrels here in Gotham. See top page 2 for Susan Choi's observations that explain what Deborah Allen has photographed. See also pages 10-13 of this Newsletter for the early history of this sparrow in North America.

DATE: Sunday, 7 May 2000

**SUBJECT**: American Kestrel Tale (Brooklyn)

REPORTED BY: "susan m choi"

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 [see photo bottom page 1]? 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 (Brooklyn), 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

### For more info on English House Sparrows in NYC, see pages 10-13

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From: Daryl Giampieri

**Subject:** West Village Kestrels (Manhattan)

**Date:** April 22 (Thursday)

HI Bob,

I finally found the little devil. Only because one early morning he chased away a Hawk. Since then I spotted him on the roof in two places on top of the buildings at West Houston and Varick St. or King Street and West Houston. [See bottom page 7 for - what we believe is - the discovery of the nest site of these kestrels by Jennifer Matthews.]

Daryl



From: Nancy Baker

Subject: Kestrels Upper West Side

**Date:** April 26th (Monday)

I think I saw a kestrel while sitting in my 3rd floor brownstone garden on West 81st Street. At first I thought it was a red-tailed hawk because the tail was fanned out and reddish. But it was much too small. I heard a screech and looked up to find a mourning dove escaping attack. The dove had been sitting on a railing and seemed to get away, though the attacker pursued with a mouthful of feathers. I'm no bird expert, but this seems closest when I look at my old Birds of North America.

I'm between Columbus and Amsterdam, nearer to Columbus. Probably it was a Zabars parent!

Nancy Baker

From: Mike DiPrima

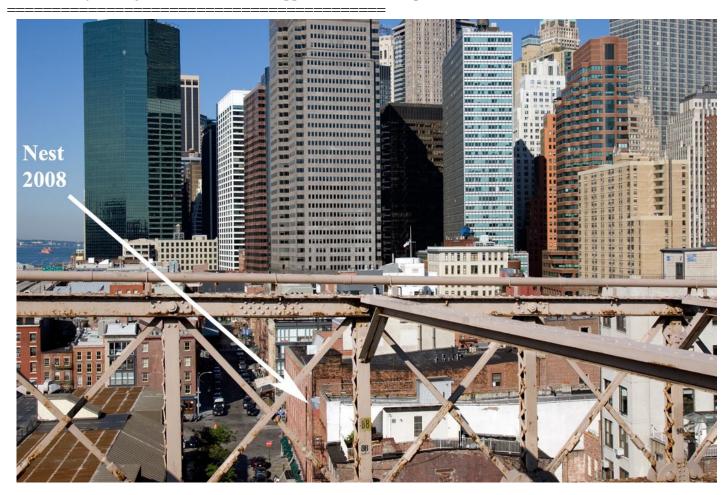
Subject: Queen's Kestrels (Jackson Heights)

Date: April 26 (Monday Night)

and fyi mine have not been heard since Easter (4 April)

not yet anyway

[But be aware: Sometimes kestrels will nest for 2-3 years at a location and then disappear forever...without a trace nor any hint of what made them disappear/abandon/die.]



Above: Arrow shows the nest cornice of the Brooklyn Bridge kestrels watched over so well by Shelley Campbell - see page 8 for more info. This kestrel nest fledged 5 young in 2008 - all females. The photograph was taken from the Brooklyn Bridge walkway looking south toward Lower Manhattan in May 2008. In that year, Peregrine Falcons nested on the Brooklyn Bridge (about 100 meters to my left (= east), and also at 55 Water Street (the dark green building at the far left of the photo) overlooking the East River. Unfortunately, this year Ms. Campbell has seen scaffolding erected on the front of the kestrel nest building - and likely this will force the kestrels to abandon their eggs (if they are already nesting), or re-locate to another building. This is an all too common occurrence in NYC for kestrels - building repairs that result in permanent loss of nesting habitat. At another kestrel nest site in Manhattan where the building was "repaired" in 2008 we placed a nest box hoping to entice the kestrels to remain and nest adjacent to their former nest. However the kestrels moved (2009) a couple of blocks away and used a different cornice (bracket) to nest in. Somehow, we have to establish a balance between what landlords need to do to buildings, and the needs of kestrels in NYC. Also, local organizations including the Wildlife Conservation Society and American Museum of Natural History have to take an active interest in local wildlife...

From: Lou Ianniello

**Subject:** Bronx kestrel sighting **Date:** April 27 (Tuesday)

Hi Bob,

Hope you are doing well. Thought you would like to know that I photographed a [male] kestrel in the playground behind my school. He then headed down the block after some starlings. This was on Blackrock and Virginia Avenues: <a href="http://www.city-data.com/school/ps-119.html">http://www.city-data.com/school/ps-119.html</a> and <a href="http://74.213.164.31/parks/X205/">http://www.city-data.com/school/ps-119.html</a> and <a href="http://74.213.164.31/parks/X205/">http://74.213.164.31/parks/X205/</a>

All the best,

Lou Ianniello

[Thanks Lou - always great to get info from our home borough - Des Bronx, pronounced like Des Moines. Nice male kestrel by the way - I can guarantee that there is a nest nearby.]



Photo Above by Lou Ianniello: adult male Kestrel near the Parkchester section of the Bronx. During winter, two adult kestrels were regularly observed just to the north of the #6 Train (Pelham Bay Local) - specifically the Elevated Parkchester IRT #6 stop. This pair has been in that area for two years at least - they nest close to Parkchester- about 10 blocks from where Lou Ianniello teaches. Thanks Lou from your fiend, Bob.

From: Jeffrey Kollbrunner Subject: Queens Kestrels Date: April 28 (Wednesday)

I know we have a number of Kestrels in the Briarwood, Kew Gardens region as I've seen a pair near Jamaica Hospital and Kew Gardens Road. I'm also aware of a pair near Queens Blvd by the Interboro. I haven't been able to find their nests and I'd like to add some Kestrel images to my Raptors portfolio. Can you possibly guide me to some nest locations in the Queens area especially if you are aware of some in the region or surrounding areas I mentioned. Otherwise, anyplace in Queens would be great. If you are not aware of the two locations I mentioned, I'm still going to search for their nests. If I find them I'll keep you posted.

All the best, Jeff

www.JKNatureGallery.com

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From: Leo

**Subject:** American Kestrel in Long Island City (Queens)

**Date:** May 5 (Wednesday)

I was jogging from Greenpoint to Astoria and spotted one in Jackson Ave. Long Island City by the 21st stop to the G: elegantly overseeing on top of a light post. Being a fan of Falconiforms I was excited, and found your site:)

Leo

\_\_\_\_\_

From: David Schenfeld

**Subject:** Re: American Kestrel in Long Island City (Queens)

**Date:** May 5 (Thursday)

I am in the tall Citibank building at court square right above the G train. I have seen kestrels flying by out of my window several times in the past few weeks. I have never seen them fly in the direction of the known nest in LIC so I am wondering if there is another pair near the Court Square station.

I suspected a nest around the 'Citiwide' self storage warehouse by the courthouse in LIC but I am not sure. I do better spotting birds when someone tells me where they are :)

### David Schenfeld

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From: Louise Weinberg

Subject: RE: American Kestrel in Long Island City (Quens)

**Date:** May 6 (Thursday)

I am also wondering if there is another nesting pair other than the Able Steel group who I see them from my window almost every day -- especially the male. I have never seen them fly off in that direction either towards the east.

When I get another minute, I'll send some nice feeding shots when they came to the roof right outside my apartment.

Best,

Louise

From: Dennis Edge

**Subject:** Nesting Kestrels in Lower Manhattan

Date: April 29 (Thursday)

Hi Bob,

I have Kestrel news. There is a nesting pair at Mercer and Bleecker Streets. Also, a pair is nesting at 9th Street and Avenue C across from 9th St. Community Garden. It is the same place you showed me in 2008. There are nesting Kestrels in Chinatown but my friend is keeping their location to himself for now. I'm finding the migration really slow so far, how about you?

#### Dennis

\_\_\_\_\_

From: Laura Meyers Subject: 9th street kestrels

Date: May 5

Thanks for this email. I keep looking in the same spots as last year and so far have not seen them. I will certainly let you know if I do spot them. All is well on this end.



**Above:** Arrow shows the nest cornice of the East 9th street kestrels watched over so well by Laura Meyers, Anita Randolfi, and Aida. This photograph was taken from Laura (and Alan's) coop, a couple of blocks north... east is to the left. The Lower East Side is a stronghold for nesting kestrels because of the many 19th century buildings that have cornices in various states of disrepair. Also, there are many small community gardens that are wonderful for nesting English House Sparrows = the big willow tree that grows in the center of this garden. Here can be found an abundance of sparrows and starlings that kestrels chase.

From: Serena Altschul

**To:** Robert DeCandido PhD <rdcny@earthlink.net>

Subject: Re: Kestrel nests Lower Manhattan

**Date:** April 29 (Thursday Night)

They are on my water tower every day. I have photos. There are at least two making the rounds in my neighborhood. Crosby btwn Broome and Spring.

#### Serena

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From: Serena Altschul

Subject: Re: Kestrel nests Lower Manhattan

**Date:** May 1 (Saturday)

I believe 2 Kestrels were mating outside my soho/nolita window yesterday. Shall I send the footage? You will need Quicktime Player. I also have lots of new photos. I will send a link to those shortly with username/password.

### Serena

Photos: <a href="http://gallery.me.com/saltschul#100055&view=grid&bgcolor=black&sel=7">http://gallery.me.com/saltschul#100055&view=grid&bgcolor=black&sel=7</a>

**Username:** kestrels2010 **Password:** kestrel

\_\_\_\_\_

From: Jennifer Mathews

Subject: Kestrel Nest, West Village (Manhattan)

**Date:** May 4, 2010 (Tuesday)

I don't know if anyone has reported this nest, but I "found" one on **Lafayette btw Kenmare and Broome** on the west side of the street in the cornice over the left hand side of the fire escape. I saw both the male and female. Very exciting and not too hard. Here is a crappy phone picture. I'll go back tomorrow with my real camera for some pictures. I spotted the nest after roaming around the block looking for the "Crosby St" pair. I'm so happy!

[See Jennifer's photos below of the nest building (left) and nest bracket (right) at the nest she found! Thanks Jen - you done magnifico.]





From: Beth Goffe

**Subject:** Possible kestrel sighting **Date:** May 1, 2010 (Saturday)

I spotted a falcon flying over the City College campus at 140th St. This morning (Saturday). I can't be sure that this was one of the pair I watched nest last year at W. 131st St. (I saw nothing at both nest sites) but I'm taking it as a hopeful sign! Beth

From: Shelley Campbell

Subject: Kestrels - Brooklyn Bridge area

Date: May 1 (Saturday)

Hi. I have been keeping an eye on the Kestrel's nest at 248 Front Street in the South Street Seaport this Spring. I have not seen any activity until today, when I was walking my dog this morning. I saw a large bird fly into the cavity at the South corner of the roof. Sadly, the building has put up scaffolding and netting for repairs to the building. I'm sure the nest is in harm's way.

This scaffolding has been put up in the last few weeks. The building next door which is an empty lot separating the two buildings has had scaffolding up for the last three months. They are pointing the entire North brick wall. I have kept my eye on the cornice because of Spring, but definitely saw a large bird, probably a Kestrel fly into the hole yesterday morning. I did write an e mail to the Best Western Seaport Inn regarding the cornice, but have not heard back yet. Someone told me, maybe you, that the owner of the hotel, also owned 248 Front Street. Keep you posted if I hear of any more info regarding the birds. shelley



Photo Above: American Kestrels nested here in 2008-09 (at least), near the Brooklyn Bridge (behind the photographer). See page 3 (bottom) for an alternate view of this nest building. As 19th century NYC buildings and cornices are repaired, we are eliminating the nest sites of American Kestrels. It is a problem that can be solved, but it will take participation of local organizations. We can have safe, repaired buildings and nesting kestrels too...getting building owners interested in local kestrels is the key part.

From: Maggie

**Subject:** Amsterdam Avenue Kestrels (Manhattan)

**Date:** May 6 (Thursday)

I saw my Kestrel this morning!! He made a pit stop on my fire escape while feeding "the love of his life". My son and I were looking out to see him and Boy!! he swarmed really close and showed his orange. This was beautiful and would have been the ultimate shot If I had my cam.:( He is perching across my window on the other roof like he did last year. I'll be checking all those last year perches to find him. Where do I check for your C.P. birding schedules?

Regards

Maggie

[When not doing kestrel and other raptor research (owls!) here in NYC, we can be found in Thailand - doing raptor migration research for the Thai government at a globally significant watch site - at least 24 raptor species have been seen in migration there, as well as numerous other bird species. However, we are New Yorkers, and Deborah Allen and I run regularly scheduled bird walks in NYC, see: www.BirdingBob.com

From: Eric Powers

**Subject:** 96th Street Kestrels (Manhattan)

**Date:** May 7, 2010 (Friday)

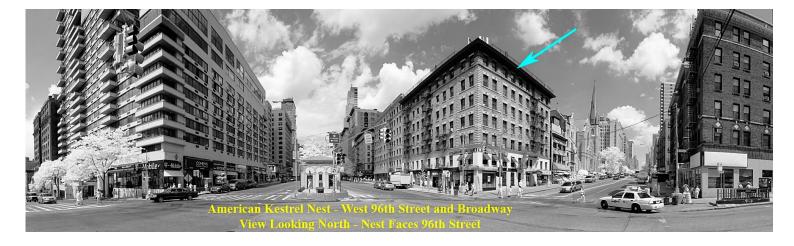
I just wanted to say thank you for sending me the Kestrel Newsletters and your papers/news on E Screech Owls. Fascinating! I thought moving into Manhattan was going to be mostly devoid of wildlife and the news of raptors in the area has me titillated to be here. Especially now since I have found the Kestrel nest on the corner of W. 96th St and Broadway...in the cornices of the building...in view from my bedroom window no less!! Fortune has surely smiled on this biologist! I'm trying to get in touch with the building owner across the street from the kestrels to allow me roof access so I can photograph the nest without disturbing the adults.

As for the screech owl and kestrel nest boxes, I see that these would just serve the squirrels of the Park. There MUST be a squirrel excluder device out there somewhere...

Keep your newsletters coming! Great job.

Sincerely,

**Eric Powers** 



# **Kestrels - North America**

#### THE ENGLISH SPARROW

By T. GILBERT PEARSON

The National Association of Audubon Societies - EDUCATIONAL LEAFLET NO. 90

Many kinds of foreign birds have been introduced into the United States with the hope of having them become acclimated to their new surroundings. In many cases this action was taken by persons who doubtless were actuated by the desire to have around them certain forms of bird-life that they had been accustomed to see and enjoy about their European homes before migrating to these shores.

Linnets, Bullfinches, Skylarks, and many other birds, interesting on account either of their singing, or of the striking character of their plumage, have been liberated in the United States and Canada. Game-birds, especially Hungarian Partridges, the little European Quail, and various species of Pheasants go to swell the list of foreign birds that have been brought here to mingle with our native bird-population. As a rule these imported species did not thrive in their new surroundings, and after a short time were seen no more.

The most striking exception to this rule has been the House Sparrow of Europe, which in this country has acquired the incorrect title of "English" Sparrow. The first importation of these birds appears to have been made in the year of 1850, by the directors of the Brooklyn Institute. Eight pairs were that year liberated in Brooklyn, New York. In a bulletin on the English Sparrow, issued by the Department of Agriculture in 1889, a statement by the Hon. Nicholas Pike is quoted, in which he gives an account of this early attempt to naturalize English Sparrows in this country. He writes: "It was not till 1850 that the first eight pairs were brought from England to the Brooklyn Institute, of which I was then a director. We built a large cage for them, and cared for them during the winter months. Early in the spring of 1851 they were liberated, but they did not thrive.



**Photo Above:** We are under no illusions about the harm non-native house sparrows cause to native wildlife. In this May 2010 photo, a male house sparrow has captured a Damselfly (species unknown) along the Harlem Meer in Central Park. The insect had just emerged from the pond where it spent its larval stage. House Sparrows patrol the edge of the pond, and as these insects emerge and are drying their wings to make their first flight, they (and Dragonflies) are easy prey. House Sparrows also take many Lightning Bug beetles that they capture during the day while those insects roost under the leaves of trees, particularly Elms.

"In 1852 a committee of members of the Institute was chosen for the re-introduction of these birds, of which I was chairman. Over \$200 was subscribed for expenses. I went to England in 1852, on my way to the consulgeneralship of Portugal. On my arrival in Liverpool I gave the order for a large lot of Sparrows and song-birds to be purchased at once. They were shipped on board the steamship 'Europa,' if I am not mistaken, in charge of an officer of the ship. Fifty Sparrows were let loose at the Narrows, according to instructions, and the rest on arrival were placed in the tower of Greenwood Cemetery chapel. They did not do well, so were removed to the house of Mr. John Hooper, one of the committee, who offered to take care of them during the winter.

"In the spring of 1853 they were all let loose in the grounds of Greenwood Cemetery, and a man hired to watch them. They did well and multiplied, and I have original notes taken from time to time of their increase and colonization over our great country."

This appears to have been only the first of many importations that followed. For example, Colonel William Rhodes, of Quebec, Canada, introduced Sparrows at Portland, Maine, in 1854. Other men brought some to Peace Dale, Rhode Island, in 1858. In 1860 twelve birds were liberated in Madison Square, New York City; and four years later they were introduced into Central Park.

In 1866, 200 were set free in Union Park, New York City. Forty pairs were brought to New Haven, Connecticut in 1867. Twenty Sparrows were turned loose in Boston Common in 1868. In 1869 the City Government of Philadelphia bought over one thousand Sparrows. In the same year twenty pairs were brought to Cleveland, Ohio, and sixty-six pairs were taken from New York to Cincinnati. Shortly after this they were introduced in San Francisco. It will be seen therefore from the above records, which are not at all complete, that the present population of English Sparrows did not develop in this country from a single importation, as has sometimes been stated.

Their appearance seems to have been hailed with delight by the people of the country generally, for many records tend to show that after they once became fairly well established in the East, there sprang up a regular Sparrow craze, for the birds were captured and taken to scores, if not hundreds, of places in different parts of the country.

Not only were they distributed artificially, but the birds also spread rapidly by their own initiative. Their progress was made chiefly along the highways, where the droppings of horses furnished an abundant supply of half-digested grain, and along the railroads where the grain-cars, particularly in autumn, were continually scattering food along the right-of-way. At the present time there are comparatively few communities in the United States or in southern Canada where the English Sparrow is not well known, and probably it is the most numerous species of bird in North America. It is chiefly a bird of the cities and towns, and is usually not found in abundance in the thinly populated parts of the country. In the autumn, however, when the Sparrows are most numerous, owing to the recently reared broods, and in cities where the Sparrow population is already at its maximum, many of these birds are naturally forced out of the cities and towns in quest of food. In no way does the English Sparrow show its fondness for living near human habitations more than in its nesting-habits. Unlike other Sparrows, it rarely, if ever, constructs its nest in woods, thickets, or fields at any considerable distance from a house.

During the breeding-season the birds swarm in the towns and cities and there, in crevices about buildings, in water-spouts, or in boxes put up for the convenience of other birds, it makes its home. The hollows of trees are frequently used for this purpose. When such nesting-sites are no longer available, owing to overcrowding, they will build bulky, covered, and ill-looking nests among the branches of shade trees. The nesting material used consists of straw, grass, twigs, rags, fragments of paper, or feathers; in fact, almost any substance that may easily be carried seems to be regarded by these birds as suitable material for nest-making.

The eggs are spotted, and usually range in number from four to six. Two or more broods are often reared in a

season. The Sparrow is extremely prolific, and one evidence of its wonderful ability to avoid dangers and thrive is shown in the fact that in large cities, where destructive natural enemies are reduced to a minimum, albinism has become more and more noticeable. I have observed here in New York City in recent years that the number of Sparrows showing white feathers in the wings or on the body has apparently increased. If these unusually marked birds lived in the country they would, of course, be shining marks for predatory enemies.

While primarily a seed-eater by nature, the English Sparrow is nevertheless quite omnivorous in its food-habits, and it annually destroys many insects. I recall some years ago talking with two farmers in Onslow County, North Carolina, who were lamenting the fact that the law did not protect the English Sparrow, for they stated that these birds were among the most valuable species on their farms because of their great fondness for the caterpillars that infested their tobacco plants.

An observer in the United States Department of Agriculture recently found that in Utah these Sparrows were feeding their young largely on the cutworms and other insects that were then a scourge to the alfalfa fields of northern Utah. Other observers in various parts of the country have pointed to instances where the English Sparrow was of decided economic value. These cases, however, appear to be comparatively isolated ones, and are regarded by our agricultural experts in Washington as being greatly overbalanced by the injury these birds do to the general interests of mankind. Most persons who have tried to cultivate gardens or small fruits in the neighborhood of towns or cities are ready to testify to the annoyance they have experienced by English Sparrows eating tender plants, such as new peas and young lettuce, as well as by the destruction of such fruits as cherries, pears, grapes, and peaches. They also frequently destroy buds and flowers.

The United States Department of Agriculture scientifically investigated the contents of the stomachs of a large number of English Sparrows, and reported that aside from the destruction of weed-seeds, very little is to be said in the English Sparrow's favor. In reference to the insects destroyed this statement is made: "Out of five hundred and fifty-two stomachs inspected by the Biological Survey, forty-seven contained noxious insects, fifty held beneficial insects, and thirty-one contained insects of little or no importance."

There is a widespread feeling that the country would be better off if the English Sparrow had never been brought here. This sentiment against this bird, whether justified or not, has arisen because of the annoyance it gives to gardeners and fruit-growers; its tendency to destroy the nests of small native birds and thus drive them out of our towns; the loss caused by fires due to the nests placed about buildings catching sparks; its uncleanly habits spoiling sculptures on the facades of buildings; its noisy chatter about the house and yard where once the songs of other birds were heard, to say nothing of the petulant calling and fighting in the early morning heard about bedroom windows where late risers are taking their "beauty sleeps."

Resentment against the bird is reflected in the laws of our country, for in no state in the Union is the English Sparrow protected by statute. Every little while there are discussions in the public press about starting "Sparrow-wars" with a view to exterminating these birds. Now and then we hear of some community's efforts looking to this end. Such attempts, however, have virtually been futile, as the English Sparrow can take care of itself so successfully that only by continuous warfare against them, year after year, can their numbers be kept down in any particular community.

Sometimes the experiment is made of offering a bounty on the heads of Sparrows. One objection to this procedure is that inexperienced persons, who are not able to distinguish between the English Sparrow and one or another of our native Sparrows, immediately become active in such a campaign, and our native birds suffer as a result. Within the past month an agent of this Association visited a western town where a bounty was being paid on dead English Sparrows. This agent examined the dead birds brought in during three days, and found that only one out of every eleven birds brought in, on all of which the bounty appears to have been paid, were English Sparrows; the others were all useful native birds.

"What shall we do with the English Sparrow?" is a question which this Association is probably asked once a day on an average throughout the year. I confess my inability to answer this question. The Department of Agriculture at Washington has attempted to answer it by issuing bulletins advising people to poison and trap the birds. Whether this course is wise, it may at least be said that all such attempts in a public way instantly produce strong opposition by many hundreds of men and women who, perhaps in lieu of more interesting birdneighbors, regard with pleasure the presence of the English Sparrows, and often feed them upon their window-sills, or provide boxes for their accommodation.

**Bird-Lore** 19(1): 42 (January-February, 1917)

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# **Kestrels - International**

Subject: [RaptorBiology] current paper on urban Common Kestrels in Warsaw Poland

**Date: Wed, 25 Jul 2001** 

From: "stan moore" < hawkman11@hotmail.com>

Friends --

I am at the BioScience Library in Berkeley and have in front of me *Acta Ornithologica*, an ornithological publication of the Polish Academy of Sciences in Warsaw. The issue I have is Volume 35, No. 2, dated Winter 2000, and I would like to share the abstract from the following paper:

"Can food caching increase frequency of chicks' feeding in urban Kestrels *Falco tinnunculus*?" by Lukasz Rejt, et al.

Abstract: "Continuous video camera observations of the Kestrel's nest situated on a building within the city centre showed presence of a surplus of prey (mainly untouched sparrows and voles) stored in the nest and its close vicinity. During the first three weeks of the nestling period, chicks were fed this prey, and the frequency of feedings was higher than the frequency of prey delivery. Food storage was also observed in some other nesting places of Warsaw kestrels.

Daily pattern of prey deliveries observed in Warsaw did not differ significantly from the available data on Kestrels inhabiting an open landscape."

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Finally, and we hope to have more to report on this in the coming weeks, American Kestrels have now been reported to be foraging at night in three different places. Here in NYC, Dr. Andrew Farnsworth reported to us that he has seen kestrels chasing insects at night at the new Yankee Stadium. In the link to the web discussion about urban raptors referenced on page 1, Dr. David Bird writes, "I have seen American kestrels, a smaller cousin, catching flying insects in the lights of the Olympic Stadium in Montreal during an Expos baseball game." And finally, our own Bill C. Heck was watching baseball highlights on Thursday night 6 May 2010. He was amazed to hear the commentators talking about a bird chasing moths at night during the ball game. Next, the camera zoomed in on an American Kestrel male eating a moth at night....Each of these observations is a discovery new to science....!

#### Robert DeCandido PhD

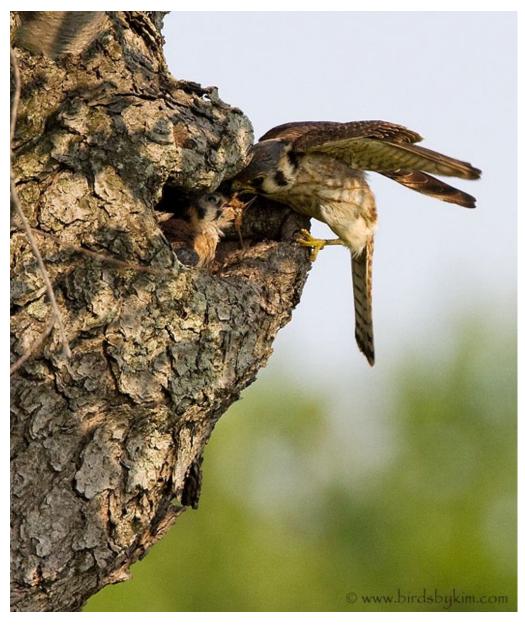
http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=dJUnX1En5TM&feature=related

# 24 May 2010

## American Kestrel Nest Survey NYC - Issue #10 (2010)

Some Female Kestrels seen outside of their nests

The busy season is about to begin for Kestrels here in NYC. Anders Peltomaa is reporting the first adult female perched outside of her nest at the Amsterdam Avenue nest site in Manhattan. See Page 7 for details. Young kestrels can fly from their nest as early as 20 May in NYC, with the peak fledging season beginning in early to mid June. If you see a female kestrel perched in your neighborhood in the next few weeks, you can be certain there is a nest very close by (within 50 yards).



**Above:** Kestrels still occasionally nest in "natural" settings such as this tree cavity in Brandywine Creek State Park in Wilmington, Delaware. Here an adult female is feeding her chicks a small bird - photograph by Kim Steininger. For more of Kim's photos, see Page 8 where there are also links to her web site.

**From:** Eric Powers

**Subject:** Kestrels on West 96th St and Broadway (Manhattan)

**Date:** May 10 (Monday)

Here's several shots...of good enough quality to see male [top left and right] vs. female [bottom right], and that he caught a small bird [top right]. The picture of the cornices shows where the nest is...the slot that is exactly centered above the window [bottom left]...you can't see any sign of the nest from this angle nor from any white wash, which is partly the reason why it took me so long to actually find the nest.

www.YC2N.com



From: Sharon Kass

Subject: Kestrel Nest on 96th street!!!!

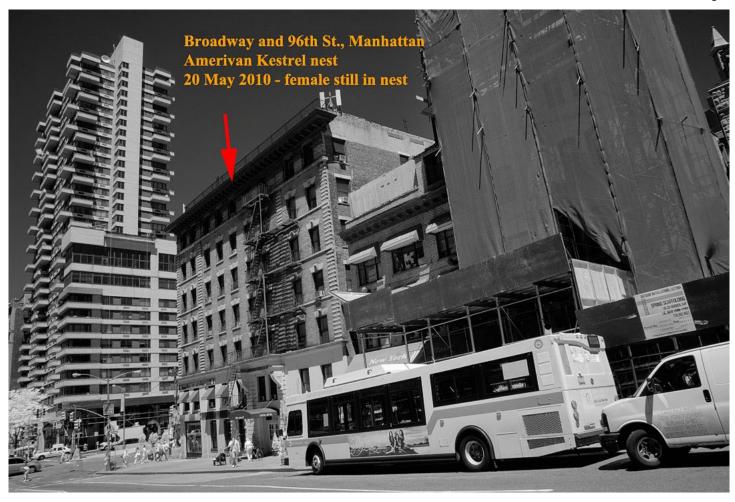
**Date:** May 9 (Sunday night)

Hi Bob, Eric, all,

Yes I watched the West 96street nest for the 4 years I lived across the street. The building was indeed the NE corner of Broadway and 96th Street. The nest was on the side facing 96th street and was about midway or slightly east of midway along the roof. There was always lots of whitewash on the fire escape directly under the entrance. I think the nest was not right near the entrance because I sometimes saw the parent enter and then walk inside west a bit along the edge (I could see a little between the cracks). The parents used the antenna over the diner for copulating but I think that's gone now. The chicks often played on the roof top of the SE building across the street. I have (poor) video of the chicks sliding down a slant over and over - perhaps for fun?

I'm glad to hear the site is active again!

Sharon



**Above:** Kestrel nest in the south facing cornice at 96th street and Broadway in May 2010. This nest was active in the early 2000's when Sharon Kass lived across the street - and made the first NYC videos of local kestrels. Then the nest went unused for three years (2007-09). The Upper West Side of Manhattan has the highest concentration of nesting kestrels in NYC - we don't know why (yet). Note construction work on the building almost next door - similar construction work has caused nest failures at other locations in NYC.

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**From:** Urbanbirds-Mailbox <urbanbirds@cornell.edu>

Subject: NYC Kestrel Newsletter #9

Date: May 10 (Monday)

Dear Mr. DeCandido, fabulous newsletter. I'd love to do a post on the Celebrate Urban Birds Facebook page on your efforts using use the photo on P 6, the accompanying text, and refer people to your materials. Can you give me permission to use that photo? Facebook posts are pretty ephemeral, but I really like the photo and the explanation of the value of the details in older architecture and the value of green spaces, which is behind all the research questions for the Celebrate Urban Birds observation. Kestrels are not one of the fifteen species we ask people to look for but House Sparrows are, and so some of the history in your newsletter about the history of House Sparrows would be relevant for a Facebook post, too...I would credit the author of the article....T. Gilbert Pearson, and again, to where would you want people to refer in order to follow your group, receive newsletter, or get more info on urban kestrels?

#### Christianne

See: http://www.facebook.com/photo.php?pid=3916212&id=71397573269

From: Kenneth Hicks

Subject: Upper East Side Kestrels

**Date:** May 11 (Tuesday)

I have periodically checked the nest site on 91st Street near Third Avenue and have seen no activity there. On Saturday morning, while working outside, I heard the call of a kestrel and when I looked up I saw him/her on the top of the water tower on the southwest corner of Lexington and 93rd Street. I then hear more cries and saw a second kestrel that flew west on the north side of the tower and then returned east on the south side. Calling continued. Then both kestrels started up Lexington in a northerly direction. In the bright light, I find it hard to distinguish male and female, so I don't know if this was a territorial display or something more romantic. Seems a little late for that sort of thing.

On Sunday (9 May), I saw a kestrel flying west over the 92nd Street Y. That would be closer to the 91st Street nest site.

#### Ken Hicks

Good Question - it could be (a) they have just begun nesting at either 91st street or nearby. In NYC, we have young fledging as late as mid July...so if you figure about 30 days for the eggs to hatch and another 30 days for the young to fledge - it could be this pair is just at the beginning to nest stage...OR you could be seeing another pair - in the past, kestrels have nested on 104th street just west of Third Ave (and elsewhere on the Upper East Side). You could be seeing kestrels drifting south to sit on a favorite kestrel perch...My guess is that there is a pair that is near (or at) its 91st street nest. Do note - kestrels are extremely secretive in the early stages of nesting. Females are hidden in the nest bracket on the building, and males don't hang around the nest area. It gets easier to find active nests when the eggs hatch and the young are about two weeks old. Then the female will sit outside the nest, about 50-100 feet away from the nest entrance. That is the best time to watch kestrels to discover the nest - eventually the female (or male) will fly to the nest with food to feed the (3-5) youngsters...and this will happen several times during the day.



From: Don & Carol McCartney

**Subject:** Kirby the Kestrel (Minnesota and Oregon)

Date: May 13, 2010 (Thursday)

Kestrel fans,

This week the NYC Kestrel Newsletter mentioned that the first bits of scientific evidence have emerged that Kestrels sometimes hunt at night. And some supporting evidence appeared in the Wednesday Bulletin. During a game of the major league Minnesota Twins with rain steadily falling, a Kestrel drew plenty of attention as it swooped through the air, snaring insects lured by the bright stadium lights.

"When its acrobatic acts were shown on the video scoreboard, the crowd went crazy. One close-up shot featured the bird eating a large moth clutched in its talons.

"There's even a Twitter account with the username TargetFieldHawk and the name Kirby the Kestrel. One post says: I know I'm technically the smallest falcon, but I'm a Minneapolis moth's biggest nightmare"

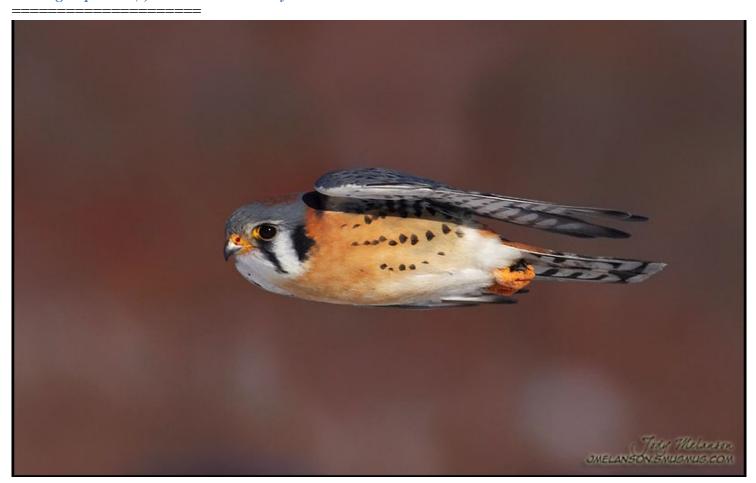
This is some fun trivia, but this did take place at night, with the aid of bright stadium lights.

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You have to see this video of Kirby hunting at night and in the rain!:

http://blogs.citypages.com/blotter/2010/05/target\_field\_ha.php

Talk about Citizen-Science! The several hundred thousand people who watched this video, or saw Kirby hunting in person (!) all made a discovery new to science...



From: Elaine Maas

**Subject:** Kestrel Nest Cam, Israel **Date:** May 13, 2010 (Thursday)

I've been getting your newsletters ever since I went on a CP bird walk with you back in March. Thanks so much.

I have a question I am wondering if you could answer or if someone else can.

I have gone on this website from the Kestrel newsletter - <a href="http://www.battaly.com/nehw/AmericanKestrel/news/">http://www.battaly.com/nehw/AmericanKestrel/news/</a>

And from there to the 3 webcams in Tel Aviv that have been showing barn owls and kestrels chicks. We have been watching since Monday in my classroom.

Today (13 May), the mother kestrel has <u>not</u> returned to her nest since her last appearance about 3 hours ago (12 noon our time). This seems terribly unusual. For the last 4 nights that I have been watching, she has always stopped hunting around 1pm our time, and nested with her chicks for the rest of her night. We have watching her with her wings over them like a blanket, in fact. The chicks are sleeping alone without her now as I write. I don't think the mother is night-hunting like the kestrels referenced in the new Yankee Stadium. It seems much too long for her to be away

My afternoon Biology classes are curious as am I as to the fate of abandoned chicks in such a nesting box, particularly one with a video cam for all to view.

There's a biology lesson here, of course, for my students. Even so, it's hard to watch after seeing such strong and alert chicks this whole week.

There's another lesson underlying this -- what is the responsibility of groups that set up nest boxes and web sites? Is there a general protocol to follow under the circumstances. This is the question I wonder about.

Once again - thanks - Elaine

From: Elaine Maas

**Subject:** Kestrel Nest Cam, Israel (Part 2)

**Date:** May 15 (Saturday)

Bob -

Thought I would pass on the good news -

The kestrel chicks (all 4) all alive, alert, noisy, and well, as of this morning. And, I have observed someone dropping bits of food into the nest box twice this AM!

So either, they got our messages .... OR they discovered mom's disappearance on their own. Guess I have the answer to my question about intervention!

Thanks for your help to solve this small international crisis- have a great day.

Elaine Maas

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From: KA Peltomaa

Subject: Anders' AMKE report 5/20

**Date:** May 20 (Thursday)

Today I saw the female Kestrel perching on the building opposite the nest site (she was on top of "George's building"). It was nice to see her out and about, and of course to know that we hopefully will see the young ones for this season.

#### - Anders

\_\_\_\_\_

From: Rosemary Kassel

**Subject:** KESTREL 93RD & B'WAY?

Date: May 24 (Monday)

I saw this bird at 93rd & Broadway. I see kestrels out in Coney Island and it looks like it may be one, although it was small--at first I thought it was a female cardinal, but it was going from pole to pole, maybe eating insects, eggs, young birds?

I'm sorry the picture is not better, but it did fly away.

### Rosemary Stolzenberg

Thank You ever so much for the photo and information. The male kestrel you photographed is most likely from the nest on the corner of 96th street and Broadway - See pages 2-3 for more info. And yes we believe a few kestrel pairs nest on Coney Island in Brooklyn...If you see kestrels there, do let us know.



**Above:** View from Carol Wood's terrace of the 69th street and Broadway kestrel nest and habitat. The Upper West Side has the highest concentration of kestrel pairs in NYC. We don't know why... This is also one of the highest nests in NYC at about 125 feet above street level. Starlings nest on the cornice as well.

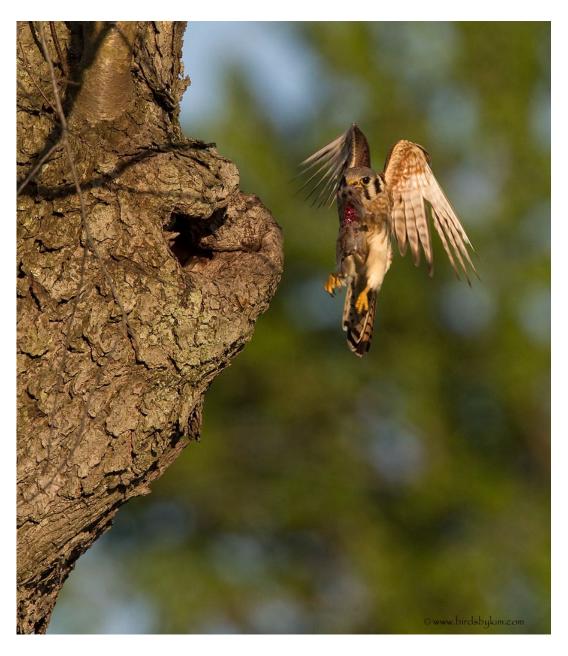
# **Kestrels - North America**

To see kestrels using a "natural" cavity as their nest, see the web site of Kim Steininger:

http://birdsbykim.com/blog/?p=57

http://birdsbykim.com/blog/?p=228

http://birdsbykim.com/blog/?p=78



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# **Kestrels - International**

## **Consistent Differences in Feeding Habits Between Neighboring Breeding Kestrels**

David Costantini, Stefania Casagrande, Giuseppe Di Lieto, Alberto Fanfani & Giacomo Dell'Omo

**Summary** - In this study, we analyzed the diet of breeding kestrels (*Falco tinnunculus*) in a Mediterranean area with the aim to evaluate the relative importance of both hunting area and individual feeding behavior as factors affecting prey selection. Differently from the populations from middle and northern Europe which primarily feed on voles, the kestrels breeding in the Mediterranean region showed a wider diet composition. As expected, hunting area features influenced the diet composition and, in general, the kestrels were feeding on what was locally more abundant. However, we detected consistent differences in the diet composition between neighboring breeding pairs which were also maintained in subsequent years. Since the neighboring birds were sharing the same hunting grounds, the differences observed were likely to reflect individual preferences or capabilities in catching some prey type regardless of their actual availability. The presence of differences in diet composition between neighboring pairs and their temporal consistency suggests that the hunting skills, and in general the feeding behavior of kestrels, is likely to represent a trait characterizing a behavioral type.

**From:** Behaviour 142, 1409-1421 (2005)

## PCBs in the Eggs of Eurasian Kestrels Indicate Exposure to Local Pollution

### Giacomo Dell'Omo, David Costantini, Julian Wright, Stefania Casagrande and Richard F. Shore

Fail-to-hatch kestrel (*Falco tinnunculus*) eggs collected at the end of the 1999 and 2005 breeding seasons from nest boxes in and around the city of Rome, Italy, were analyzed by gas chromatography with electron capture detection for their PCB content and for the presence of DDT derivatives and other organochlorines. Among the various PCBs, congeners 153 and 180 were detected in all the eggs and showed the highest concentrations. Eggs collected from the same nest from a polluted location in Rome during two different years showed similar type and number of PCB congeners. These data and the fact that eggs from another nest near a sulphate mine had, atypically, low chlorinated congeners support the conclusion that eggs of this species, whose adults in the Mediterranean and continental Europe perform only short or no migration movements, might be indicative of local pollution. When multiple eggs in the same clutch were analyzed, the PCBs were similar in type but their concentration decreased within clutch, likely in parallel to the laying order.

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Remember on 31 May (Memorial Day), there will be a field trip to a few kestrel nests in Manhattan. Size of the group is limited. Email me for details and to make a reservation.

We cannot emphasize this enough - if you see a kestrel perched somewhere in NYC in the next 2-3 weeks, it is likely a female and she has a nest in the immediate area. Do let us know...And soon the busy season for Bobby and Cathy Horvath, NYC raptor re-habbers, will begin too.

#### Robert DeCandido PhD

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