

3 June 2010

American Kestrel Nest Survey NYC - Issue #11 (2010)

First Fledgling Kestrels Reported

It is early June and American Kestrels are fledging young. The last few days of May and the first two weeks of June comprise the peak season for young kestrels leaving their nest in NYC. By mid-July the nesting season is 99% complete for NYC Kestrels. It is possible that a pair or two re-nests to fledge young yet again, but we don't have any probable evidence of this. In other cities south of NYC, some pairs do re-nest.

Here in NYC there are two things to look for to find a kestrel nest (of which we estimate there are 60-100 nests throughout the city; and about 20-25 on Manhattan Island): the primary clue is to see young birds - See Anders Peltomaa's photo below. Second, if you see an adult 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).

We are rapidly coming to the close of the 2010 kestrel season - this may be our last Newsletter for the year.



Above: *At least two young Kestrels (note down on forehead) from "Maggie's Nest" at Amsterdam Ave. and 84th street - photographed by Anders (KA) Peltomaa on Saturday 30 May 2010. For more information on this nest site, see page 3 and also page 7-8. In 2009, young fledged from this nest on 10 June through 13 June (four or five young in total) . In 2010, the first youngster fledged on 30 May. This nest was originally found by Janet Bachant on 22 March 2009. See page 2, bottom, for an infra-red photo of the nest building and cornice.*

From: Rosemary Kassel
Subject: Coney Island (Brooklyn) Kestrels
Date: May 24 (Monday)

I got this video of a kestrel eating a bird leg on our terrace in Coney Island, the address is 460 Neptune Ave and our terrace looks directly over Asser Levy park to the ocean.

I had been observing the kestrel family that nested in an air conditioner hole across the way on the 22nd floor. I don't see them much now, but I often hear them.

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

From: Rosemary Kassel
Subject: Coney Island Kestrels
Date: May 26 (Wednesday)

Hi Bob,

The video was from Spring 2009. I am only out in Coney on weekends, but I look for them. I don't see a nest again. I just see a kestrel flying by once in a while and I believe I hear them "krilling" --maybe they're nesting on the roof, but I don't know. I've heard they like to hang out on the parachute jump.

I'll keep watchin'! [See page 6 for another Brooklyn nest.]

Rosemary



From: Chad Seewagen
Subject: Kestrels on Amsterdam Avenue (Manhattan)
Date: May 24 (Sunday)

Hi Bob,

If it's worth anything to you, I heard and saw a kestrel overhead yesterday (23 May - Sunday) afternoon while I was walking through a street fair on 87th and Amsterdam. I assume you already know of a pair in this area, but thought I'd let you know just in case. I only looked up briefly after hearing a kestrel to make sure I wasn't imagining things and saw it curve from straight over the 87th and Amsterdam intersection towards Broadway (ie, the kestrel flew west). I didn't note the sex.

Chad

Yes it seems the adults from both the Zabar's Nest at 80th and Broadway, as well as the Maggie Nest (Amsterdam and 84th) head west toward Riverside Park to look for food. Other kestrels in the area such as the 69th and Broadway pair also head west to Riverside Park to hunt...my guess is that the food is easy to obtain and abundant there.

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From: KA Peltomaa
Subject: Amsterdam Avenue Kestrels
Date: May 27, 2010 (**Thursday**)

I have started to do daily visits to 511 Amsterdam so we find out when the youngsters fledge. For the last 3 days I have seen nada. Neither adults have been there and no visible movements in the nest cavity

From: KA Peltomaa
Subject: Re: Friday at Amsterdam Ave
Date: May 29 (**Saturday**)

I'll raise you 2 juveniles. Today (Saturday) I saw two juveniles in the nest cavity. The female was perching for a while above Harriet's Kitchen (opposite side of nest building). It was such a good feeling to see the offspring for this season! [*See photo page 1 for - what appears to be - at least two young males in nest cavity. And below is another photo of the young ones by Anders - 29 May 2010 = Saturday. See also pages 7-8 for more info.*]

- Anders

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From: Shelley Campbell
Subject: kestrels
Date: May 28 (Friday)

I wrote to you about my concern over the Front Street, South Street Seaport building renovation and after contacting the owner of the building, he had the scaffolding moved to the South and West side of the building. This morning, walking my dog, I saw a baby Kestrel sitting in the open cavity looking out. What a surprise.

Sincerely,

Shelley Simpson

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Dear Shelley,

Great conservation work - and thanks for this update.

I was at the Brooklyn Bridge on Thursday (27 May) and watched an adult male kestrel land atop the water tower of the Post Office (1 Peck Slip). He remained there quite a while looking about...so long that I had time to go and sit in the Wendy's on the other side of the parking lot. From there I could have a cup of coffee and watch him...this is what I saw:

He flew off to the SW (toward apartment buildings) and disappeared for 20 minutes or so. When he returned he had prey (a small bird) with him...and proceeded to pluck it atop the water tower. Then he took the bird to the west base of the water tower and disappeared - and my thoughts were that is either where they have a [strange] nest or he is caching the food for later. He then flew back up atop the water tower...After another

10 minutes he flew down to the aforementioned spot - and emerged with the bird. He then flew west toward the apartment buildings - and did not return.

On Monday I will check the nest where you saw the young bird. I looked in other cornices in that area for evidence that the kestrels might have shifted their nest location a few (hundred) meters away...but seeing the construction in the area of the building, my first thoughts were: no way they would be nesting there...so on Monday (the Memorial Day Kestrel walk), the group will be looking there at about 11:15am or so...

On a couple of follow-up visits to the Front Street site (including Memorial Day), I did not see any evidence whatsoever of kestrels nesting at that location that they used in 2007-09...Let's see what happens next year after construction is complete. This area would be a prime spot for a series of nest boxes.

Thanks Shelley - and do keep me posted!

From: Bobby Horvath

Subject: First Fledging Kestrels!

Date: May 27 (Friday)

From Bobby Horvath: The first fledgling kestrel (could not fly so must have fallen directly from the nest nearby) came in from **27th street and 10 Avenue**. Weight: 99 grams.



Above: *Nest site of the West 119th Street kestrels in infra-red. This view looking west towards Morningside Park and a distant apartment building on the west side of the park (Columbia University area). The red arrow points to the nest cornice. On Thursday, 3 June, two recently fledged young were seen flying over the park - so this kestrel pair was successful. This is a good nesting site for kestrels.*

From: Isabel Conti
To: rdcny@earthlink.net
Subject: Brooklyn Kestrels
Date: May 29, 2010 (Saturday)

The nest is under the roof of a building in Brooklyn on Bath Ave between 21 Ave and Bay 28 St. I observed it from across the street where there is a small Laundromat. The building is the center one of 3 with similar decoration. I saw the female enter the nest and the male waiting in a tree at the Bay 28st corner. There were also starlings and sparrows nesting in smaller holes on the roof. I will send my bad picture also.

Isabel



Above: Isabel Conti sends these two photos. The first shows a young kestrel peering out of a nest cornice bracket (aka Modillion in architectural terms). The bottom one shows the neighborhood where the kestrels nest - in the small building above the white car across the street. Note that the building is not the tallest one on the street, and the nest opening is quite large compared to typical kestrel nests in Manhattan. Isabel adds: " Bath Beach is located south of the Verrazano bridge - Dyker Heights section and north of Coney Island. It borders on Gravesend bay (Bath Ave is 2 blocks from the Belt Parkway) The nearest subway is the D train. One Brooklyn resident placed it in the Bensonhurst section of Brooklyn. Isabel - Thank YOU!

From: Maggie Medina
Subject: Amsterdam Avenue Kestrels
Date: May 31, 2010 (Monday)

Hi Bob n Anders,

I have been watching my Kestrels closely these days n they look healthy n beautiful. I still have not gotten a really good cam but will. I have shots w/my small cam but I have to really zoom to see them. I got lovely flight shots too.

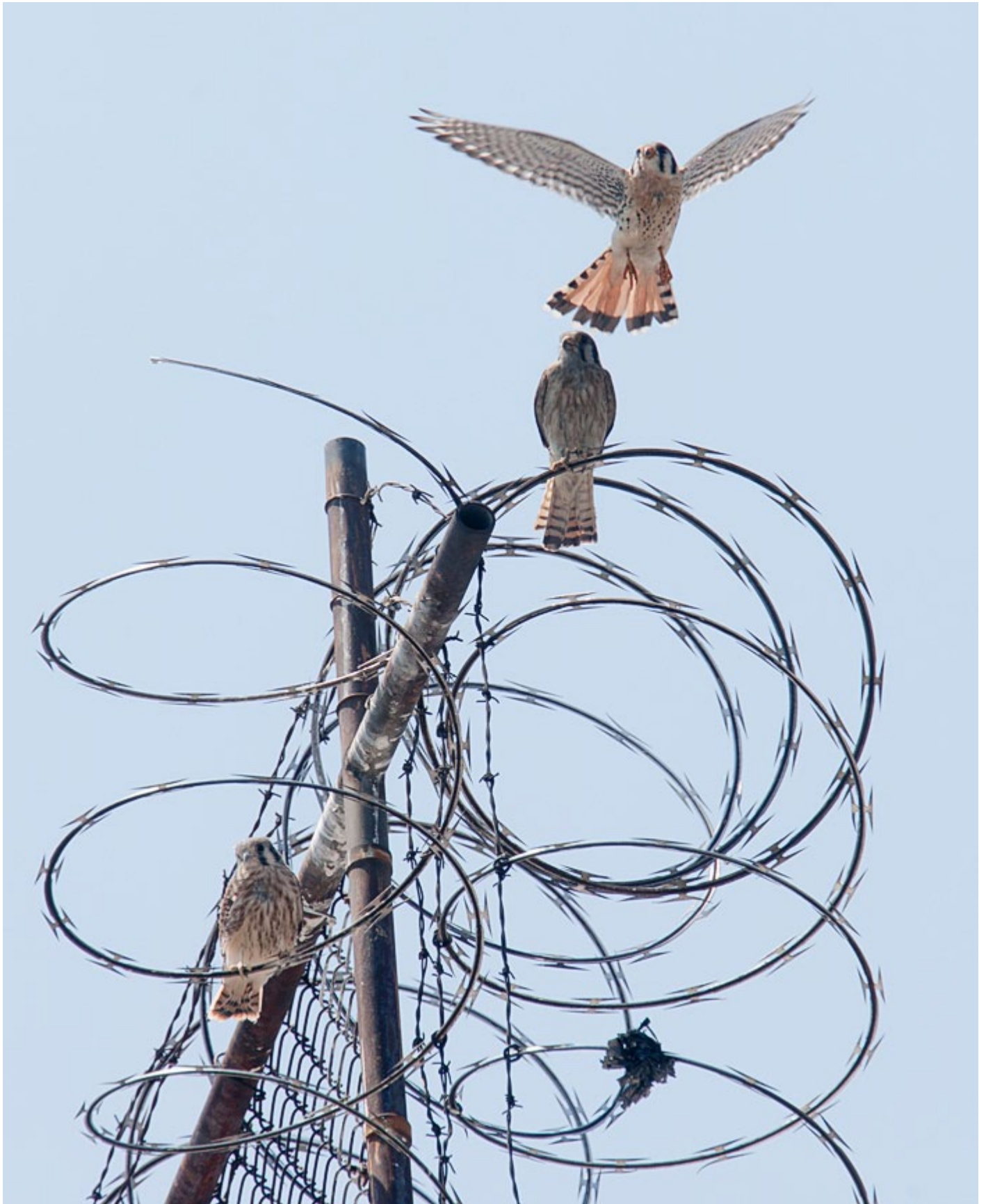
Every time I go to my window they swarm to my fire escape when I look up at the nest. I HAVE SEEN THE BABY CHICKS ALREADY!! I sooo hear them clearly. So, when I go upstairs they swarm pretty close above my head, sometimes a quick hover. I love their orange and quite large wing span. The babies r up on my roof top n I got pics, will load some lovely shots of one of them. The others are bold n fly pretty well now. This little one on the pick is smaller, I think.

Other picks I could of had but did not have my cam/video were the food exchange between Mom n Dad sometimes in flight, the parents exchanging warnings about me up there and I think plotting the swarm from both angles at me. I LOVE ALL THIS!! I'm a newbie but I'm sooo liking it, I will get a good cam n do this next year for sure. My views n angles are fantastic!!! The access, just being on my own "perch" (fire escape/window/roof) is priceless. Will keep you posted. I will load pics next time.

Proud Kestrel Momma - Maggie



Above: First kestrel (a male) to fledge from the Amsterdam Avenue nest on 30 May. There were four fledglings at this nest - the last leaving the nest by 2 June. See top next page for two adults and a fledgling female photographed on Memorial Day (31 May 2010).



Above: From top down: Adult male kestrel in flight; adult female, perched and just fledged female kestrel, perched. By the way, don't worry about the barbed wire - I realize it gives the impression of harsh city life (kestrels as prisoners of war) - but they like perching here - and living in cities....

Kestrels - North America

From: Miriam and Ted Lipsitz

Subject: NYC kestrel newsletter

Date: May 25, 2010

Just wanted to tell you that I have been enjoying the newsletter for a few years now. The folks who submit letters and fotos about kestrel sightings in and around NYC are enthusiastic! They are obviously excited to be involved and contribute to what we are learning about these urban cavity nesters. And it must be great fun for everyone to see their letters and fotos in print. It keeps the good work going!!!

Another kestrel fan from Bend, OR

Miriam Lipsitz

DOUBLE BROODING BY AMERICAN KESTRELS IN CENTRAL MISSOURI

BRIAN R. TOLAND

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION (Excerpt!)

Individually-tagged kestrels raised two broods at two of 17 (11.8%) nests in 1982 and at 12 of 36 (33%) nests in 1983. The 12 pairs which double-brooded in 1983 included two pairs which double-brooded in 1982. Both of these pairs nested in buildings. A concurrent increase in nest sites (30 boxes were erected for the first season and 20 more were added for the second year) and prey availability (microtines apparently increased from moderate densities during 1982 to very high densities in 1983) were probably important factors contributing to the increase of double brooding pairs during this study.

Although I did not quantify rodent population densities, personal observations and interviews with farmers throughout the study area indicated that voles (*Microtus* spp. = *Voles*) were abundant before and during the 1983 nesting season.

Distribution of nests and percentage of double brooding in nests other than boxes was similar for both years; two of 11 (18%) pairs had second broods in 1982, while three of 13 (23%) pairs were double-brooded in 1983. The distribution, density, and percentage of double brooding increased in nest boxes. In 1982, six pairs nested in 30 available boxes with no double brooding. In 1983, however, 23 pairs nested in 50 available boxes and nine (39%) pairs double-brooded.

The average size of second clutches was smaller than that of initial clutches, although the difference was not significant ($wZ = 0.49$, $P > 0.05$, $df = 1$). First clutches averaged 4.9 eggs (4-6) in 1982 and 5.3 eggs (4-6) in 1983. All second clutches during both years contained four eggs. The hatching success of initial clutches averaged 86% for the two years and was significantly higher than the average hatching success of 73% for second clutches ($x^2 = 5.73$, $P < 0.05$, $df = 1$). All but four nestlings fledged successfully during the study, which resulted in overall nesting success rates (number of young to fledge divided by total number of eggs) of 85% for first nestings and 73% for second nestings.

In this study, only early breeders laid a second clutch after successfully raising a first brood. Of pairs whose first broods fledged during May, 80% laid second clutches and fledged second broods. Of pairs which fledged first broods in June, 25% raised second broods. No second broods were attempted by pairs whose first broods fledged in July. These data suggest a seasonal influence on kestrel productivity. Similarly, Bird and Lague (1982a) found an inverse relationship between clutch size and laying date in captive American Kestrels, with

clutch size decreasing as the season progressed. They also found that later clutches had smaller eggs with thinner shells. Later clutches were also fewer, on average, than early ones laid by Eurasian Kestrels (*Falco tinnunculus*) in Europe (Cade 1982).

The lower hatchability of kestrel eggs of second clutches has been attributed to a seasonal decline in fertility of males (Bird and Lague 1982b). Bird and Lague (1977) found that, in captive kestrels in Canada, semen production peaked during the season at 13.5 h of daylight and declined significantly around the summer solstice, 21 June, at 15.75 h of daylight.

The mean fledging date for second broods in this study was 13 August. Fertilization probably averaged around 1 June (14.7 h of daylight). Clutch sizes and hatching success rates of early (mean fledging date 16 May) and late (mean fledging date 15 July) single broods were the same. Thus, a fertility decline in kestrels probably occurs during the approximately 30 days that separate late first-nesters from second-nesters in central Missouri (between 13.8 and 14.7 h of daylight).

The unpredictable and often inclement weather associated with March and early April in Missouri may increase the probability of nesting failures in the earliest nesters. Half (four of eight) of the clutches which failed were of pairs whose young would have fledged in May had they been successful. Of the four unsuccessful early nesting pairs, three did lay replacement clutches. Thus, while earlier initial clutches had the same number of eggs and hatching success as did later initial clutches, earlier-nesting kestrels appeared to have better nesting success in most respects, i.e., greater probability of raising second broods, laying replacement clutches, and higher mean number of young fledged per pair (7.20 vs. 4.37).



Above: Adult male and female (above) kestrels at the Amsterdam Avenue nest.

For their second broods, the kestrels used either alternative nest sites close to original nests, or the same nest cavity if alternative sites were not available. Of 14 pairs of kestrels which double brooded, eight reused the original nest, while the other six used alternative sites which were 30-300 m ($X = 135$ m) from the original sites. Mader (1975) found several pairs of Harris Hawks raising second broods in alternative nests within their own home ranges, at distances of 300-1,600 m of first nests. He also found that one pair laid a second clutch in the same nest before the nestling from the first clutch had fledged.

Kestrel pairs that produced two broods usually copulated again before their first brood had fledged. The mean number of days between fledging of the last nestling and initiation of the second clutch was six days (range 0-15). In two nests, the first egg of the second clutch was laid on the same day that the last nestling of the first brood fledged.

Porter and Wiemeyer (1972) reported that three captive kestrels began their second clutches 11, 12, and 14 days, respectively, after young of the first clutch had fledged. They also found that second clutches occasionally were laid before first-clutch young had fledged. Young kestrels of first broods were dependent upon the adults for 10-14 days after they had fledged. At most nests, double brooding males brought food to first-brood fledglings as well as to their mates, who were incubating second clutches. The post-fledging dependency period, however, was shorter in first-brood fledglings than in either second brood fledglings or fledglings from single-brooded birds ($X = 4.5$, range = 3-7 days).



Above: Four just fledged kestrels at the Amsterdam Avenue nest - mid June 2009.
Photo by Anders Peltomaa - this is our favorite NYC kestrel photo. Thank You Anders!

Both members of a pair became exceedingly inconspicuous during second nestings, in contrast to first nestings when one or both adults were usually perched within 20 m of the nest or delivering prey throughout the day. During the last two weeks of the nestling stage in first broods, females perched within 20 m of their nests an average of 28% of each day. Males perched within 20 m of the nest an average of 22% of each day during the fourth and last week of the nestling stage (Toland 1983). During this period, adults(especially females) were quick to defend against potential predators, including other raptors, corvids, wild and domestic carnivores, and people (Toland 1984).

During the raising of second broods, nests appeared to be abandoned from 08:00 to 19:00, except on cloudy or unseasonably cool days. Adults spent an average of only 6% of each day perched within 20 m of their nests during the last half of the nestling stage. They rarely attacked intruders of their territories at that time (Toland 1984).

Adults were usually under the canopy of nearby trees, possibly seeking respite from the heat, especially in 1983, when daytime temperatures in July and August were consistently around 38C. I did not see second-brood nestlings at the nest hole for several days before fledging, as I did those in first broods. Because females spent little time brooding second-clutch young, males did not need to call them out to transfer prey. Instead, females hunted even during incubation and early nestling stages.

Adult kestrels brought prey to first broods during all daylight hours, but especially during two peak periods - 09:00-1; 1:00 and 16:00-17:00 - when 70% of the food was delivered (Toland 1983). I noted that most of the food for second broods was delivered between 06:00 and 07:30 and after 18:30.

The inconspicuousness of American Kestrels raising second broods may contribute to the lack of information regarding this phenomenon. My results indicate that, with the presence of adequate nesting sites and food supply, kestrels successfully raise two broods per year in central Missouri. The combination of food availability and weather conditions probably determines whether kestrels attempt to nest early enough to raise two broods in a season (Newton 1979). Warm, dry weather in early spring would also enhance hunting success and the body condition (fat and protein reserves) of females, critical requirements for egg development (Cave 1968). In contrast, cold, wet spring weather increases energy demands and decreases hunting success in kestrels, which lowers the probability of successful reproduction (Cave 1968). Thus, kestrels attempting to nest early in Missouri are faced with a dichotomy: a higher than average rate of nest failure if conditions are suboptimal or, if conditions are optimal, the reward of enough time in the season to successfully raise two broods.



Above: Habitat surrounding the 69th Street and Broadway kestrel nest. Based on recent observations, we believe this nest failed this year despite both adults visiting the nest through mid-May 2010.

10 June 2010

American Kestrel Nest Survey NYC - Issue #12 (2010)

Kestrels Fledging Young in NYC

American Kestrel reports continue to trickle in - indeed kestrels will fledge young at least into early July here in NYC. This week we present information from some new nest sites in NYC including a non-cornice nest in Manhattan (highly unusual). See below. We also present urban kestrel observations from further afield including Pennsylvania (Philadelphia area) and Illinois (Chicago). One fellow (Greg Dysart AIA) in Cambridge, Massachusetts has been studying a pair there:

<http://dysart.zenfolio.com/falcons>

What should you do if you find a kestrel on the ground that cannot fly - especially a young one? See page 10 for details.



Above: *In early June we were kindly invited to the home of Dr. Joseph and Anne Haddad, where they showed us a kestrel nest in a most unusual (for NYC) place - the top of a plant pergola - indicated by the arrow above . Outside of a few leafy vine sprigs, the nest was open to the sky (see pages 3-4 for more photos). Back in early April when the female first began sitting on eggs here, there was not much overhead cover at all. The quintessential NYC kestrel nest in a building cornice is shown on page 2.*

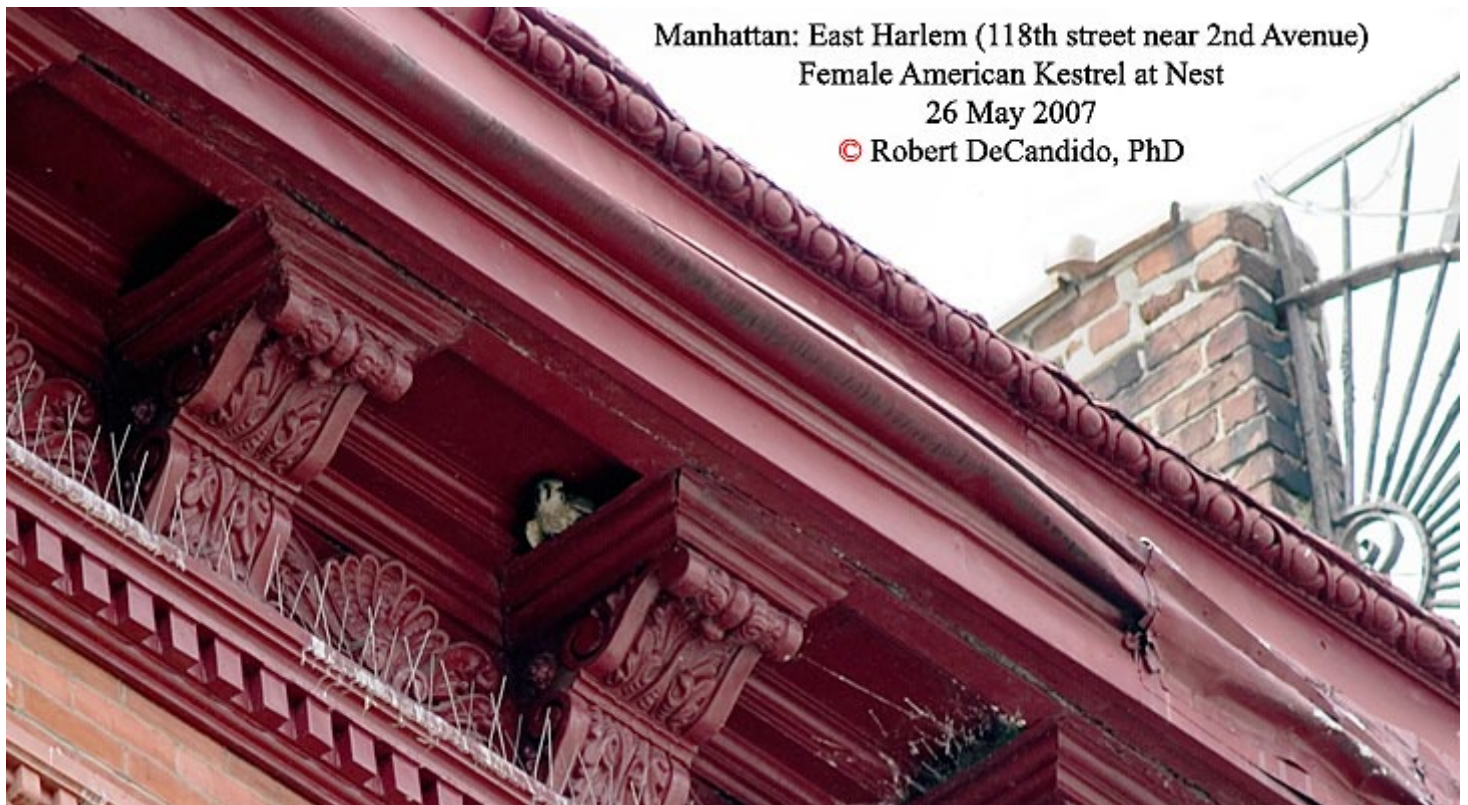
From: Rosemary Kassel
Subject: East Harlem Kestrels
Date: June 4 (Friday)

About May 24th I saw what I believe was a kestrel in East Harlem. I work at a school on 117th Street between 1st and 2nd Ave. In the playground, I saw sparrows building a nest over the baby jungle gym and I showed my students the leaves and sticks that had fallen down during the construction. The male sparrow was taking little sprigs of leaves from another tree to line the nest.

I saw the kestrel sitting on top of a building on the east side of the playground, then I saw it fly in a circle over the playground and return to the building. We see a lot of seagulls near the school and often we see great white egrets fly over.

Last Spring we saw a red-tailed hawk disembowel a pigeon on a fire-escape across from school. The tenant chased the hawk away, I guess to keep his fire-escape free from guts, but it only moved over to the next building to finish its lunch.

Rosemary



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From: Deborah Alperin
Subject: Kestrels in Mid-town Manhattan
Date: June 4 (Friday)

I think I saw a kestrel today flying eastward away from the Citigroup building [59th street]. So I saw it when I was at the corner of 53rd and Lex. I was sitting outside in the Plaza having lunch with a friend when I suddenly I saw what was NOT a red pigeon.

debs

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From: Anne and Joseph Haddad
Subject: Broadway Kestrels
Date: June 7 (Monday)

We had a great time yesterday afternoon (Sunday) watching the adults splash in the rain - they were spreading their wings and getting all fluffy - like they were taking baths!! Last evening around 6 and later there was a lot of activity - the mom brought what looked like a small bird for dinner. I'm going to miss them when they go!

Annie

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Above: Above in gritty infra-red is the place where kestrels nested in 2010...in a plant pergola. See the next page (p. 4) for a close-up of the empty nest. In 2007-09 kestrels nested just two blocks south opposite Zabar's (see kestrel newsletters from 2008 for details) on 80th and Broadway, but not this year...When we visited on 8 June 2010, four kestrels had just fledged from this nest (three females and a male). This would be a great spot for a nest box or two (Art Gingert are you reading this? - we need you here!), as well as a nest cam so that anyone can watch what is happening during the nesting season. Deborah and I would also like to add that we were treated with such great kindness by Anne and husband Dr. Joe (of Columbia University) - we feel so lucky to meet so many interesting people as part of our kestrel research. And you know what? Wherever we have gone to watch kestrels nesting in NYC - the lucky family who discovered the nest is so amazed that falcons could be living right on their building, often just a few feet away. To be able to watch the young kestrels grow - think school School school.

Below: *Detail of kestrel nest on 82nd and Broadway (the latter is visible below the nest).*



From: Matthew Vohr
Sent: June 8 (Tuesday)
To: Deborah Allen
Subject: kestrel - Manhattan

I saw your info at <http://www.cityislandbirds.com/> for kestrel sightings.

Saw this guy between First and Second avenues, 7th street and St Marks Place, Manhattan

I'm sorry for the low quality of the picture, but it is a kestrel, right? The picture was taken May 23rd.

From Deborah Allen: *Hi Matthew - Yes, you're right. The photo you sent is of a male American Kestrel. In 2008 we located an active nest at 40 Stuyvesant Street near St. Mark's Church, but that site didn't appear to be active this year, so perhaps the birds have found a new place a bit to the east and south. The most common nest site is in a cornice. Usually you can expect the nest site to be within a couple of blocks of a favorite perch.*

From: Marty Rogers

Subject: East 150 st. Kestrels (South Bronx)

Date: June 8, 2010 (Tuesday)

Dear dr. Bob, Hi. I am a friend of Fr. Tom Deely (I met you at the school once). Just an update the kestrels that Fr. Tom used to watch on 153 st and Melrose and Elton ave are alive and well. From the top of the school over the past 2 days the fledglings are flying around with the male and female perched on the church or water towers near the church. It looks like 3 fledglings. Yesterday the female was eating lunch on top of the rectory. It is great to see and I am contacting Fr. Tom to share the news. Hope you are well. peace, Marty Rogers.

American Kestrel nest
Melrose Place near 153rd Street - Bronx
May 2007

Thanks to Padre Tom Deely and Marty Rogers



Kestrels - North America

From: Jed Hertz
Subject: Urban Kestrels (Illinois)
Date: June 7 (Monday)

I've attached my American Kestrel survey data for a 30 mile radius of Kankakee, IL as well as photos of the Bradley, IL bird at the house gable, plus other photos from the area.

Cheers,

Jed Hertz
Kankakee, Kankakee Co, IL (60 mi South of Chicago)

Photos/Videos: <http://www.flickr.com/photos/jhertz/>
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From: David McNaughton
Subject: Re: [PABIRDS] Urban Kestrels in Pennsylvania
Date: June 7, 2010 (Monday)

Dr. DeCandido,

While I can't attest to a truly urban population here, I can tell you that we have nearly as many kestrels nesting in the natural habitat and our kestrel box program as we have had nesting in or on barracks, range towers, and other urban structures. Out of all the known nesting kestrels, the one I can count on to produce fledglings always uses an air conditioner on a range tower. Each year we get the report of "baby eagles" on the porch to the same. No box placement has been able to tempt her otherwise.

Dave McNaughton,
Fort Indiantown Gap NGTC,
Lebanon and Dauphin Counties
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From: Joan Silagy
Subject: Re: [PABIRDS] Urban Kestrels in Pennsylvania
Date: June 7, 2010 (Monday)

Very interesting Robert, thank you. I live rural and there are areas that I frequent quite a bit that always had nesting American Kestrels. This year the boxes remain empty except for one. I live near Blue Marsh Lake, a huge Army Corps lake and they and Pennsylvania Game Commission have many boxes out that were always used, but not this year. I'm so glad they are at least nesting in the big city.

What I found interesting this past winter, I had two wintering Merlin at the lake; the year before only one but no wintering American Kestrels like in years past. The Merlin's are a new addition. Also had a Peregrine hanging around. Perhaps they wined and dined on my Kestrels.

Thanks for your interesting report.

Joan Silagy
Leesport, PA
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From: Rudolph Keller
Subject: [PABIRDS] Urban Kestrels in Pennsylvania
Date: June 7, 2010 (Monday night)

Though the last time I saw one was in 2007 (haven't been there since), kestrels were pretty regular around Temple University Hospital in north Philadelphia, as urban a location as any you would find in NYC.

Rudy Keller



Above: *This photo of a female kestrel leaving its nest is from a bit further afield - in the U.S. Virgin Islands. There kestrels are year-round residents as well as winter visitors from North America. Photo by Martin Dellwo on 1 May 2009. See his email below.*

From: Martin Dellwo
Subject: Philadelphia Kestrels
Date: June 9 (Wednesday)

Hi Bob,

I don't have a good estimate, and unfortunately no photos myself. I consulted a few people in the Delaware Valley Ornithological Club like Art McMorris and Doris McGovern who might know more than me; over the course of years, Kestrels have been seen in a variety of locations. Doris pulled together reports a few years ago and thought 6-8 pairs, but the atlasing and other counts that get done never turn up this number.

She listed some sighting areas, these might not mean as much to you if you don't know Philly. Maybe I'll start a google map:

Center City (my area): 2-3 pairs

Northeast: 1-2 pairs

along I-95 (admittedly a broad swath!): 2

Fairmount Park (another rather large non-specific area): 1

Eastern Park Reservoir (a more specific area in the park which Doris bands): 1

Art is Peregrine Falcon coordinator (or some such title) for PA State Game Commission, he didn't have much specific but mentioned two locations:

near UPenn's campus

Naval Yard (this is very South Philly)

Coincidentally, Tony Croasdale also reported on PA Birders seeing a very vocal kestrel yesterday at Washington & South, very much what we call Center City; during the atlasing period, Tony also clued me into a family of kestrels a little further SE of there, Dickinson Sq. Those are the only Kestrels I've observed myself, and there were at least 3 together that I found one evening. I had the next year an unconfirmed report year of a nesting pair just NE of Center City; and I think Tony had reported some on Temple's campus, a little more north.

So, quite a number of reported sightings off and on, I would be very interested in surveying them more thoroughly though my job doesn't necessarily give me the time for that.

As I'm writing this, I'm thinking I might in fact have a photo or two from the Dickinson Sq Kestrels, I'll dig around in my archives a check.

I *do* have some photos of Kestrels on St. John, Virgin Islands! :) You can see them here:

http://phlblader.smugmug.com/keyword/falcons-virgin%20islands#559130788_ekkC2

Not quite the urban environment of NYC or Philly, but they seems quite common there. **This pair nested in the eves a friend's house (photo page 8).**

Marty



From: Scott Judd
To: rdcny <rdcny@earthlink.net>
Subject: Re: IBET Urban Kestrels - Chicago
Date: June 9 (Thursday)

Hello: I live in the city limits of Chicago, and see kestrels with pretty good regularity in my travels, occasionally even from my own front yard and/or walks around my neighborhood.

I saw what looked like a breeding attempt (and reported it to IBET) near my home earlier this spring, but I have not seen that pair together since in the area, though I have seen a single kestrel in the same tree where the apparent breeding attempt occurred.

As a fairly casual birder (but a voracious observer of raptors in any possible setting), I'm not sure I have much info of actual scientific value to share at this point, other than affirmation that kestrels have definitely been commonly present in Chicago in the 15 years I've lived here. Most recently I saw one hover/hunting over an un-mowed patch next to a very busy Kennedy Expressway, which was quite a vision with hundreds of cars and trucks whizzing by just yards away from the seemingly unphazed little falcon.

Please let me know if there's any way I can assist your efforts to get a handle on Chicago's kestrel population or trends.

Scott Judd
Logan Square, Chicago, IL

Thank You for this info. Yes in North American cities we have little idea how many kestrels are nesting, how they are doing, etc. My guess is that in cities in the southwestern USA, say from Texas to the west, nesting kestrels must be more common than up here in the north. Here in NYC, the only way we have found it possible to get a handle on the local kestrel population is to publish this Newsletter - and make as many people as possible involved in the project as scientists. Thank You for your information - you are not alone in the wilderness, as they say. There are many more of us watching and wondering about urban kestrels (and raptors). --- Bob

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What to Do if You Find a Young Kestrel on the Ground?

At this time of the year when young kestrels make their first flights they are very (very) vulnerable. They often end up on the ground (street) where their parents cannot bring them food or defend them from problems such as moving vehicles, cats, etc. Note here that a kestrel on the ground of a rooftop or fire escape is in a good place...and that is what our goal will be – to get a street level kestrel to a rooftop where the adults can bring the young falcon food and defend it from predators such as Crows and Blue Jays and even Robins.

So if you see a kestrel on the street that is being gawked at and surrounded by people, get yourself a coat or a large towel and calmly (slowly) approach the young bird. When you are within reach, toss the coat/towel over the kestrel...and then transport the package to a nearby rooftop. Obviously catching the young kestrel will not be easy, but it is doable. The most important thing to do is to transport the bird to a secure rooftop in the area where you found the bird. The parents will find it...(youngsters become very vocal when they are hungry). A good rooftop is one that is about 40-80 feet high and does not get any visitors (foot traffic). Alternately, a ledge or fire escape that faces the main street would be ok. If you want more advice, then give me a call (718-828-8262). You can also contact a local raptor re-habber --

To contact local raptor rehabilitators if you find (or know of) a kestrel in trouble:

Robert and Cathy Horvath - 516-293-0587 = BobbyH5800@verizon.net – on Long Island (but takes all NYC raptors).

Eileen Jones - 718-853-9290 or EJ74@verizon.net – in Brooklyn – her raptors often end up with Robert Horvath since she does not have the necessary room for flight training/exercise.

Both Eileen and Bob (and Cathy - the entire family really) are doing extraordinary work that is largely unknown to most bird watchers in NYC. Thank You from all of us.



24 June 2010

American Kestrel Nest Survey NYC - Issue #14 (2010)

Kestrels Fledging Young in NYC and Environs



From: Paul H Karner

Subject: Kestrel Report from Eastern Northampton County, in Pennsylvania

Date: June 22 (Tuesday)

I so enjoy your weekly reports. I am really excited to see all the people enjoying Kestrels in NYC. What a year I am having and so many returning banded adults nesting [*in eastern Pennsylvania*]. I have banded over 200 young so far and still have over 20 boxes to band. I found adult Kestrels nesting that I banded as far back as 2006. The good news is that I found a female that was banded last year in New Jersey. The past two years I did not find any from NJ at all. NJ Kestrels have Colored Wing Tags besides a leg band. I do hope one of these K's finds their way to your city. Keep up the great work you guys are doing in the city!

If you ever want to drive over here I'll show you around the study area.

Paul

From: Barbie Painter
To: Robert DeCandido PhD <rdcny@earthlink.net>
Subject: Manhattan Kestrels (Waverly Place - NYU area)
Date: June 18 (Friday Morning)

I am sipping coffee with the screens raised on the off chance he returns, to get a clearer picture. I watched him for quite a while the first morning, and greatly enjoyed his landing on the air conditioner. A distinctive chirp lets me know he is on the fire escape. I'll send you other pictures, I only wish I had a camera with me. How many days will he flutter about before disappearing?

A beautiful bird. A fledgling, landed on the windowsill before work, air conditioner in the evening.

136 Waverly Pl @ 6th Ave

Barbie Painter



Above: *Male American Kestrel photographed by Barbie Painter in the New York University (NYU) area of Manhattan. How long will kestrels stay in the vicinity of the nest site? About 3-5 days - and then they begin to wander about the neighborhood - do look for them atop water towers and other prominent places. Often, you can hear them before seeing them...*

From: Kathy Clark
To: rdcny@earthlink.net
Subject: Kestrels
Date: June 18 (Friday)

Hello Bob,

I've read a few of your kestrel newsletters. We have been monitoring a population using nest boxes we installed in 3 study areas of central and northern NJ, with hopes of helping to define the problem(s) plaguing this species. I'm curious about the contaminants study you are starting with the other partners. Can you provide some more details? I'm wondering if we could collect samples that might contribute to the study, or perhaps apply the same methodology to our study birds.

Thanks in advance,

Kathy

~~~~~

Kathleen E. Clark  
Supervising Zoologist  
Endangered & Nongame Species Program  
NJ Division of Fish & Wildlife  
2201 Rt 631, Woodbine, NJ 08270  
Tel: 609.628.1605  
Fax: 609.628.2734

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From: Greg Dysart  
Sent: Friday, June 18  
To: Massbird@TheWorld.com  
Subject: [MASSBIRD] 6 Cambridge Kestrels

Friday June 18, 2010 - Cambridge - Central Square

This morning before work I saw 6, maybe 7, American Kestrels of the recently fledged family residing around Bishop Allen Drive, mostly north of the street between Norfolk and Douglass Streets. Four of the falcons, I believe all young, were seen on one chimney in the neighborhood. All seem to be doing well, including a small young female photographed last Monday. See the chronological photos at

<http://dysart.zenfolio.com/falcons>

Good birding to all,

Greg Dysart  
[dysart@volume3.com](mailto:dysart@volume3.com)

PS Robert DeCandido PhD is doing an ongoing study of Urban Kestrels in New York City and other urban areas. See his work at:

<http://www.battaly.com/nehw/AmericanKestrel/news/>

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**Above:** *Female kestrel on nest (see young nestlings p. 5) photographed by Paul Karner in eastern Pennsylvania. This photo might make John Smallwood and colleagues very happy - they do kestrel research in western New Jersey. Or perhaps it is someone else doing a banding project in NJ - any takers?*

=====

**From:** Kellye Rosenheim

**Subject:** Manhattan kestrel (Grammercy Park)

**Date:** June 19 (Saturday)

Dear Bob,

My friend Pamela sent this to me - see below. She lives on the south side of Gramercy Park. I hope all works out for this little one.

Yours,

Kellye Rosenheim

=====

**From:** Pamela Rosenthal

**Date:** June 19, 2010 (Saturday)

**Subject:** red tail

Hi Kellye-



I was called by a neighbor a few minutes ago to come see the bird on the street. I called you (you have a message on your phone) and another passer-by took a photo and emailed it to you. I said that you were accustomed to random "bird" emails. NYC's finest came-by and scooped up the small red tail and presumably took it off to the ASPCA... hopefully all will work out just fine.

Pamela

=====

**From:** Pamela Rosenthal  
**Subject:** Manhattan Kestrel - Grammercy Park  
**Date:** June 21 (Monday)

Thank you. Your project and news letter are fantastic!

I'm sorry that my only photo of Saturday's young kestrel was in the box that the NYPD had placed it in. I say this because the poor thing was very urbane. It was found bewildered on the sidewalk on the 21st street side of Gramercy Park, between Irving Place and Gramercy Park West, at about 11 AM. It was resting against the park perimeter, on the park side of the street, with trees, not buildings above it. It was difficult to spot a nest threw the tree foliage. I will go back out and look more carefully.

I just called the 13th Precinct hoping to trace this little kestrel. Needless to say the person on duty had no idea what I was talking about, but she did say that she would look into it. I will call back later. [[See next email from Eileen Jones to find out what happened to your kestrel.](#)]

I'm sorry that I didn't know about this project sooner, but now I'll keep my eye open for kestrels - and I'll continue to try to find the nest.

Pamela

=====

**From:** Eileen Jones  
**Subject:** Grammercy Park Kestrel - Manhattan?  
**Date:** June 22 (Tuesday)

**Kestrel:** She came in on the 19th, from **27 East 21st St** from a private individual thru NY Animal Rescue.

.... and a red tail fledgling from a "crane" nest in the Brooklyn Navy Yard. It's a heck of a story.

Eileen



**From:** Cat Chester

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

**Date:** June 20 (Sunday)

I found your email thru google. I live on the 27th floor of an apartment building in Manhattan and face the roof of a tall building across the street. A couple of weeks ago I heard high pitched squeaking or squealing and looked out my bedroom window to find two baby chicks on my ledge that I thought were baby hawks. I yelled to my son and when he saw them he pleaded with me to close the window. I did but of course they flew away when the window moved.



Since then we realized there are four babies and there is a nest on the roof of the building across the street. We haven't seen the nest but we see the birds roosting on this metal grate that is next to a chimney or air shaft. [[See photo of a male kestrel on the metal grate above.](#)] We've seen the mama bring home mice and have actually seen them rip the meal apart with little tufts of furs floating away in the air.

I don't have a telephoto lens and we've been watching them with binoculars. Yesterday I remembered that we have a crappy telescope so I set it up and once I got a better view I realized that I am not watching hawks at all. I did a google search and now believe that we have an American Kestrel family living across the street. I can see black stripes on the neck area and a white spotted chest, with dark grey and brown on the back with more spots. The mama is maybe 10-12" big and the babies are now about 8".



**I live on York Avenue and 82nd St., not far from Carl Schurz Park and the East River** and often see them flying off in the direction of the park which I guess is their hunting ground. Your site asks that you be emailed if there's a sighting, so I am emailing you to let you know. This is the first time that I've seen this kind of bird in NYC.

Regards,

Cat

=====  
**From:** Cat Chester  
**To:** Robert DeCandido PhD <rdcny@earthlink.net>  
**Subject:** Re: NYC Kestrels - Upper East Side, Manhattan  
**Date:** June 20 (Sunday night)

Hi Robert:

Thank you so much for the newsletter. What beautiful photos! And yes, now I am almost positive that there's a Kestrel family across the street. It's so interesting to me that there can be something so beautiful living in this tough urban area and all you have to do is look carefully.

I'm not a bird watcher and if it's not a pigeon, sparrow or robin I'd have no idea what I was looking at. But I see that you do bird walks in Central Park and that seems like a lovely way to spend a couple of hours. I may try to join the group one Sunday morning. If I do, I'll introduce myself.

Best regards,

Cat



**Above:** *Young male American Kestrel on a fire escape in the West Village in 2007 Note down on forehead.*

**From:** Cat Chester

**Subject:** Definitely an American Kestrel (Upper East Side, Manhattan)

**Date:** June 21 (Monday)

Hi Robert:

Very exciting! All the photos were taken about an hour before they were sent to you and I believe we've seen four chicks. After doing some more reading last night I realize now that what I thought was a mouse was probably a sparrow and what I thought was tufts of fur floating in the air was probably down feathers. I really know nothing about birds and didn't realize that they would prey on smaller birds. Anyway thanks for the confirmation and yes, we will definitely keep watching.

When I first noticed the Kestrels, it was because two baby chicks had landed on my window ledge and were crying. I guess they had just started flying. Shortly after that, maybe a day or two later, we saw four babies on that black metal grating you see in the photos and either the mom or dad had brought some food back to them so there was a lot of flapping and eating. If I had to guess, I would say this was 3 weeks ago. I haven't seen all four together at one time since then. It's just been two together and then an older, larger parent. The Kestrels are nesting on the roof of the building across the street. I can't see the nest because it's in a brick enclosure around a water tower.

Best regards,

Cat

=====



**Above:** *Young female American Kestrel photographed in 2010. She is about to make one of her first flights.*



**From:** Leanne M. Wilson  
**Subject:** Greenwich Village Kestrel (Captive?)  
**Date:** June 20 (Sunday night)

Mr. DiCandido,

I found your name when searching for information on American Kestrels in New York City. Earlier this evening, around 6 pm, I saw a juvenile male American Kestrel in an alley on the North side of Bleecker Street between Mercer and Broadway. The bird was sitting on a table and was not frightened of me. As you can see from the picture, its primary wing feathers had been clipped.

I hope this information is helpful.

Sincerely,

Leanne Wilson



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**From:** Barbara Loucks  
**To:** Robert DeCandido PhD <rdcny@earthlink.net>  
**Subject:** Re: Kestrel (captive?) - NYC  
**Date:** June 21 (Monday morning)

I forwarded it to DEC law enforcement. If you hear about these incidents and have any hard evidence, please pass along to DEC law enforcement promptly. Unfortunately many of these turn out to be difficult to track down. Thanks. [[Barbara Loucks works for the New York State DEC - Endangered Species Unit.](#)]

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*It is difficult to determine what is happening in such situations. Since 2007, we have received three reports of captive American Kestrels - apparently being held by private citizens in NYC. Obviously this is a violation of Federal Migratory Bird Laws. On the other hand, it is interesting to see people fascinated enough by these small falcons to want to keep them in captivity in the city. As an analogy, the poachers in National Parks in other parts of the world sometimes are hired to be the local guardians of wildlife; so too the folks holding the kestrels in NYC might turn into a great resource to educate other New Yorkers about these birds. Anyway, if someone is in that area (Bleecker Street between Mercer and Broadway in Greenwich Village), do look around. Otherwise, we await further info from Leanne Wilson on her interesting find.*

**From:** gene4eagles (Gene Miller)  
**Subject:** Kestrel Under Attack - Brooklyn  
**Date:** June 18 (Friday)

Hi Robert,

I just wanted to relate an interesting incident that I observed on June 8, 2010. As the male Kestrel from the Bath Ave. site (Brooklyn) was perched on a fire escape next to the nest, a small bird continually dive-bombed him. He then flew across Bath Ave. and landed on a TV antenna, or telephone wire and flew from there to repeat the attack. The Kestrel was steadfast and didn't react to the dive-bombing. I was surprised that he didn't fight back, being a raptor with sharp talons. Could you please identify the attacking small bird [*Mockingbird - see photo bottom page 11*]. Is this behavior normal? [*Yes.*] Was it attacking to protect its territory? [*Yes.*]

Eugene Miller

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**From:** gene4eagles (Gene Miller)  
**Subject:** Bath Ave. Kestrels - Brooklyn  
**Date:** June 21 (Monday)

I was on station at Bath Ave. this morning from 7:43 AM till 10:08 AM. Kestrels kept poking their heads out of the cornice nest all morning. However, I was unable to determine if any of the sightings were from chicks, or adults. There was quite a bit of perching on antenna, and flight about dish antennas and trees. One kestrel photo appears to show some sort of catch.

Eugene Miller



**Above:** *Adult Male American Kestrel photographed by Gene Miller peeking out of its nest in Brooklyn.*





**Above:** *Adult Male American Kestrel photographed by Gene Miller in Brooklyn.*



**Above:** *Adult Male American Kestrel being dive-bombed by a Mockingbird - photographed by Gene Miller in Brooklyn.*

**From:** Eric Powers

**Subject:** iPhotos - 96th street nest and Broadway (Manhattan)

**Date:** June 24 (Thursday)

Well, here are some of my better shots. I have some video as well if you'd like [[Yes do post and send a link.](#)]. I haven't given up on them yet since they are still around, in and out of that nest, so I'm guessing that it's a late brood. I'll keep you informed. 96th St, between Broadway and Amsterdam

Eric



**Above:** *Pair of Adult American Kestrels (male on right) photographed on 23 June by Eric Powers on 96th street near Amsterdam Avenue in Manhattan. This pair might still be nesting....*



**From:** Felix De Los Santos

**Date:** June 21 (Monday)

**Subject:** red tail hawk

hi my name is felix, today i rescued a baby hawk i found him on 5th avenue and 60th st. he flew into a building very young. i took him to the animal hospital on the east side and left my info

**From:** Bobby Horvath

**To:** raptorsnyc@googlegroups.com

**Subject:** Re: red tail hawk

**Date:** June 22 (Tuesday)

....I picked up that "kestrel" along with 3 others Sunday afternoon from the Animal Medical Center . They are being picked up everywhere right now. Many people mistake them for baby hawks [red-tails]. It is fine.

....Kestrels keep falling from the sky. We got in 4 on Sunday I guess as my Father's day present...The rescued hawk from 60th and 5th was delivered the Animal Medical Center and was actually a male kestrel. I picked up 3 others from there Sunday including 2 from Grand Army Plaza not flighted enough yet picked up by Park Rangers.

Only 2 kestrels so far have any injuries so the rest should be ready to go back shortly. The 2 will need some time to see how they make it.

Bobby Horvath

*On Sunday morning, 13 June, I was sitting at Grand Army Plaza (59th Street and 5th Ave) at about 7:30am. I had heard a kestrel giving alarm calls a few minutes earlier, and came over to see what was happening...I then watched a female kestrel dive-bomb what appeared to be a newly fledged Red-tailed Hawk. The female was using the Sherry-Netherland Hotel as a perch (about 59th street and 5th Ave), and the RT was pressed against a window of a 6th floor ledge of the Plaza Hotel (59th St and Central Park South). My guess is that the kestrel nest (given where the young ones were found) is likely on the Sherry-Netherland somewhere...In past years we have seen 3-5 young kestrels perched atop the Plaza Hotel in July - this suggests that kestrels have nested in the 59th street and 5th Avenue area for several years at least. Where these kestrels are hunting would be interesting to determine - it does not seem to be Central Park. Perhaps with all the horses in the 59th street east area (and horse food scattered about), the House Sparrow population does well, and is just too good not to notice.*

=====

***We'd like to publish another NYC Kestrel Newsletter or two this year - so if you have images and observations, do send them our way. Thanks! -***



# 17 June 2010

## American Kestrel Nest Survey NYC - Issue #13 (2010)

### *Kestrels Fledging Young in NYC - Photos from Kestrel Spies*

With this issue we present what NYC Kestrel spies are seeing - in their own photos, and as always, in their words. All in all, about 400 people get this Newsletter, and more than 95% of those folks live or work in NYC. We will let you in on a secret: this kestrel research could not be done without you. There is no way someone could find out about (or cover) the different NYC kestrel nests that have been discovered. Thank You. So far as we can determine, this is the only urban study of kestrels that has ever been done in North America. Right now we have more pairs of breeding kestrels in NYC than anywhere else in the state...and working as a team, we have made discoveries new to science about kestrels (and other critters) . To think of where the state of our knowledge was just five years ago - and how far we have advanced in our understanding of the urban ecology of NYC Kestrels - it is truly wonderful.

So where do we go from here? Well, along with Dr. Dan Cristol (College of William and Mary), John Smallwood (one of the leading North American Kestrel Field Researchers, he of Montclair State University), a team from the Hawk Mountain Sanctuary in Pennsylvania, Eileen Jones (Raptor Re-habber), Bobby and Cathy Horvath (Raptor Re-habbers), and (soon to be) Dr. Chad Seewagen, we are working on a toxicology study of NYC kestrels compared to a nesting population in NW New Jersey (Smallwood) and another kestrel population monitored by the Hawk Mountain team in eastern Pennsylvania. Also, Dr. Seewagen and I are working on a paper about nest site selection of urban kestrels here in NYC. So the information that we receive from NYC kestrel spies has been, and continues to be, the sine qua non of these studies. Again, Thanks All.



**Above:** *Jonathan Slifkin of Horace Mann High School sent us this image of a male kestrel he saw at 93rd and West End Avenue on or about 10 June 2010. Thanks Jonathan for sending - Bob.*



**From:** Beth Goffe  
**Subject:** City College Kestrels  
**Date:** June 11 (Friday)

My co-worker and I watched an adult kestrel leave the 133rd and Amsterdam nest at about 12:15 today. I've been watching it for weeks now and this was my first substantial look this year. We were both very excited to see it - she'd never seen one before and was impressed at how fast it was (I think it was the female is it didn't seem too colorful in the brief glance we got). The babies fledged last year on 6/14 so I'm guessing we're fairly close (I didn't see any movement from young inside the nest today). I'll keep you posted.

Beth

**Bird Photography - [www.pbase.com/bgoffe/birds](http://www.pbase.com/bgoffe/birds)**

Below: *Ready to fledge City College kestrel at cornice opening, 2009 - photo by Beth Goffe.*



**From:** Eric Salzman  
**To:** Robert DeCandido PhD <rdcny@earthlink.net>  
**Subject:** Re: NYC Kestrel Newsletter #12 - 2010  
**Date:** June 10 (Thursday)

Hi Bob,

Lorna and I were recently in Jamaica where there are many Am Kestrels, apparently belonging to two different subspecies: *dominicensis* (the Hispaniola version) and *sparveroides* (the Cuban and Bahamas subspecies). Apparently in Jamaica there is a rufous morph which has a completely reddish breast but the ones we saw were all white morphs. But they did have distinctive looks (at least as compared with our Eastern US bird).

Eric

=====  
**From:** Greg Dysart  
**Subject:** Cambridge Kestrels - Massachusetts  
**Date:** June 10 (Thursday)

Hi Bob,

The breeding pair have succeeded in raising at least one youngster this spring, maybe more. I'm watching the nest hole and observing the adults in the area and one or more young looking out from their home. The photos are chronological with a young female seen at the entrance in the last few frames.

I've keep this information out of MassBird because I didn't want the building owner to realize there was a hole in his building and repair it before the young all fledge...

Your site and it's documentation are very interesting. Maybe urban nest boxes in appropriate, better locations will be seen as viable by concerned organizations as the proof of urban Kestrels gets displayed.

Best regards,

Greg

Greg Dysart  
<http://dysart.zenfolio.com/>

*Yes we wonder about the same things in NYC = if we let the building owner know will he then seal off the opening? Good question...It seems to us that some of the landlords (or building supers) like kestrels - and some don't. One never knows in advance. Also, in NYC, kestrel seem to nest at a location for 1-4 years and then abandon it for whatever reason(s). Keep sending info - and thanks, Bob*

=====  
**From:** Greg Dysart  
**Subject:** Cambridge Fledglings  
**Date:** June 14 (Monday)

Hi Bob,

The Cambridge Kestrel Family has successfully fledged their young. I believe 1 female and 2 males. The young are now flying and being taken care of by their parents. Today, I saw 4 Kestrels, 2 young males, an adult male and a young female.



The family may be seen in Central Square Cambridge in the neighborhood of Bishop Allen Drive, frequently between Douglass and Norfolk Streets. Young male: <http://dysart.zenfolio.com/falcons/h3cf1d9dc#h3cf1d9dc>

and the very young female, she made short flights: <http://dysart.zenfolio.com/falcons/hda51687#hda51687>

Greg

June 14, 2010



**From:** Eric Powers  
**Subject:** 96th Street Kestrels  
**Date:** June 10 (Thursday)

Very fun newsletter! This is great.

The kestrel nest that I've been watching on W. 96th St and Broadway doesn't seem to have produced any chicks. Activity is slowing...perhaps the chicks fledged and are gone and I never noticed? Perhaps the incessant construction in the street (VERY noisy with jackhammers and heavy construction equipment) directly in front of the building.

At any rate, I'll send a few photos of them perching around the neighborhood.

Keep up the great work!

E  
=====

**From:** Carol Wood  
**Subject:** Re: 69th street kestrels  
**Date:** June 12 (Saturday)

Hi Bob,

I was just up on the terrace around 7 this evening, and saw no signs of kestrels. I keep hoping for activity. Perhaps they're nesting in a different place, but I looked at all the "favorite spots" and saw nothing.

Regards,

Carol  
=====

**From:** Rob Cicchetti  
**Subject:** Re: 69th street kestrels?  
**Date:** June 12 (Saturday)

Hi Bob,

I haven't seen anything lately, except several starlings on the ledge. They've been strangely absent generally - but with that said, when I was watching them intensely during 2006, I first noticed young kestrels peeping through on June 12, so I wouldn't give up hope yet.

=====

**From:** Carol Wood  
**Subject:** 69th Street Kestrels  
**Date:** June 13 (Sunday)

As I was heading out around 12:30 this afternoon I looked up and saw a bird on top of the female kestrel's favorite water tower. I didn't have my binoculars with me, and it looked too small for a kestrel. When I came home around 1:30 I went up to the terrace with my binoculars, and saw no birds. Who knows what's going on? I'll keep looking.

Carol  
=====



**From:** Louise Weinberg  
**Subject:** Queens Kestrels  
**Date:** June 12 (Saturday)

My kestrel fledged this morning. Here's a few pix.

=====

**Below:** *Kestrel nest in Long Island City (right circle); and first fledged young being inspected by a Starling(left circle). The bottom photo shows a close-up of the starling and kestrel. Photos by Louise Weinberg - thanks!*



**From:** Alexandra Ratay  
**Subject:** Kestrel Sighting!  
**Date:** June 14 (Monday)

Hi Bob,

Just wanted to let you know that I saw a male kestrel at Stuyvesant Square Park last Thursday, June 10th! I was sitting on a bench with my brother and nephew when the kestrel swooped in on a bunch of unsuspecting sparrows right in front of us! I told one of the park gardeners about it, and she said that the kestrel has been in the area since the winter time. Hope all is well!

Alexandra

=====

**From:** Gene Miller  
**Subject:** Brooklyn Kestrels  
**Date:** June 14 (Monday)

Hi Robert,

I have been observing the Kestrels on Bath Ave. and Bay 28th Street. I have viewed the male Kestrel in flight and perched (photos enclosed). I have also viewed the female, but did not get any decent photos. At this time I am not sure if there are chicks located in the cornice nest. How do we distinguish the chicks from the adults? I will keep you posted as to future activity.

Eugene Miller



**Above:** *Adult male kestrel in flight near the Bath Ave. nest in Brooklyn. Photo by Gene Miller.*





**From:** Gene Miller  
**Subject:** Female Kestrel In Flight (Above) - in Brooklyn  
**Date:** June 15 (Tuesday)

Hi Robert,

I finally got some photos of the female Kestrel in flight at The Bath Ave. location [[See Above.](#)]. I believe it is the adult female. If it is a chick, identified by the markings, please let me know. I got to the site at 7:22 AM this morning (6/15/10), and for two hours I only viewed a head pop out of the cornice for maybe a second. Not enough time to get a shot off. At the end of the two hour wait I was finally rewarded with the female circling above the house and tree on the corner. I am enclosing four photos.

Eugene Miller

*Yes your two photos above definitely show an adult female...Thanks Gene!*

=====  
**From:** David White  
**Subject:** American Kestrel - female in Brooklyn (Prospect Park)  
**Date:** June 15 (Tuesday)

Greetings,

Yesterday morning I saw one perched above a window on the 16th floor of my building next to Prospect Park-10 Plaza Street East. I didn't see nest. The sighting listed on page 2 [Union & 8th Ave.] from Issue #9 is less than 2 blocks from my sighting.

-David White  
=====



**Above:** *Female fledgling American Kestrel photographed on June 8, 2010 at the 82nd and Broadway nest site (Anne and Joseph Haddad's terrace nest). This young bird just left the nest - and was doing great.*

**Robert DeCandido PhD**

[http://www.mp3rocket.com/mp3/-1\\_00/Bruce-Springsteen--Badlands.htm](http://www.mp3rocket.com/mp3/-1_00/Bruce-Springsteen--Badlands.htm)

# 6 July 2010

## American Kestrel Nest Survey NYC - Issue #15 (2010)

### *Kestrels Fledging Young in NYC and Environs*

With this issue we solve the mystery of the origin of the banded female kestrel from Pennsylvania we featured on the cover of Issue #14 - see pages 2-3. We also provide information on new kestrel nests in Manhattan including St. Marks Place (p. 6) - thanks Lea Cetera; and in Chelsea (p. 8) - thanks Sara Scovronick. Meanwhile, great information from Brooklyn came from Bushwick (p. 7) from Keir Randall; and information about a kestrel shot with an arrow in Flatbush - thank you, Eileen Jones. Eugene Miller sends several wonderful photos of the Bath Avenue Kestrels (Brooklyn!) as well - see pages 9-10. And from further afield, there is a wonderful photo of a group of Lesser Kestrels roosting together in Africa, sent to us by Eric Gurwin (page 11).

Every once in a while, we find a story about a larger than life kestrel researcher, and what he does for these small falcons....this one will take you to a story about Paul Karner:

<http://www.poconorecord.com/apps/pbcs.dll/article?AID=/20090720/FEATURES/307209998>

**NYC = BiodiverCITY.** The American Kestrel is just one of the few raptor species in the world that nests right on city streets, often in close proximity to people. Thank You for your reports, ideas, photos. You are helping to preserve our NYC biodiversity.





**From:** Erica Mueller  
**Subject:** Re: NJ Banded Kestrel  
**Date:** June 25 (Friday)

Hi Dr. DeCandido,

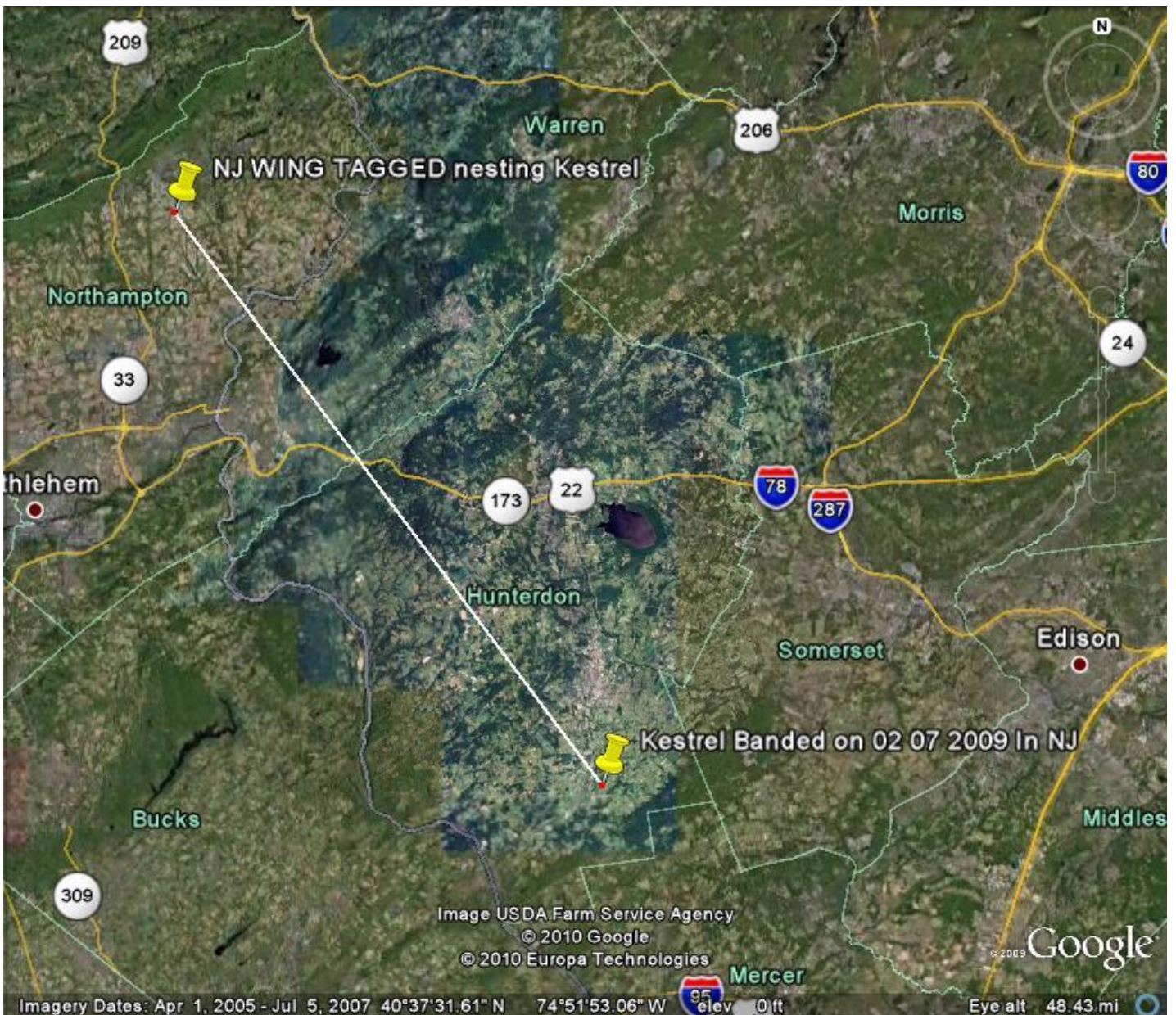
The wing-banded kestrel looks to be one banded by Dr. John Smallwood at Montclair State University, and was either banded in Sussex or Warren County. I helped with his nest box program from 2003-2007 and just finished my thesis on kestrel vocalizations in these two counties. The wing-band looks exactly like the ones we use.

Erica Mueller  
Lincoln Park, NJ

*Erica - congratulations! If you ever want to do kestrel research here in NYC, I would be glad to help You. Best luck in your next endeavor - whatever it is and wherever life takes you. Meanwhile, the next two maps tell the story of the kestrel featured on the cover of Issue #14. According to Dr. Smallwood: " She was banded as a nestling on 02 July 2009 in a nest box in Sussex County."*







**From:** Paul H Karner  
**Subject:** Fw: Banded Kestrel from NJ  
**Date:** June 29 (Tuesday)

Hi Robert,

Well John Smallwood and I have figured out where his K did come from. I attached a picture of the area. [[SEE ABOVE](#).] About 45 miles. So you can see your NYC K's could reach my area.

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I was amazed by how many kestrels you are getting this year [*in Pennsylvania*!]! Our slump in NJ continues, and we set a new low record this year, only 19 pairs in our 100+ boxes, similar to the about 20 we've been getting in recent years. These are the same nest sites that used to get over 60 pairs, and the habitat looks great. The only thing missing are the kestrels.

Cheers,

John Smallwood



**From:** Don & Carol McCartney  
**Subject:** Sibling Get-together  
**Date:** June 24 (Thursday)

Hello Bob,

This photo was taken after these nestlings were banded and is their first venture into the outside world. It captures that brief moment in a Kestrels' life when they are able to perch, yet are too young to fear humans.

Don McCartney  
central Oregon Audubon Society



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**From:** Rob Cicchetti  
**To:** Robert DeCandido PhD <rdcny@earthlink.net>  
**Subject:** Re: NYC Kestrel Newsletter #14  
**Date:** June 24 (69th Street Kestrels)

Hi Bob,

Unfortunately, I have not seen any sign of any Kestrels nearby in the last week since I got back. Has anyone else spotted anything?

On another note, do you have any contacts in Paris? I saw at least one falcon at and in the towers in both Notre Dame and Sacre Couer. As a matter of fact, the architecture in the city is perfect for nesting kestrels. I would bet



money there are nests nearby or in them.

*My best contact in France is:*

*"Jean Marc Thiollay, PhD"*

*He is likely the foremost raptor researcher in that country. He is retired now...Jean-Marc once told me about kestrels in Paris - and how they hunt the outskirts of the city for mice...Anyway, send him an email and ask your questions. Also, France has Peregrines at the tallest structures that hunt birds at night.*

*Yes who knows about the 69th street kestrels? - my guess is that something happened there...then again, look what happened at 96th and Broadway - those kestrels seem to be nesting (or have young) or something...I cannot believe the nest survived the construction there...Time will tell.*

*rdc*

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**From:** Beth Goffe

**Subject:** Tricky birds - Kestrels of Harlem (Manhattan) - Amsterdam Avenue

**Date:** June 27 (Sunday morning)

Hi Bob,

I was up here on Amsterdam in Harlem with my whole rig and had no luck. I was about ready to pack it all up and go home and figured I'd check the Convent Ave. nest for the heck of it. Guess what? 2 adult kestrels perched, one I witnessed entering the nest. They make me crazy! Hopefully decent photos later...

Ok, here's a link to a couple of the photos:

[http://www.pbase.com/bgoffe/american\\_kestrel](http://www.pbase.com/bgoffe/american_kestrel)

Beth

*For clarification: in 2009, Beth found the nest on the front of the building (facing Amsterdam Avenue); this year she was not seeing much there - an occasional kestrel was observed entering last year's nest. On 27 June 2010, Beth walked around to the back of the building (Convent Avenue) - and that is where the "real" nest seems to be this year. The Amsterdam Avenue nest cavity might be used for (a) storing extra food; and/or (b) for one of the adults to go to, to rest out if the sun. Another mystery...*



**From:** Lea Cetera  
**Subject:** Kestrel sighting in East Village (Manhattan - St Marks Place)  
**Date:** June 27 (Sunday)

Hi Robert,

Sending you an email to follow up our phone conversation last week about my Kestrel sighting on my rooftop in the East Village, more specifically at the corner of 10th St. and 2nd Ave.

I was up on my roof again yesterday evening and immediately saw two Kestrels flying away as I came up to the roof- I think a male and a female. Upon further investigation, we noticed up to 4-6 Kestrels perching on neighboring buildings (the tallest ones of course) and also using St. Marks Church on the Bowery's steeple as a lookout.

It looks like they are doing well in the east village at least for now, not sure of where their nests are though.

Best,

Lea

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**From:** Anthony Henderson  
**To:** Robert DeCandido PhD <rdcny@earthlink.net>  
**Subject:** Re: Kestrels, East Village (St Marks Place area)  
**Date:** Jun 28 (Monday)

hi guys

i have moved from the apt where i first saw the 10th st/stuyvesant st kestrels (2008) but was able to see them the other day upon visiting my friend who still lives there. the first thing i did was to check the window below the nest and sure enough there they were! i didnt see youngsters but i believe i heard them and noticing my friends perched on the antennae across 10th, i opened the screen and one of the kestrels in true form dove across the street to scold me away. i love these birds! the nest i know of is in a broken rusted eave on the eastern side of the top of 40 stuyvesant st.





**From:** Keir Randall  
**Subject:** Brooklyn Kestrels  
**Date:** June 27 (Sunday night)

hi Bob

Good news from Bushwick. 2 (1m, 1f) American Kestrels fledged last week (or earlier). The birds appeared on and around the adults' regular hunting perch, on a rooftop near the intersections of Broadway, Malcom X Blvd and Pulaski Street in Brooklyn, 11221.

- copulation recorded - April 12
- probable fledglings seen in bad light - Jun 21
- fledglings confirmed - Jun 25

Although they are flying, they spend much time hopping from perch to perch, head bobbing, preening, inspecting their toes (!) and seemingly testing if the antenna is edible :) During the hot afternoon this Saturday, Jun 26 the male fledgling sat/lay on the rooftop below the antenna and rested there - that's the first time I've seen this behavior from a fledged Kestrel.

The adults are around and today I saw an attempted food transfer but unfortunately didn't identify the prey item. In the moment before the adult arrived, both fledglings raised their wings and flapped on the spot as though to draw attention to themselves. The adult female has also been actively harassing American Crows in the vicinity, including diving at one perched on the elevated J train tracks below my 4th floor window.

This is the 4th or 5th year running that the resident pair has successfully fledged young in this neighborhood!

cheers

Keir

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**From:** Eileen Jones  
**To:** Robert DeCandido PhD <rdcny@earthlink.net>  
**Subject:** Brooklyn Kestrel (Flatbush)  
**Date:** July 2 (Friday)

I have feathers for you from a male kestrel fledge from Snyder and Rogers Ave in Brooklyn, the neighborhood is Flatbush. He came in June 30th. The bird was handed to a Police Officer out on patrol. The bird was reportedly picked up next to a dead one that had been shot with an arrow. Sorry I don't have cleaner info for you, but if any of your peeps are in the area, maybe they'll notice something. A couple of weeks ago, a Canada goose was shot with an arrow in Prospect Park, related? Who knows, does make ya think. The incident has already been reported to NYS DEC and USF&WS. Have a good week.

Eileen

*These days, birds of prey have incredibly good PR, particularly in NYC. There was a time when few people divulged the location of a raptor (eg. Peregrine) nest or owl roost in NYC for fear that someone would shoot them (owls) or try and take one for falconry...Now, the opposite situation rules - so many people want to see owls and hawks locally that their popularity has become a problem. With the kestrel project, I made a decision from the beginning to show people nest(s) - because we knew very little about the ecology of these small falcons here in NYC, and the more info the better. Also, kestrels tend to be secretive...so even if people are watching the nest, they usually get bored and leave after a couple hours of seeing nothing. However, we*

*do get occasional reports of raptors being shot in NYC - sad for an individual raptor. On the other hand, for certain raptor species that still nest here in NYC, the trend is up - more Red-tails each year; more Osprey nests; a stable number of Peregrine nests; with new raptor species nesting in the last decade: Cooper's Hawks (Bronx and Staten Island); Black Vulture (Staten Island); Turkey Vulture (Bronx) and even the Raven (Queens). The latter four species wax and wane from year to year - so it is difficult to know what the long-term trend will show. Only the little Eastern Screech-owl, once the most common nesting raptor in NYC, is in free-fall decline throughout much of NYC - its only remaining stronghold is on Staten Island.*

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**From:** Sara Scovronick

**Subject:** Kestrels nesting in Chelsea (Manhattan)

**Date:** July 2 (Friday)

Hi Robert,

I do seem to have a pair of kestrels around and am very excited about it. I think they may be nesting on the roof...I have seen them on two different spots up there, so not sure yet where exactly, and also have heard them directly above my balcony (I am on the top floor, 21st floor). This week was the first time I was able to see and photograph them actually on my balcony.

Is there any specific information you are looking for?

I once did a brief internship with the Santa Cruz Predatory Bird Group, mostly monitoring Peregrines, so I'm really happy to help out. I didn't know you and others were keeping an eye on them here in the City.

Sara



**Above:** *Two Young male American Kestrels photographed in early July 2010 by Sara Scovronick. The general location of the nest is somewhere between 15th street and 34 street on the west side (between 6th Ave and the Hudson River) = Chelsea.*

**From:** Gene Miller  
**Subject:** Bath Ave. Kestrels (Brooklyn)  
**Date:** June 30 (Wednesday)

The hot and humid weather finally came to an end in New York city. The day had low humidity, temperatures in the 70's, and crystal clear skies. I got to the nest site at Bath Ave. at 8:26 AM and stayed until 10:35 AM. The action was slow, with only the female peeking out of the corbell a few times, until she left the nest at 9:14 AM and returned shortly. The male was spotted in the air, with prey in its talons, at 9:23 AM. At this time the female darted out of the nest, and quickly snared a small bird. They both then flew to a TV antenna, where they devoured their meal. The sun was to their back so most of the photos of them and their prey were underexposed.

I still am not sure if there are chicks in the nest, since none were spotted at the opening in the corbell. Also, both the male and female devoured their prey, instead of carrying it back to the nest to feed any chicks. Are there usually openings in the corbell leading to the cornice? Do the Kestrels live in the corbell, or the cornice? Hope to keep you posted as to further developments.

Eugene Miller



**Above:** *Adult female American Kestrel entering her nest cornice in Brooklyn on 30 June 2010 photographed by Gene Miller. Generally, when you see the female hanging from the front of the nest it means that the young ones are fairly large...More photos by Gene on the following page.*





**Above: (TOP)** *Adult male American Kestrel about to leave the nest in Brooklyn.*  
**(BOTTOM)** *Adult male returning with a small bird to the nest.*  
*Both photos by Gene Miller.*



**Below:** *A group of roosting **Lesser Kestrels** in East Africa photographed by New Jersey resident, Eric Gurwin in 2010. Lesser Kestrels nest from western Europe through the Middle East all the way to China. The European population is rapidly declining...groups of these small falcons migrate to East (and Southern) Africa where they gather in large roosts - the photo below shows adult males with grey heads; females and young males appear similar to adult females.*



If you want to see more of Eric's Lesser Kestrel photos, see:

<http://www.fredmiranda.com/forum/topic/887734/0>