

# 15 July 2010

## American Kestrel Nest Survey NYC - Issue #16 (2010)

Even though it is mid-July, a few NYC Kestrel pairs are still in the nest with young soon to fledge - so report Beth Goffe about her City College Kestrels (Manhattan) and Gene Miller on his Bath Avenue (Brooklyn) birds. In this issue, we also include kestrel info from various parts of Manhattan and Queens. We await reports from anyone in Staten Island about kestrels there...perhaps there are no kestrel nests on NYC's least developed borough? Impossible!

From further afield, we provide information about a yellow wing-tagged kestrel in Pennsylvania sent to us by August Mirabella (p. 7-9). Could it have been hatched in NJ? August also sends much info about kestrel nest box projects in his neck of the woods. And from Africa (pages 10-11), Anthony Van Zyl provides information about Lesser Kestrels that migrate north in autumn (from Southern Africa), while their European relatives are migrating south. Do they end up in the same area to spend the winter together?

Finally, the following three photos on pages 1-2 show (a) American Kestrel nests; and (b) appropriate kestrel hunting territory. I bet most people think the photo of Pennsylvania farm land is the best habitat for kestrels. Wrong! The habitat in each photo is equally good for kestrels. All three photos show habitats altered by man...Given sufficient food, kestrels are just as "happy" in urban areas as they are in rural ones. As more information comes in from cities across America, we will learn just how well kestrels do nesting in close proximity to people - Right now we are doing the only urban study of these small falcons in North America. Why? So we will have kestrels in NYC in 2050 and 2110! I don't want to remember NYC kestrels as those birds whose last remaining habitat was a postage stamp...They are just too lovely in real life for a fate such as that.









**From:** Catherine Livingston  
**To:** Robert DeCandido PhD <rdcny@earthlink.net>  
**Subject:** Manhattan Kestrels  
**Date:** July 7 (Wednesday)

Hi Bob - thought I would pass along a sighting, in case you don't already know of this location...both I and Luke Tiller have seen kestrels in the area of 34th St to 40th St on 9th and 10th Aves. I have seen both a male and female in this general area, which makes me think there may be a nest nearby, of course. Just FYI.

Catherine  
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**From:** Michael DiPrima  
**To:** "Robert DeCandido, PhD" <rdcny@earthlink.net>  
**Subject:** Kestrels in Queens - Jackson Heights  
**Date:** July 9 (Friday)

The kestrels are back! ....mom and pop were hanging together and 730 am pop took off and went east

**Date:** July 12 (Monday) - he dropped down from my roof and flew over to the school again it looks down on several blocks of private houses like a cliff view of an open hunting area  
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**Above:** *Adult female American Kestrel just leaving her cornice nest in Brooklyn (Bath Ave.).*  
**Bottom p. 4:** *Adult male returning with a small bird to the nest. Both photos by Gene Miller.*

**From:** gene4eagles (Gene Miller)  
**Subject:** Brooklyn: Bath Ave. Kestrels  
**Date:** July 9 (Friday)

Hi Robert,

The heat wave finally broke, and I took the opportunity to check out the Bath Ave. Kestrels once again. Friday was a humid day, but the sky was clear, with a slight haze, and the temperatures were in the middle 80's. I arrived on station at 9:34 AM and stayed until 11:05 AM. From 9:34 AM until approximately 10:00 AM there were three Kestrel flights. The first flight was north over Bath Ave. The second flight, with the male Kestrel carrying prey, was east along Bath Ave. Can you identify the prey, Robert? Is it a Sparrow chick? *[Seems to be.]* The third flight was straight out of the corbel; like an arrow, flying north. This activity was followed by a quiet period. The activity picked up again from 10:45 AM to 11:05 AM, when there were two quick flights. The first was a female Kestrel shooting out of the corbel, and heading for a large tree on Bay 28th street. Was this female Kestrel a chick, identified by the downy upper legs? *[Both of your photos show adults.]* The next was a duo flight of two small Kestrels (chicks? wasn't able to get a photo). Overall, there was quite a bit of flight activity. I didn't view any perching during this morning period. Robert, I am still not clear if there are any chicks that fledged from the corbel/nest. I am also not clear as to whether the corbel connects to the lintel. Do the Kestrels live in the small corbel, or do they live in the connecting lintel? Do corbels have an opening to the lintel? *[At your site the kestrels seem to nest in what you call the "Corbel" - but architects call a "Modillion." I would guess that within 12-24 inches of the opening (see photo bottom p. 3) is where the eggs were laid. You should see heads at the entrance (opening) any day now - look for downy feathers on the foreheads - those are the youngsters. Once you see heads, it is about 3-7 days before they are flying - and they will not return to the nest in the cornice (and that specific Modillion.)]*

Eugene Miller

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**From:** Dennis Edge  
**Subject:** East Village Kestrels - Manhattan  
**Date:** July 9 (Friday)

Hi Bob,

A birding friend and I were on Ave C and 11th St. today and saw 4 Kestrels perched on a 26 floor or so building at the southeast corner of 12th St and Ave C. We believe these are the 9th St. nesters and that 2 chicks successfully fledged there. We watched the birds for a while and two left the building and the 2 remaining birds (the fledglings I believe) began to fly about, diving at each other as if in play. *[See photo below by Dennis Edge - two male kestrels in flight at 11th street.]*

Dennis



**From:** Anita Randolfi  
**Subject:** Re: 9th st kestrels  
**Date:** July 11 (Sunday)

dear Bob,

Couldn't get to your C Pk bird walk this morning ... (my life is full of visitors)... instead, I took a walk between 8 & 9am on E 10 between 4th Av. and Ave C. I was rewarded with the sight of one kestrel on a roof on 10th between 2nd & 1st Aves. I had hoped to see these Ave. C kestrels, but had no luck. I'll keep checking. Hello to Debbie - anita randolfi

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**From:** Catharine Livingston  
**To:** Robert DeCandido PhD <rdcny@earthlink.net>  
**Subject:** West Village Kestrel sighting  
**Date:** July 9 (Friday)

Saw a kestrel this morning! It was sitting on the top of a brownstone on Charles Street, b/t West 4th and Bleecker. First one I've seen in my hood!

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**From:** Beth Goffe  
**Subject:** Nest still active - City College (Manhattan)  
**Date:** July 14, 2010

Hi Bob,

I'm across Convent Avenue. The male kestrel is on the roof preening and I saw the female fly in and enter the nest. Got a robin excited for a minute. No camera today - the light's awful! I'll be back...

Beth

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**Above:** *Young female American Kestrel that has somehow left her nest too soon - she likely cannot fly very well, if at all. Note down (white)feathers on forehead - a good sign of a young bird. Note also that her wings do not cross over her tail..on adults, the wings are longer. In a case such as this, we recommend catching the kestrel and bringing it up to a nearby rooftop or fire escape. The parents will find it - and given the age of this kestrel (25 days or so), and that it likely cannot fly well - the nest is very close by. Photo by Rick Gilbert on or about 8 July (and sent to us by Brian Haimes).*



**From:** August Mirabella  
**To:** John Smallwood PhD  
**Sent:** Wednesday, July 7  
**Subject:** Wing Tagged Kestrel (Yellow)

I saw the reference to your banding activities in NJ in the NYC Kestrel Newsletter from Bob DeCandido. I have boxes at Peace Valley Park in Bucks Co. PA. Last year the male at our one nest had a yellow wing tag. However, no numbers could be seen. Seeing the size of the wing tag in the NYC photo makes me believe the wing tag on our bird is broken as it is short and stubby. This year probably the same bird with stubby yellow wing tag nested in a different box in the park. Now we have two boxes active and both fledged young. Paul Karner suggested this bird was banded in NJ. Did you use yellow tags and if yes, can you tell me anything about this bird?

There are three of us in Bucks putting up boxes and we had a total of 12 occupied boxes this year. Three nests were in Barn Owl boxes, which we also put up. One of those nests sites was hijacked by a Barn Owl but the kestrels moved to a nearby kestrel box. So far I know that six boxes fledged young [\[see photos below by Howard B. Eskin; the right photo shows two males and one female\]](#) and the rest were either still in progress or we didn't follow up on outcome after finding eggs.

August Mirabella, North Wales, Pennsylvania

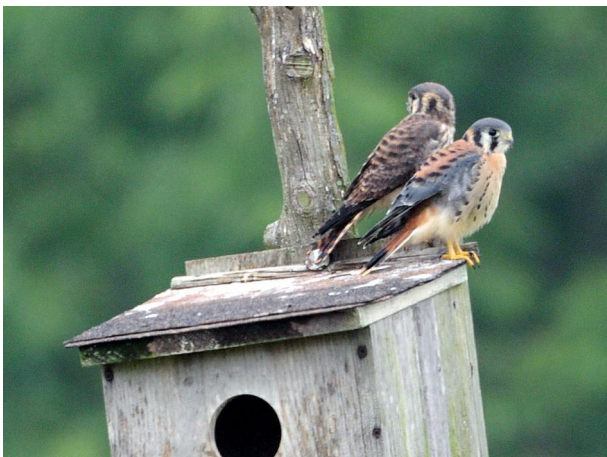
**From:** John A. Smallwood PhD  
**Sent:** Tuesday, July 13  
**Subject:** Re: Wing Tagged Kestrel (Yellow)

Hello August,

I'm pretty sure that I'm the only person putting wing tags on American Kestrels, except for one of my sub-permittees and a student in Florida banding non-migratory Southeastern American Kestrels in our boxes down there, so the bird you have been seeing almost certainly was banded by me in New Jersey. Of the 1658 kestrels marked since 1996, 118 have been males with yellow tags on either the left (2000-2006) or right wing (2006-2008). I expect the bird you've been seeing most likely is one recently banded.

I'm curious how many boxes you have up, i.e., 12 active nests represent what occupancy rate? I've maintained about 100 nest boxes each year, but the number of active nests has been falling from a high of 61 in 2002 to only 19 this year. I understand Paul Karner is having better luck.

John



**From:** August Mirabella  
**Subject:** Re: Wing Tagged Kestrel/Box occupancy  
**Date:** July 14, 2010 (Wednesday)

John,

Thanks for the reply. Where was the 2006-2008 banding done in NJ? I think the wing tag was on the left wing but unfortunately I am not 100% sure as I apparently forgot to record that info. Since we first noticed this bird in 2009, it makes sense it may have been banded in 2008. Is it normal for the tags to be torn off? Maybe the bird breaks it off as a foreign object when preening.

There are three of us putting up boxes. Steve Benningfield says he has 40+ with this being his best year with four occupied.

I have seven boxes in a relatively small area. One was put up too late this year to be occupied, I think. Three are too close together to get more than one pair. Those were my first ones at Peace Valley park in three adjacent fields. I figured I would give them multiple choice in case they preferred one over the other location. I wasted two poles and boxes this way, but I was learning. Anyway, total occupied this year was three out of a potential of four (considering the multiple choice sites as one). The yellow marked bird, if the same one as 2009, changed boxes to one at opposite ends of the park in 2010. The pair at the original box this year was present for some time before a female showed up at the second box to join the yellow marked bird who had been waiting for a week or two. This male also showed up after the original box was occupied, so maybe that is why it moved. I also have one kestrel box and three Barn Owl boxes at a preserved group of farms with over 400 acres of pasture and grassland to raise grass fed cattle. Two boxes were mounted inside the barns with a hole cut in the wall of the barn. The other is in a silo at the same barn as one of the wall mounted boxes but has lots of pigeons (so two boxes equal one potential kestrel site). We may try to kill the pigeons. The two wall mounted boxes had kestrels on eggs in April. The kestrel box has had starlings for two or three years. So, with the owl boxes, there are a total of five occupied out of seven potential sites.

Farbotnik started his effort this year but late in the season. He has eight boxes and three occupied. The one pair was actually in one of his Barn Owl boxes, but an owl that arrived in June is believed to have evicted the kestrel already on eggs. The kestrel then started over at a kestrel box nearby. The owls are the first known pair here in the county in several years. So, of 10 potential sites, he has three occupied but he started late.

Summary	Boxes(sites)	Occupied
	SB 40+	4
	AM 5	3 kestrel boxes
	AM 2	2 owl box with kestrels
	DF 10	3
	TOTAL 57+	12

We are optimistic that we will get more in time. It took a few years(4?) to go from one pair to two at Peace Valley. I have predator guards on all my poles. One issue I have is the wood shavings vanishing. I fixed that by putting a hardware cloth wire mesh on top of the shavings and more shavings on top of that. I also make the wire mesh curved so if the shavings on top vanish, the eggs will roll to the center. I found without that, the eggs would roll around the wood bottom and the nest would fail. Benningfield has had this same problem. I also have managed the fields with cooperation from the park maintenance supervisor to provide good habitat for them. at Peace Valley.

Considering how your operation has seen such a drastic decline, I assume as a researcher, you have tried to



identify any procedural or other practice that you are using that may be negative. I guess box position, box construction, nesting material, direction it is facing, access by predators, food supply, herbicide or rodenticide poisoning, and many more things that you I am sure have considered must be looked at to see if the results are negative for reasons that can be fixed. If you have any conclusions on your decline, I would be interested in hearing what they are. I hope you see a turnaround in success.

Thanks again,

August



**Above:** *Prey exchange of a lizard (species unknown) from a male American Kestrel to the female in the western USA. Photo by Hugh Robateau in 2009.*

## Lesser Kestrels (*Falco naumanni*) in East Africa (photos by Eric Gurwin)



**From:** Eric Gurwin  
**Sent:** 30 June 2010  
**To:** Anthony Van Zyl  
**Subject:** Lesser Kestrels in Tanzania

Dear Anthony,

Bob in New York City suggested I write you about my experience with a hover of kestrels in Tanzania this past March. .... the location was about 15 minutes from the Seronera air strip in the Southern Serengeti of Tanzania. Apparently, this is a fairly common sight for the guides, but for me - I was in kestrel heaven. Here is a link to some photos I took and posted on FredMiranda.com nature and wildlife forum

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

<http://www.fredmiranda.com/forum/topic/913196/0#8613037>

Eric Gurwin

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**From:** Anthony Van Zyl  
**Subject:** RE: Lesser Kestrels in Tanzania  
**Date:** Jul 7, 2010

.....Yes, thanks for the links to your wonderful photographs of Lesser Kestrels in Tanzania. These birds



typically migrate to and from Southern Africa each year, although there are roosts in Malawi and West Africa. From the information I have gathered, there are no substantial roost sites in Tanzania but they do pass through Tanzania each October and March/April. No doubt the birds you were seeing were on their way back to their breeding grounds.

I co-ordinate the volunteer-based Migrating Kestrel Project where we count kestrels each year at their roosts. While I know that seeing hundreds of kestrels is very impressive, some of the Lesser Kestrel roosts get very big and our largest Lesser Kestrel roosts have been in the region of 15,000 kestrels!

No that satellite tags are small enough to place on this size of raptor, I hope that in the future there will be more working on the migration patterns of Lesser Kestrels. Current thinking is that the birds from Europe migrate to West Africa, while those in the eastern part of their north hemisphere range migrate to southern Africa.

I am always interested in sightings of these birds on migration, as they are not often reported. So observers believe that they fly too high to be easily seen by observers on the ground.

Kind regards

Anthony

[www.kestreling.com](http://www.kestreling.com)



**Thanks as always for the extraordinary information sent - rdc**

## 2 August 2010

### American Kestrel Nest Survey NYC - Issue #17 (2010)

With this penultimate issue for 2010 we bring information about nesting kestrels in Gravesend, Brooklyn that Isabel Conti first reported in early June 2010 (*NYC Kestrel Newsletter #11*). Here, Gene Miller contributes a photo essay on these falcons that live right above people in a residential neighborhood. Cat Chester sends an update about her kestrels near the East River and the 80s on the Upper East Side of Manhattan (p. 6). John Stawarz has found a new kestrel nest in Soho in lower Manhattan (p. 8); while Corey Tazmania reports on a recently fledged kestrel in his backyard in Queens (pp. 2-3). Finally, we send an article about nesting Lesser Kestrels in Israel (pp. 8-10) - and include several more photos about this falcon on its migration in Africa - thank You Eric Gurwin.

Date Kestrel Found (2010)	Sex	Borough and Location where Kestrel found
28-May	Male	Manhattan: West 27th street and 10th Avenue
5-Jun	Male	Bronx: Hunts Point area ("Rocking the Boat")
10-Jun	Male	Manhattan: 265 West 79th Street on Church Steps
11-Jun	F	Manhattan: West 36th St. between 9th and 10th Aves
14-Jun	Male	Queens: Ozone Park - 130-02 115 Avenue (PS 155)
14-Jun	F	Manhattan: Lexington Avenue between 45th and 46th Sts
15-Jun	Male	Brooklyn: Bay Ridge - 73rd Street and 13th Avenue
16-Jun	Male	Queens: Ozone Park - 130-02 115 Avenue (PS 155)
16-Jun	Male	Queens: Ozone Park - 130-02 115 Avenue (PS 155)
18-Jun	F	Manhattan: 73rd St and Amsterdam Ave
18-Jun	Male	Brooklyn: Church and Flatbush Avenues
19-Jun	Male	Brooklyn: Williamsburg
19-Jun	F	Manhattan: West 36th St at Dyer Avenue
19-Jun	F	Manhattan: Grammercy Park - East 18th St
20-Jun	Male	Manhattan: East 66th st. between 5th and Madison
20-Jun	Male	Manhattan: Central Park (Ramble) at 79th st.
20-Jun	F	Manhattan: West 28th St.
20-Jun	Male	Manhattan: Columbus Circle (59th St and CPark West)
21-Jun	Male	Brooklyn: Far Rockaway - 125th St.
21-Jun	F	Manhattan: Central Park at 59th Street and 5th Ave
23-Jun	Male	Bronx: South Bronx between 145th and 146th streets
24-Jun	F	Bronx: South Bronx - 530 East 146th street
25-Jun	F	Bronx: South Bronx - 530 East 146th street
5-Jul	F	Manhattan: Soho - Lafayette Street
8-Jul	Male	Manhattan: Soho - Lafayette Street
13-Jul	F	Bronx - no specific location

**Table 1.** [Data Courtesy of Bobby and Cathy Horvath.] Date, sex and location where 26 fledged kestrels were found on the ground (and could not fly well) in NYC in 2010. These kestrels were then raised back to health by the Horvaths, and released in NYC. One kestrel released back into NYC in 2006 was found nesting in Manhattan (Harlem) in 2008 - further details can be found in *NYC Kestrel Newsletter # 13 (9 July 2008)*. These 26 are just a portion (perhaps 7-15%) of the total number of young kestrels that fledged in NYC this year.



**From:** Corey Tazmania  
**Sent:** July 22 (Thursday)  
**To:** Deborah Allen  
**Subject:** Young male American Kestrel in Queens

Hello Deborah,

My name is Corey and I live on the border between LIC and Astoria in Queens.

We live on a tree lined block with gardens and are about 3/4 of a mile from the east river. Our garden has a bird feeder and two little bird houses. We have a lot of Sparrows and Doves, Cardinals, Blue Jays and the occasional Hummingbird and Woodpecker.

Today was the first time I had ever seen a falcon in our backyards. I got a very close look at it and it was definitely a young male American Kestrel. He dove into a tree, looked a little bewildered and then flew up onto a wire looking over the area. He stayed for about five minutes and then took off.

I found your site while searching about the bird and thought you'd like to know.

If I see he becomes a frequent visitor to our gardens, I'll let you know.

Corey



**Figure 1.** *Adult male Kestrel near his nest in Brooklyn. Photo by Gene Miller - for details see the following pages.*

**From:** Corey Tazmania  
**Subject:** Re: NYC Kestrels  
**Date:** July 23 (Friday)

Thank you both! Please add me to the newsletter.

Looking though the newsletters you sent, I saw that someone in LIC reported a nest close enough by us to expect another visit...

I'll keep my eyes peeled and again, thank you for raising my awareness.

Best,

Corey

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**Figure 2 (above).** *Adult female Kestrel entering her nest at the Bath Ave. site (Brooklyn). Photo by Gene Miller - for details see the following pages. Figure 3 (top of next page). Nest building and location of the Bath Avenue Kestrel nest site, Brooklyn.*





**From:** Gene Miller  
**Subject:** Bath Ave. Kestrels - 7/16/10 [Brooklyn]  
**Date:** July 19 - Monday morning

Hi Robert,

The heat wave continues in New York city and the Kestrel activity seems to have diminished. I arrived at the Bath Ave. Kestrel site at 10:18 AM and stayed until 11:30 AM. There was only one sighting of Kestrel activity, when at 10:24 AM a male Kestrel flew South- East along Bath Ave., straight into its corbel/nest. The flight into the nest was too quick to focus the camera. I got a few photos as he scrambled into the nest. I also am sending you some photos of the nest site as per your request. The first photo depicts the setting looking North-West along Bath Ave; the second photo depicts the nest site looking South-East along Bath Ave.

Eugene Miller

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**From:** Gene Miller  
**Subject:** Bath Ave. Kestrels [Brooklyn]  
**Date:** July 20 (Tuesday afternoon)

With another hot day coming up today, I decided to head for the Bath Ave. Kestrel nest site early. I arrived on station at 8:14 AM and stayed until 10:05 AM. For the first half hour there were no sightings of Kestrels at all . I thought that the season might have ended, since my last visit (7/16/10) was also devoid of any significant action. I was pleasantly surprised at 8:45 AM when the action heated up. Until the time I left, it never stopped. At first both the male and female Kestrels took turns perching on a TV antenna on the South-West side of Bath Ave. The male and female Kestrels continually flew back and forth across Bath Ave. from

tree to tree. Most times they appeared to be carrying their prey and stopped at each tree to take some bites. The male Kestrel visited the nest and appeared to come out of it with a larger chick than its original prey. Could this male Kestrel (photo 2022E) be removing a dead Kestrel chick from the nest? The dead chick appears to have dark areas around its eyes, and very fluffy feathers. - A Kestrel chick? Will this Kestrel family migrate soon, or do they stay at their nest location all year? The male and female Kestrels appeared to be occupied with something as they entered their nest. Maybe they were feeding the chicks? Are any of the photographs of chicks?

Eugene Miller

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**Figure 4 (above).** *Adult female Kestrel with small bird prey - likely a House Sparrow - she just received from the male near the Bath Ave. site (Brooklyn). Photo by Gene Miller.*

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**From:** Gene Miller

**Subject:** Bath Ave. Kestrels - 7/26/10 [Monday]

**Date:** July 26 (Monday morning)

Hoorah, The Kestrel chicks have finally appeared! Two chicks were visible at the corbel opening and one was flying in the nearby trees. The day began with crystal clear blue skies, low humidity, and a medium breeze. It was perfect weather for photography. I arrived at the Bath Ave. site at 8:15 AM and stayed until 10:00 AM. When I arrived there were two chicks visible at the corbel opening. They were making their characteristic call. I believe they were hungry, and were calling their parents for food. At 8:45 AM I viewed a female chick



perched on a nearby tree. It flew to and back from somewhat close-by trees. At 9:12 AM the female adult Kestrel appeared at the corbel opening. I believe it was bringing food to the chicks. After the adult female left, the chicks were not viewed or heard. They must have been eating the prey in the corbel. The action continued with the lone fledged chick flying from tree to tree.

Eugene Miller

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**Figure 5 (above).** *Adult male American Kestrel removing a small bird - likely a House Sparrow - that was in the nest - and not eaten by the young kestrels. He will take it to a nearby perch and eat it..Photo by Gene Miller at the Bath Ave. site (Brooklyn).*

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**From:** Cat Chester

**Subject:** Kestrel Babies (Upper East Side - Manhattan)

**Date:** July 31 (Saturday Afternoon)

Hi Bob:

It had been quite a few weeks with no sightings and I had reluctantly concluded that my Kestrels were gone. I sadly put away my telescope.

So, it was a great surprise to see all three babies (I assume) hanging out together today. Maybe the nice weather brought them out.

Cat

**From:** John Stawarz

**Subject:** Kestrel seen at NE corner of Watts and Ave of the Americas

**Date:** July 30th (Friday afternoon)

I'm an amateur birdwatcher and I work in Soho, and yesterday morning (29 July) spotted a Kestrel on the NE corner of Watts and Ave of the Americas. I don't know if it was a male or female, but the bird was perched on top of the building with something in its beak (mouse?), then swooped up under the eave into a small opening that apparently serves as its nest opening. Let me know if you have any questions about this sighting.

.....As for the kestrel I saw, it went into a nook above the Watts's street side of Lupe's Restaurant:

Lupe's East LA Kitchen Inc  
110 Avenue of the Americas (and Watts)  
New York, NY 10013-1607

I've attached a screen grab [below] I got from Google maps that shows approximately where the kestrel entered the roost, although the hole isn't visible on the picture. If you check out the roost on a weekday from 10-6 and would like me to point it out with better detail, just give me a call and I can walk over from work. (I work a block away from the site.) Let me know if there's anything else I can do to help.

John Stawarz

Production Assistant  
National Geographic Television







## Rare bird becomes integral part of Galilee Moshav's life

Haaretz

7 April 2009

By Eli Ashkenazi

At first they were only visitors, small flying migrants, but recently the lesser kestrels (*Falco naumanni*) have become a integral part of the life of the Danin family of Moshav Elyakim. "Housing for homeless kestrels" is what the father, Shlomi, calls the nesting box that has been built in their yard. After school and work, Shlomi and his children - Aviv, 13, Adi, 12, Daniel, 7, and Yigal, 5 - are busy studying, following and observing the rare small falcon.

One day last week, as Danin stood in the living room of his home talking to us, he did not take his eyes off the nearby hill, following his sub-tenants' hunting route. "They have a daily schedule and the couple work in harmony and as a team. The male looks after the female. We have a lot to learn from them."

As recognition of their activity on behalf of the lesser kestrel population, the Danin family has recently been awarded the title of "Friends of the Lesser Kestrel" by Menachem Hadar of the Society for the Protection of Nature in Israel. The distinguished title was awarded to them under a project being conducted in the Megiddo area by SPNI and the Israel Electric Corporation. Another "Friend of the Lesser Kestrel" is Arad Shoham of Kibbutz Dalia, who thus far has cared for some 400 abandoned chicks who fell from their nests.

The lesser kestrel is the smallest bird of prey in Israel and weighs only 160 grams. It can be identified by its unique colors: Its head and neck are a bluish gray, its feet and eyelids are yellow and the rest of its body is chestnut brown. However, its beauty does not help it in the struggle for survival: The lesser kestrel population is in a constant downward trend. It is estimated that over the years the number of pairs has dwindled to only about 600.



As part of the project to save the birds, fifth-graders in the Alona and Megiddo regions have "adopted" the lesser kestrel. They learn about it at school, build nesting boxes, keep a close eye on the nesting birds in their locales, conduct censuses and act to raise awareness of the bird among the human inhabitants of the area.

Last week, as the first lesser kestrels arrived from Africa for the nesting season, SPNI conducted a lesser kestrel census together with the children and their parents. The census indicates that the beautiful bird of prey is in danger of worldwide extinction. Thus, for example, in Megiddo this year only about 200 kestrel pairs were counted, as compared to 300 last year.



**One of the main reasons for the dwindling lesser kestrel population in Israel is damage to its nesting sites. Often the birds choose to nest in the roofs of homes. Renovations and the replacement of old roofs reduce the possibilities for nesting, and damage to open areas also harms the kestrels, which lose hunting grounds.**

"The decline in the number of lesser kestrels is painful for us - it's a special bird," says Danin. "The children and I have decided to set up natural nesting boxes in the open areas, built of stone with niches inside. I want the lesser kestrels to know that there's a warm corner here for them."

<http://www.haaretz.com/hasen/spages/1077030.html>



**All photos of the Lesser Kestrel in East Africa by Eric Gurwin of New Jersey.**

Note that the Lesser Kestrels photographed in Kenya by Eric Gurwin were likely ones that nested in South Africa and spent the winter in East Africa. The Lesser Kestrels of the article that nested in Israel migrate through the Middle East to spend the winter in West Africa.

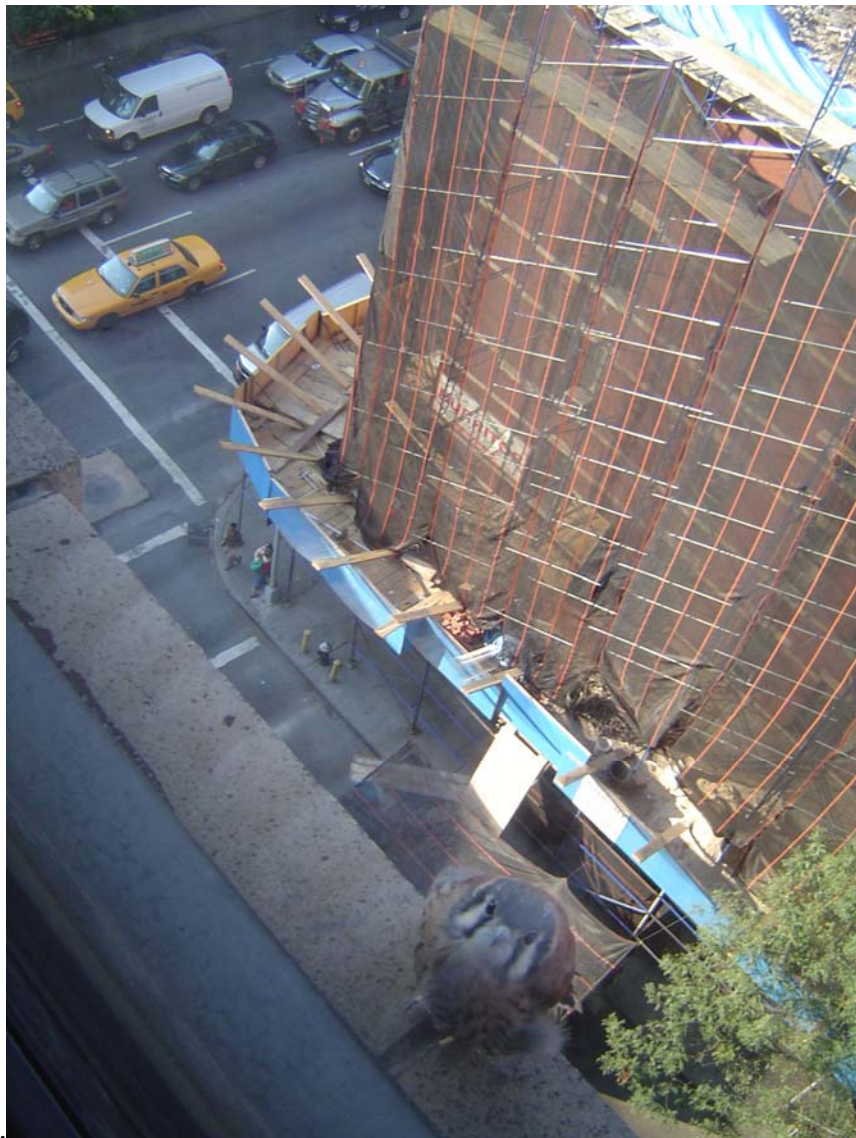
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Finally, regarding Table 1 on page 1, space did not allow some comments about the information contained therein. 14 of the 26 kestrels that made it to re-hab were from Manhattan (54%). On the other hand, no kestrels came in from Staten Island - this is interesting because SI is the last of NYC's five boroughs to develop. Do any kestrels nest on SI? Perhaps a few pairs (< 10). As a corollary, data from Table 1 suggest that kestrels do best in developed areas of NYC that have building cornices for nests. Anyway, we will be sending feather samples from these 26 NYC kestrels (and any others that come in before mid-August), as well as samples from 28 young kestrels in Pennsylvania (Hawk Mtn), and 15 samples from northwest New Jersey (Dr. John Smallwood) for lead and mercury contaminant analysis. We'll update data/info and photos as we receive them. Meanwhile, thank You all ever so much for the info sent to us this year. ---- [Robert DeCandido, PhD \(the Bronx\)](#)

# 11 November 2010

## American Kestrel Nest Survey NYC - Issue #19 (2010)

*How many Kestrels spend the autumn-winter in NYC?????*

Much has happened with NYC Kestrels since late August. In terms of migration, a few of the east coast migration watch sites (such as Fire Island in Suffolk Co. NY) are reporting their highest totals of migrating American Kestrels in at least 10 years. That is really good news. Closer to home here in NYC, kestrel observers are seeing these falcons in some of their usual haunts. And here is where we need your help – we are unsure about how many kestrels spend the winter in NYC. We assume most birds hatched this year disperse and migrate away from NYC. By comparison, we think that most adults stay on or near their breeding territories. Science and conservation are not about assumptions – we need the facts! If you see a kestrel this winter – do let us know. That's it. In the meantime, we bring you stories about kestrels mostly from Manhattan – the place where the wild things are. It seems like a few kestrels are raiding bird feeders...and Dave Leland and Janet Bachant have two good stories to tell.



*Why is this juvenile male kestrel perched on the ledge of this west side building? See page 2.*



**From:** Marie Hoffman  
**To:** Deborah Allen  
**Subject:** American Kestrel Juvenile Pictures (Manhattan)  
**Date:** 23 August 2010 (Sunday)

Hi Deborah,

Here are the pictures of the juvenile Kestrel on the Film Building on 9th Ave (between 44th and 45th). We found it on the 8th floor and the window was facing north.

Feel free to ask me other questions! Good luck!

Best,

Marie



*Through the years we have received reports of nesting kestrels on the west side of Manhattan from the 20s to the 50s near 10<sup>th</sup> Avenue. We have only been able to find one nest, on 25<sup>th</sup> St just east of 10<sup>th</sup> Ave (thanks to Chuck McAlexander). So we are not surprised to find juveniles turning up in this area – and with a little luck we might find a nest or two in 2011. Meanwhile, Thanks Marie for the info and photos.*

**From:** Joe Sweeney  
**To:** Robert DeCandido PhD <rdcny@earthlink.net>  
**Subject:** Kestrels in Central Park  
**Date:** October 6, 2010 (Wednesday)

Hi Bob and Deb,

While I was birding with Barbara Green in the southern end of Central Park on Friday, October 1 (2010), I found a perched kestrel in a tree near the ice rink (see photo).

Two days later near the Great Hill in the northern part of the park, Barbara, Sharon Berlan and I accidentally flushed a kestrel out of a large tree. As it flew away, we could see that it had a small bird in its talons (hopefully not a Connecticut Warbler).

Enjoying your reports from Thailand. Happy counting of raptors.

Joe Sweeney

Joe's Best Bird Images: <http://www.flickr.com/photos/sweeneyfit/>  
Birds of the Ranch Note Cards: [http://www.zazzle.com/joesweeney\\*](http://www.zazzle.com/joesweeney*)



*Male American Kestrel photographed by Joe Sweeney (who does wonderful bird walks in southern California – see his web site above). This little guy was hunting from a willow tree in the southern part of Central Park in early October 2010. Note that there was a successful kestrel nest near (or even on) the Sherry-Netherland Hotel at 59<sup>th</sup> street and 5<sup>th</sup> Avenue...another kestrel nest that escaped detection until we found young birds in the area in July 2010.*





**From:** David Leland  
**To:** rdcny@earthlink.net  
**Subject:** Bird Visit - Manhattan  
**Date:** 23 October 2010 (Saturday)

Hi Bob and Deborah,

Please excuse me for dropping in on you in Thailand. I just wanted to share a surprising avian moment, especially because you take special interest in kestrels in NYC.

Last Monday (18 October 2010) around noon I was in our bedroom and suddenly heard some floppy sounds coming from the adjacent bathroom. I thought maybe some towels had fallen, but the sound repeated. I went into the bathroom and saw what I thought was a pigeon flapping its wings between the upper part of the mostly closed window and the (perforated) venetian blind. The bird was headed directly out trying to go through the glass with its tail sometimes projecting inward between the slats. The bird had to have come in through the few inches of opening at the bottom of the window. The blind was also down except for the bottom few inches. Why and how the bird flew up between the window and the blind I do not know.

I managed to raise the window a little more and pulled the blind back from the window, allowing the bird to drop down and fly out the opening. As soon as I saw the bird directly, and not through the perforated blind, I could see the unmistakable rusty rump and blue-gray wings of a kestrel.

That is really all. I was somewhat haunted by the experience and wanted to share it with you. I hope your research is going well and that you are enjoying yourselves.

Best regards,

Dave Leland

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**From:** Michael DiPrima  
**To:** "Robert DeCandido, PhD" <rdcny@earthlink.net>  
**Subject:** American Kestrel (**Queens**)  
**Date:** 26 October 2010 (Tuesday)

**There is a male kestrel at work right now sitting across the street (165 st hillside ave).....mike**

**From:** Adam Klein  
**Subject:** Kestrel sighting – Manhattan (96<sup>th</sup> street)  
**Date:** November 8, 2010 (Sunday)

I saw your notice while doing some Kestrel research and wanted to report a sighting. My girlfriend and I saw and identified an American Kestrel sitting on a water tower on top of a building at 96<sup>th</sup> and Broadway on the Upper West Side. We saw it from our apartment window and observed it for several minutes through binoculars, so we're quite sure of our identification. It is the first one I've seen in the city, so I wanted to verify that they even lived in Manhattan--hence the search that led me to your notice.

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

Thank you for posting the helpful information. Best,

Adam Klein



*Thanks Adam. In summer 2010, that kestrel pair tried to (unsuccessfully) nest on 96<sup>th</sup> street above the Citibank building (see arrow in top photo.) The second photo is the pair in July this year...photographed on the church one block east of the nest. The bottom photo is by Eric Powers who is also watching these kestrels. Sharon Kass first spotted kestrels nesting at this location in circa 2002-03.*



**From:** Janet Bachant

**Subject:** Window sighting and Kestrel news (West 86<sup>th</sup> street, Manhattan)

**Date:** November 10, 2010 (Wednesday)

Hi Bob,

Just a note re a recent sighting at my kitchen window in the city. I believe (though I could be wrong) that this is a pine siskin that came to my kitchen feeder. Maybe he followed me from the country? (That was a joke!), but you seemed interested in whether it was in the city so here it is at my kitchen window.

Also, wanted to let you know that the kestrels are still here going after the finches. But when I was having breakfast the other morning one went after a small Mourning dove. That was a first for me to see! He (male) did not get it.

That's it. Hope you had or are having a great time in Thailand. ttys. Janet



And yes Janet, that sure is a Pine Siskin Way to go! That is the first report of a truly urban urban Pine Siskin from the streets of Manhattan that I am aware of. Maybe a kestrel will get it...



# 23 December 2010

## American Kestrel Nest Survey NYC - Issue #20 (2010)

*How many Kestrels spend the autumn-winter in NYC????*

### Happy Holidays from Kestrel Central here in NYC!

Just a note to say *we are still interested in any and all kestrel sightings this December-January-February and March – particularly NYC sightings.* Why? We are unsure how many kestrels spend the winter in NYC. We assume most birds hatched this year disperse and migrate away from NYC. By comparison, we think that most adults stay on or near their breeding territories. Science and conservation are not about assumptions – we need the facts! If you see a kestrel this winter – do let us know. That's it – **and Happy Holidays.**

**Deborah Allen and Robert DeCandido**



hello - thought you'd enjoy this photo I took this past spring in PA

steven Berkowitz

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**From:** Dennis Edge  
**To:** Robert DeCandido PhD <rdcny@earthlink.net>  
**Subject:** Manhattan Kestrels  
**Date:** 11 November 2010 (Thursday)

Hello Bob,

Coincidental timing. I got your newsletter today and I have raptor news from the Lower East Side. Yesterday afternoon in Tompkins Square Park several of us birders were watching two Red-tailed hawks sparing over the remains of a pigeon and one (an adult) chased the other (a juvenile) out of the park onto a building on 7th street. We continued to watch the adult until we heard the telltale cries of a kestrel coming from 7th Street. We hurried to 7th St. to find a kestrel mobbing the juvenile RTH which was perched on an antenna. Soon the RTH flew away and then the kestrel (a female) perched on the antenna with prey. It seemed too soon for the kestrel to have caught the prey (a sparrow with notched tail; one of the *Spizellas* I think) and perch on the antenna [see photo below]. Possibly, the prey was left on the antenna by the kestrel when the RTH arrived and hence the reason for the mobbing. This morning I was in the park and 2 birds came zooming over me, one chasing the other. One was a kestrel and it was being chased by an adult Cooper's hawk. The Cooper's didn't get the kestrel and landed in an Elm tree while the kestrel circled higher while crying its alarm. It then flew in the direction of 7th St. Anyway, here are my shots of the first event. The 3rd bird in the first photo is a pigeon who was having second thoughts about being so close to the action.

Dennis



**Female American Kestrel by Dennis Edge, November 2010, Manhattan**

**From:** Thomas Schuchaskie  
**To:** Robert DeCandido PhD <rdcny@earthlink.net>  
**Subject:** Manhattan Kestrels  
**Date:** November 13

I was invited to a release of a rehab female Kestrel on this past Thursday morning (11 November). It went really well! She flew into a nearby tree, let us snap some photos, then took off north towards her home in the 130's [West Side of Manhattan].

Thom  
urbankidadventurers@yahoo.com  
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**From:** Matthew Wills  
**To:** Robert DeCandido PhD <rdcny@earthlink.net>  
**Subject:** Brooklyn Kestrels  
**Date:** November 12 (Friday morning)

Hi, Bob!

Heard and then saw a kestrel above Congress St @ Court St in Cobble Hill, Brooklyn, on Wednesday. I have also seen, for the last three weekends, kestrels in Green-Wood (along with sharpies, Cooper, merlin, peregrine, red-tail, even an overhead osprey; excellent fall raptoring there).

Matthew  
[www.matthewwills.com](http://www.matthewwills.com)  
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**From:** GEORGE BECKWITH  
**To:** Robert DeCandido PhD  
**Subject:** Manhattan Kestrel  
**Date:** November 12 (Friday)

Bob,

I was just out for a lunchtime stroll (1:30 PM) in the beautiful sunny weather we are having today and spotted a female Kestrel at 2 Fifth Avenue sitting on the corner post of a 10th floor (+/-) balcony guardrail overlooking Washington Square Park. Hope all is well in Thailand.

George  
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**From:** Michael DiPrima  
**To:** "Robert DeCandido, PhD" <rdcny@earthlink.net>  
**Subject:** Kestrels in Queens  
**Date:** Nov 15 (Monday afternoon)

**Its nov 15 (Monday)**  
**I'm at work and the kestrel is sitting across the street**



**From:** Laura Terra  
**Subject:** Sightings - Saturday and Sunday (Bronx)  
**Date:** November 21 (Sunday Morning)

Hi.. Hope you had successful trips!!!

Just an update.. Today (Sunday) - Kestrel in my neighbor's backyard - at first I thought it was a sharp shinned, but a lot smaller and realized it was the Kestrels I've been reading about in your newsletters and was hoping they would stay away from this area.. but I guess that's over..

Also today...a Cooper's Hawk was by the telephone pole near my house and flew towards the Muliner/Matthews Park when he saw me come out the door.

2 Red tailed hawks yesterday... 2 less pigeons ..

I know you love this stuff, but to me.. I really prefer to have the more communal animals and wish they would stay away and I could just read about them!!!! ; )

Take care,

Laura  
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**From:** Chad Seewagen PhD  
**To:** Bob  
**Subject:** Kestrel obs (Manhattan)  
**Date:** November 22 (Monday)

Hi Bob,

I imagine you are either back in NYC or will be back at any moment. I just got back from Ontario yesterday after successfully defending my dissertation. Yahoo! Anyway, I just wanted to pass along a kestrel observation. While cooking dinner last night (about 6pm), I heard one calling and I was able to find it perched on a water tower on the roof of the building next to mine. So that would be the second building east of Broadway on 108th St. It was a male. It was calling quite a lot over the span of a half hour or so. I couldn't tell if it was two birds calling back and forth or just one. Just passing it along...

Let me know if/when you are back in NYC. We'll have to catch up.

Chad  
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**From:** Mike DiPrima  
**To:** rdcny@earthlink.net  
**Subject:** Kestrel in Queens (Jackson Heights)  
**Date:** November 25, 2010 (Thursday morning, Thanksgiving)

thanksgiving nov 25  
kestrel perched in jackson heights  
h.t. (OK!)

**From:** GEORGE BECKWITH  
**To:** "Robert DeCandido, PhD" <rdcny@earthlink.net>  
**Subject:** Kestrel sighting (Manhattan)  
**Date:** December 10, 2010 (Friday)

Hi Bob,

I just saw male Kestrel at Washington Sq. I talked to a gardener there who said he had been around for a few hours today and apparently he has been around frequently. I have also seen a red tailed hawk in the park 2 or 3 times in the last 2 weeks. Apparently there are 2 that live around the park.

George

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**From:** ISABEL CONTE  
**To:** rdcny@earthlink.net  
**Subject:** Brooklyn Kestrel  
**Date:** December 14, 2010 (Tuesday)

Hi Bob,

The kestrel that perched on my fire-escape 3 weeks ago paid me another visit today. This time I had my camera ready. I'm sorry I can't send the movie version (the bird left a calling card and then my cat scared it off). I live very close to the Marine Park Salt Marsh and Floyd Bennet Field where there are many kestrels, and I don't know how far they could range. This is the first time i've seen one in my neighborhood. Its a nice change from the usual starlings and doves at my window.

Isabel Conte

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**From:** Matthew Wills  
**To:** Robert DeCandido PhD <rdcny@earthlink.net>  
**Subject:** Brooklyn kestrel  
**Date:** December 18, 2010 (Saturday)

Just heard, but did not see, a kestrel near Cobble Hill Park [Brooklyn], near where I saw bird a couple weeks back.

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**From:** Eric Powers  
**Subject:** Kestrel Nest on 96th street (Manhattan)  
**Date:** December 18, 2010 (Saturday)

Just so you know, that building on W96th St was completely renovated on the exterior, and they fixed any and all holes in the sides...there will not be any kestrels at that building for many more decades. 😞 (:

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**From:** Mike DiPrima  
**Subject:** Kestrel (Queens)  
**Date:** December 18, 2010 (Saturday)

kestrel outside now (Queens) - dec 18th

couldn't see the wings but the "hood" was dark - looked very healthy

merry christmas



**From:** Jane M. Burn  
**Subject:** Kestrel sighting (?) - Manhattan  
**Date:** December 20, 2010 (Monday)

Hi – when trying to ID this bird I came across your poster online. The pic isn't very close, but if you zoom in it's not bad. We took this today, (20 December 2010), from the window of One Broadway, facing south and overlooking Battery Park and the harbor. She was there for about 20 mins, and then left, but no sign of a nest or anything. Jane