25 January 2011

American Kestrel Nest Survey NYC - Issue #2 (2011)
Kestrels are here in NYC – but where?

Send Info to: rdcny@earthlink.net

Above: adult Female American Kestrel (James Salywoda 2011)
Kestrel Reports from our Spies in the Field:

From: John Wender  
Subject: Kestrels - Manhattan  
Date: January 13 (Thursday)

Hello Bob and Deborah,

Isaiah and I saw a kestrel perched on the finial of a water tower on the roof top across from my office windows, mid-block on 29th street between 7th and 8th Avenues.

John B. Wender  
Bartalone Wender Architects  
New York, NY

Above: Pair of American Kestrels (male, lower, with blue wings) on a water tower, Upper West Side in spring 2008; photographed by rdc
Hi Bob,

Here are the photos of the Kestrels I took back in my naiveté bird sighting days. Don't have a long lens but they are always out my window. Haven't seen them since Fall. They are in a cornice nest, yes, on Union St between Smith and Hoyt.


I know they are eating when I see baby pigeon torsos and dismembered bird legs littering the sidewalks.

My mother is a botanist/ birdwatcher. Her partner, Don MacNeil was a big wig at San Francisco Hall of Sciences. Mother has an insect named after her and she had those LP bird call records when I was a kid. no shame. Both were also affiliated with The Oakland Museum Natural Sciences division. Don has since passed away and is mourned by many.

You remind me of him. Thanks for posting on that blog, too.

mary prlain
set decorator & set dec buyer & props buyer
maryprlain.com

Above: nest of a Red-tailed Hawk (not a kestrel!) in the Bronx by Deborah Allen, about 2005.
From: Allen Wolovsky  
To: rdcny@earthlink.net  
Subject: red-tail roost on 5th st (Brooklyn)  
Date: January 14 (Friday)  

Hi Bob,

I saw your red-tail note on pardonmeforasking.

I live on 5th Street between 5th and 6th aves. About 10 years ago I noticed a red-tail perched in the tree in front of our house. She(?) would come in late November and stay until Feb or March. In the first few years she would be there every night, coming in at dusk and leaving early morning. Same branch. As the years went on she would move around a little in the tree, but only to two or three spots.

I often would just watch her, mostly motionless. When I took out the garbage at midnight she was company even though her head was tucked in.

Luckily for me the tree in front of our house kept its foliage until late into the winter. I assume that's why she picked that one. So it could be hard to spot her at night. To find her I learned to stand where the light of the streetlight would shine on her breast.

Sometimes she would come in a little early and I could go out and watch her directly from the street. She would watch the pedestrians go by below her but never moved because of that. There was even a squirrel in the tree one day who got pretty close but didn't notice her. But no confrontation. I guess she had dependable feeding spots. When she came in, it was for the night. I was honored to see her in a terrible storm, when the branch was moving in a fierce blowing rain. She just hung on.

I only saw her arrive once. I was working on my car, around 5 pm, and I could feel her flying in over my, and heard rustling and crashing and branches breaking above my head. She came in fast. I looked up to see her on an unfamiliar branch. Sure enough, within a minute she started hopping around to get to her safe, level spot.

No nesting, never a partner.

This year the tree was brought down in the tornado on 9/16/10. But she had stopped visiting a few years ago, so she'll never know. I miss her.

I've been looking for kestrels recently. Haven't seen any yet. We do get quite a few parrots, though. They're fun.

Best wishes,

Allen

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Allen Wolovsky
From: John M. Clarke  
Subject: Kestrels - Brooklyn  
Date: January 14 (Friday)  

Thank you both, and Happy New Year!

I'll let you know should my Brooklyn kestrel pair returns this year (just off the southwest corner of the Prospect Park Parade Grounds)... I have a young male Cooper's Hawk visiting my backyard this season (feasting on sparrows) in addition to the larger female that's been coming back for 3 years now (eating pigeons and doves)...

Jack C

Above: adult female (?) Cooper’s Hawk eating a bird in Brooklyn (10th street in Park Slope)  
Photographed by Phyllis Wrynn
From: Barbara Grant  
To: rdcny@earthlink.net  
Subject: Red Tailed Hawk (Queens)  
Date: 18 January 2011

My neighbor Michael DiPrima sent you a photo captioned: “not a NYC kestrel (photographer unknown 2010) – but a young NYC Red-tailed Hawk”

I am the photographer and my name is Barbara Grant.... The photo was taken in Jackson Heights (Queens). I have a series of 6 photos from that day and that was the last photo as the hawk turned toward me then flew off. The hawk first landed on my air conditioner on 12/26/10 and has made repeated landings (at least 8) since then.

From: Barbara Grant  
To: rdcny@earthlink.net  
Subject: Red-tail Hawk photo from Queens  
Date: 20 January 2011

Hi Bob,

After the hawk made too many visits I had my window air conditioner removed for the season. It was becoming too comfortable and was upsetting my two very small dogs. I enjoyed the visits but did not want a permanent boarder.

Thanks for your interest in the photo.

Barbara Grant
Above: also not an American Kestrel but a (juvenile?) Red-tailed Hawk on the Upper East Side of Manhattan by Karen (13 January 2011)

From: Michael DiPrima
To: rdcny@earthlink.net
Subject: Queens Kestrels
Date: 16 January 2011 (Sunday)

Just saw the female kestrel on the school roof
she spied the red tail hawk we have and started dive bombing it
great show
came within 50ft of me

From: Chad Seewagen PhD
Subject: Columbia University area Kestrel
Date: 20 January 2011 (Thursday)

FYI there's a kestrel perched on top of the water tower on the roof of the building next to mine (108th between Broadway and Amsterdam) calling right now. Same spot as the last time I reported an observation to you.
Hi Bob,

It's your old birding friend, Richard Schwartz, from East 75th Street.

I just saw a Kestrel on a rooftop on 30th St & 8th Ave. about 100 feet from my window. I saw the bird which didn't look like anything else. Its tail was bobbing. Ran and got my binoculars and saw that it was a Kestrel! He then dove straight down about 10 stories to a courtyard below. I'll let you know if I see him (her) again.

This was on West 30th St between 7th & 8th Aves. right across from my living room window. Very exciting. Hope all's well and we'll be in touch.

Richard

Hi Bob,

As for Kestrels, we are always on the lookout (my colleague and I teach a bird program to elementary students all over the city, so we’re always on the lookout for birds!) And just this past week we had a great sighting down here by our office, on Carmine, close to Varick street. Heard it several times, and caught a great view of it overhead. Very nice!

Take care and thanks again for your response.

Haley

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Above: female American Kestrel in the rain peering out from her nest on West 105th street (rdc)
Hello,

I saw a beautiful bird swoop by my window and fly up. After leaning half way out my 9th story window (something I will probably never do again) I spotted it one floor up. This was taken about 30 minutes ago on 62nd and West End Avenue (Manhattan). My friend identified it on facebook and I googled American Kestrel Manhattan and saw a link to your webpage asking for people to report sightings to you. I feel very lucky to have seen it. I am attaching a pic I took with my wife's camera. I can send you a higher resolution version if you want it. How common are these in Manhattan? I have seen some larger hawks flying around before, but never one of these. I usually survey the sky when I see all of the pigeons dive bombing into the projects across the street because I now know they do this when birds of prey are about.

Sincerely,

Anil Melwani

Above: Adult male American Kestrel – photo by Anil Melwani on the Upper West Side of Manhattan, 23 January 2011
Hi Bob, and it's great to hear from you. I am a regular birder in Inwood Hill Park and the webmaster of the inwoodbirdwatchers listserv.

We have been seeing a kestrel fairly regularly in our neighborhood. In December, a male was hunting in soccer field near the inlet, and in January, we saw a kestrel (indeterminate sex) take a small bird and land on an apartment building on Indian Road to eat it. Over the past few months, I've also seen one landing and eating on a TV antenna on Seaman Road, across from my apartment, and have heard it hunting overhead (I'm on the top floor). We do not know if they are nesting in the neighborhood, but we are hopeful.

I'd be happy to try to track these more regularly. Also, feel free to subscribe to the inwoodbirdwatchers. To subscribe, send an e-mail to inwoodbirdwatchers-subscribe@yahoogroups.com and then you will have access to our archives here http://pets.groups.yahoo.com/group/inwoodbirdwatchers/

Jessica

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Do send any reports of American Kestrels to us, and if you sneak in a photo of an urban Red-tail or Cooper's Hawk or even a Great Horned Owl – we won’t complain. Thanks!

Deborah Allen and Robert DeCandido PhD rdcny@earthlink.net