Hello All,

Herein are many wonderful reports from kestrels around town, and even from western Pennsylvania (Hollidaysburg). Janet Bachant spent a very rainy Friday (5 June) watching an adult male and female kestrel returning to her apartment building near West 86th street to hunt House Finches (pages 3–4). Meanwhile Jane Lynn is hypothesizing that her kestrels may be fledging a few days earlier this year than last and provides a link to some fine photos (page 5). ..Here in NYC we are entering the peak time for kestrels leaving the nest - be on the lookout for UFOs (unidentified falcon objects) in your neighborhood - and do email if you want to know what to do if you find a kestrel on the ground.

This week Bobby and Cathy Horvath provided superb information to track down (perhaps) the most urban of urban kestrel nests in NYC: on East 57th Street in Manhattan. See the panoramic photo on page 4.

Just fledged male American Kestrel from the east 6th St. nest, June 2008 - note down on head and wing.

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Kestrel Reports from the Field:

From: Janet Bachant  
To: Robert DeCandido PhD <rdcny@earthlink.net>  
Subject: Kestrels, West Side  
Date: Jun 4, 2009

Hi Bob,

I've been out Sunday and Thursday afternoons for about an hour each time and no luck at all. No sighting even of one watching the nest. Does that mean that they've gone? I plan to go out again tomorrow morning to see if I can catch any morning action. Will let you know. Janet

From: Bob  
To: Janet Bachant  
Subject: Kestrels, West Side  
Date: Jun 4, 2009

Hi Janet,

They are likely still in that nest...what is happening now is that the female no longer needs to keep close watch on the young ones (they won't be attacked and killed by a starling invading the nest). So she is likely out hunting too...You'll just have to sit there for an hour or two watching the nest to determine what is going on. Note that about a day or two before the young fledge, they like to look out the nest opening - once you see them there - they are just about ready to go...Look also for stuff being blown out of the nest as the young ones flap their wings inside the nest. That is how you can judge the age of the young - wing flapping = fledging pretty soon!

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From: Bill Benish  
Subject: Re: NYC Kestrel Newsletter #7  
Date: Jun 4, 2009

Hi Bob,

Thank you for sending NYC Kestrel Newsletter #7. I'm still keeping an eye out for kestrels around W105th Street. On May 24th, I observed a kestrel perched on an antenna on or behind the left side of the building on W105th Street where they previously nested. It was there when I walked by in the morning, and I saw it there again at 4:30 pm.

I have not located a nest nearby, but I'll continue looking!

Bill Benish

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From: Lisa Darms  
Subject: Re: NYC Kestrel Newsletter #7  
Date: Jun 4, 2009

Just wanted to let you know that "our" Fort Greene (Brooklyn) Kestrels seemed to have moved on this year. They arrived a couple months ago and were here for a few weeks, but I haven't seen them in a month or so - my
theory is that the building they had always nested in is one that had been vacant, and was just remodeled and recently rented out. The reason I'm convinced they are gone rather than just elusive is that I regularly see starlings and other birds on their perch.

Lisa

Yes - we see this in NYC kestrels: some specific nest sites are occupied for 10 years or so...while others only for 1-2 years. On the other hand, within an area (territory), a given pair may have several nest sites they use through the years. How long a particular member of a NYC pair lives is also unknown (3-5 years?)...So we are certainly seeing mate replacement - but prime territories remain occupied every year, with the actual nest site changing every couple of years or so (usually but there are exceptions)...One of the ways we know that mates have changed is that one (or both) of the adults begins using a different favorite perch (and/or the nest site changes, etc.). Why different nests are used within the same territory is unknown - perhaps it is weather related for a particular year (this has been a cooler and wetter spring than average); it may have something to do with build-up of material in the nest - such as feathers from sparrows and other prey species that may harbor parasites (mites)...Lots of theories but we don't know right now. It would be great to get a temperature/humidity measuring device into a nest cavity to see what the range of temps is inside one of these cornices through the spring. We have noticed (as photographers) that the metal "brackets" that support the metal cornice are shielded from the direct sunlight by the cornice itself - perhaps this keeps the cavity (bracket) cool enough for the young birds and mom - but we don't know for sure just yet...Lisa, Thank You for the Brooklyn reports this year and last - do keep searching your neighborhood and especially Fort Greene - kestrels seem to hunt the smaller parks much more often than larger ones (eg., Prospect (Brooklyn), Van Cortlandt (Bronx) and Central Park (Manhattan)...In only one park in NYC (Pelham Bay Park in the Bronx) do we have kestrels nesting - but not every year. In Pelham Bay Park they (one pair only) use the nest boxes I placed there in 1998. rdc

From: Rob Cicchetti
Subject: Re: NYC Kestrel Newsletter #7
Date: Jun 4, 2009 8:15 PM

Hi Bob.

In the few minutes of light when I have been home, I have seen the adult kestrels on 68th/Broadway deliver several fresh kills on a few mornings this week and also on the weekend-very good indicator of growing young I would say. I will be able to spend a bit of time to watch a bit more on the coming weekend as I will be in the city and revert back with any detail.

Did you locate your kestrel nest around Union Sq? (NOT YET!)

From: Janet Bachant
Subject: Finches and Kestrels - upper West Side
Date: June 5, 2009

Hi Bob,

I was just getting ready to go out to check the kestrels [Amsterdam Avenue], thinking to myself that I haven't seen them at my window lately when I heard a thud and saw the whole thing. Poor baby....Had my camera all set up too but as soon as I moved over to it, he was gone (think it was the male). 8:20 AM was the kill. This was a very professional hit on a female finch by a male kestrel that knew exactly what he was doing -- the poor baby remark was for the finch! The kestrel is just fine! Sorry for any misunderstanding (we've been watching
the finches mating, singing and bringing their young to the window so ...you feel bad for them.) But of course I want "my" kestrels to feed their young too....J

[At 10:20 AM] Another pass, this time by a drenched female kestrel, but the finches flew into the kitchen so no luck for the kestrel. J.

[1:41 PM] = I don't know if this is the usual and I'm not here to see it but there were another 3 strikes by the falcons in the last 10 minutes. It looked like the male this time, but I don't think any of them were successful. I can't believe I was thinking that they weren't around much. I guess it is me that hasn't been around much! Janet

[2:30 PM] Another strike at 2:30 PM. Scared a little male finch into the kitchen but then the finch was so panicked he flew into the window and knocked himself out. The kestrel flew away but returned a few seconds later but couldn't get the finch cause he was inside the enclosure, lying on his back. The finch recovered after about 10 minutes and eventually flew away. Janet

[4:06 PM] Another two passes and one "visit" to the window gate that scared a female finch inside ( I was sitting at the kitchen table no more than 3 feet away. We gave each other the once over -- then she left.) One female finch is hanging out on top of the enclosure --don't know if she's long for this world. I am getting ready to go to the country now. Janet

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American Kestrels
57th St. East Site
4 June 2009
© Robert DeCandido PhD

Habitat of East 57th street kestrels in Manhattan - you cannot get more urban than this! Note flagpole extending out from building - a favorite perch of this pair. See last page for image of the two adults sitting on that perch (see bottom photo page 6).

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From: Alexander Kalogerakis  
Subject: 80th Street Kestrels  
Date: June 5, 2009

Hi Bob,

Looked up while walking on 80th between West End and Broadway yesterday, and saw a rather wobbly, fast-beating but slow moving kestrel crossing the airspace- a fledgling to my eyes, and nice to see.

Alexi

[Thanks Alexi! Likely the 80th street and Broadway kestrels...one was found on the ground and is in re-hab. Others, such as the one you saw, seem to be doing well. rdc]

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From: Jane Lynn  
Subject: Kestrels in PA  
Date: June 6, 2009

Hi Bob,

I just wanted you to know that I saw the first two baby Kestrels come out and sit on the outside of the building where I could get some pictures. I posted it on my blog last night.


Interesting enough I was seeing the Male and Female copulating and displaying nesting behavior earlier this year than last. (The beginning of April versus last year towards the end of the month.) I thought that would indicate the babies would be out sooner and according to last year's blog entry the first baby fledged on June 25th. so we will see. This year I noticed the parents have been quiet compared to last when I was hearing a lot of crying from the female during feeding time and calling from the male when he brought the food. Just in the past week have I heard them being vocal. I don't know what that means, but it is different behavior from last year. You may know what that means, but it is all a mystery to me.

I know one thing, they are a joy to watch and document and the babies are just too cute. I'll keep you posted.

Thank you for the newsletters!

Jane Lynn  
Hollidaysburg, PA

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You Folks have said the kestrel story so well - Thank You!

robert de candido phd
Jim O'Brien's nest site - young fledged here in late May; small parks near the nest are "population pumps" for prey species such as House Sparrows and European Starlings. The female can catch the latter, even in flight. Both adults like to raid the nests of these two prey species - and others as well (Pigeons, eg).

Remember that Flagpole from the photos of the East 57th street kestrels? Here is the falcon pair together about 40 feet from the nest. Female has prey (the remaining lower half of a small bird) in her beak - she is trying to locate a just fledged youngster to deliver food...