3 July 2009

American Kestrel Nest Survey NYC - Issue #14 (2009)

Kestrels are fledging - Part IIIIIIIII-B!

We continue to be surprised at new kestrel territories being discovered on Manhattan Island. First (p. 8), Louise Neri reports several young kestrels, and gets us a step closer to finding the actual nest near New York University (NYU!). Ms. Tricia Frost reports important details about a family of kestrels in the area of 38th street and Third Avenue. And we'd like to add our dos pesos too: despite our best attempts to overlook activity at nests used in prior years, we were alerted to at least one young kestrel fledging from the nest at 86th street and Central Park West (28 June) - thanks to Howard and Anita Stillman for the "heads-up." This nest site has been occupied for at least 10 years at least...and originally pointed out to us by Miriam Raikowski. And on 25 June, in the early evening, some of us (including Sharon Berlan and Rob Strauss) discovered that the 57th street and Third Avenue kestrels seem to be nesting again - the female is entering and remaining in a nest cavity in that very urban location.

Closer to home, Beth Goffe reports that the City College area kestrels fledged in the last several days (see photo of nest habitat below and her descriptions in the "Reports from the Field" section beginning on page 3). Deborah Allen sends an amazing photo (p. 11) of a female kestrel trying to snatch a sparrow meal from a traffic light support on West 85th street....And Carol Wood provides intriguing confirmation that Kestrel adults are copulating again (p. 8) on Broadway, and perhaps we should be on the lookout for second broods at several locations in NYC.

Speaking of home, Laura Meyers allowed us access to hers near Loisaida ("Lower East Sida") Avenue to photograph the kestrel habitat in the area of the East 9th street and Avenue C nest. We'd like to thank her, and everyone else - without your help there would be no kestrel newsletter and no story to tell. Thank You all for allowing Debs and me into your world - we feel truly lucky to receive your words, ideas and photos.

Robert DeCandido PhD - rdcny@earthlink.net or 718-828-8262

Above: City College area American Kestrel nest site - panoramic stitch. The nest is monitored by Beth Goffe. June 2009
Above: Male American Kestrel delivering food to the 75th Street nest, Upper East Side, in late June 2009.

Below: Can you find a kestrel nest in this photo? There are likely several... Hint, this is a view of the lower east side, looking south from 10th street. Avenue C runs North to South at the right. Photo thanks to Laura Meyers who granted us permission to photograph from her home. The kestrels (primarily the female) hunt in the small Community Garden with the willow tree at center, and to points unknown to the east (left) - in the urban environment. Anita Randolfi and a number of us are waiting for young to appear at the front of the nest entrance here...see next page for closer view of the area.
Above: The kestrel nest building on Avenue C and 9th street - thanks Laura! For "the big picture", see bottom photo, previous page.

Kestrel Reports from the Field:

From: Beth Goffe  
Subject: City College Kestrels!  
Date: June 25, 2009 (Thursday afternoon)

Hi Bob,

I'm at the nest and one of the birds (nestlings) has its head out and bobbing up and down, looking around. Think it's ready to fly?

So cute! I need to return with my tripod.

Beth

Sent from my iPhone

From: Carl Howard  
Subject: West Village Kestrels  
Date: June 25, 2009 (Thursday)

Possible kestrel nest on Greenwich Avenue, by Jane Street. Young already fledged. Carl
From: Adrian Benepe  
Subject: Re: NYC American Kestrel Newsletter #13  
Date: June 25, 2009 (Thursday)

Bob:

Very interesting stuff and great photos. I love the idea of kestrels in "Alphabet City". I also liked the photo of the chicks "getting their hackles up" in the nest box. You do great work--thanks so much.

Adrian

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From: Laura Meyers  
Subject: 9th Street Kestrels  
Date: June 25, 2009 (Thursday)

Hi Bob,

I read your newsletter last night and realized that the East 9th Street Kestrel Nest is right across from my bedroom window [Small World...]. Actually a block away from my 12th story bedroom window. I am on East 10th Street facing south and pretty much in line with the nest on 9th Street. I got some shots on a dark hazy morning of the Kestrel perched on the antennae and of the nest.

When I woke up at 6:30 the Kestrel was perched on the antennae and stayed there for about 45 minutes took off I caught of glimpse of "her" going into the nest at about 7:15am. I am shooting with my long lens as you call it 100-400 with a 1.4 extension.

BTW - I am the person that you see at the Bronx Botanical Gardens and travel with Alan and you call us the people with the long lens other than Deb.

Regards,

Laura

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From: Stella Moon (Part A)  
Subject: Kestrels on Avenue C  
Date: June 27, 2009 (Saturday)

Hello,

In case you are interested, I live on the corner of ave c and 3rd st for 15 years now. I have plants and a bird feeder on my fire escape, don't tell! [Our lips are sealed.] Every year for the past 6 years or so the kestrels come around December to start to feed on the finches and sparrows. This year they were around for months. Also, we see red tail hawks all the time, there is something about the air current here or something. We have seen a red tail kill even, about three months ago and it wasn't quick and dirty for the poor pigeon. We even see red tails just perching on fire escapes and roof tops in the neighborhood including ours. We have also seen what we think is a coopers hawk on our fire escape sitting one day for about two hours 6 months ago. Our bird feeder has been attracting amazing things too. Sparrows, finches, cardinals, blue jays, doves, starlings, red wing blackbirds, even a ring-necked turtle dove one year and a baby parakeet last year we tried to catch and save but were unable. There is always something to see from our perch and we are just thrilled to be a part of it. We have some good photos but not too many. I'll try to attach some.
Hello, my name is Stella Moon and I've lived on the corner of Ave C and 3rd st in Manhattan for 13 years. For the past 3 or 4 years every Christmas and around New Years kestrels would come and eat the birds at my bird feeder. The first year I couldn't believe it, I even have photos. They would strike and all the birds would go crazy and I would hear a loud bang on the window [Janet Bachant, we hope you are reading this.]. I've actually seen them eat a finch before my eyes. They never stayed around past this time of year though. They returned though year after year and this year was especially neat. A male and a female would perch on top of a light on a building across the street while hunting. I have very good pictures of them both. I hoped and prayed they would build a nest since they stayed there off and on until march this year, well beyond their normal pattern. But no nest and no more sign of them. They are so beautiful and I feel so lucky to be witnessing these magnificent creatures while it seems no one else notices. I live on the top of the 6th floor building and we also see a lot of hawks and cardinals and jays etc. I have a small bird feeder and lots of plants so it's inviting for the birds big and small. I hope this helps in your quest and let me know if you would like photos or more info,

Sincerely,

stella moon

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Above: Red-tailed Hawk (Sub-adult - note red eye) on Avenue C terrace. Photographed by Stella Moon in 2009.
From: Beth Goffe  
Subject: City College Kestrels  
Date: June 26, 2009 (Friday afternoon before the thunderstorms)

Hi Bob,

12:55pm: I'm here again. I saw 2 nestlings and a bird on the cell phone thing on the roof. I can't tell if it's an adult or newly-fledged. And now it's gone...

1:55pm: Unfortunately, I had to return to work but I'll be back tomorrow and will be able to spend a lot more time (assuming they're still around!).

The roof bird returned and I'm thinking it's a male fledgling. It hopped from one structure to another and seemed fairly unbalanced (but had beautiful plumage). Prior to today, I have not seen a bird perch on the roof - the parents were always on the move. That would make 3 young seen today. How could you tell the bird in my picture is a female without seeing the wings? (It looks like the upper breast is heavily streaked...a male would have spots. See Beth's photo below of a young City College kestrel about to fledge below.)

I am having fun with "my" kestrels!

Beth

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Above: so, is Beth's young kestrel a male or a female?
Hi Bob,

I stopped by the nest today and no kestrels in evidence at all. I hope they all survived their first few days of flight (one of them scared me on Saturday). I have TONS of pictures and am still going through them. I'll forward when I can.

Is it possible this pair might nest again? [Possible but almost all re-nesters are those pairs that fledged young by 20-25 June - but we have to stress that for NYC - we just do not know...stay tuned!]

Thanks,

Beth

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Hi Bob,

Ah, I can only wish for another brood... I'll keep checking, though.

So, attached is one of thousands of pictures I took. This is a female, correct? I'm not sure any of the fledglings were male, actually, but I haven't been through all of the pictures yet. I'll send more when they're ready. This one hung out on the same fire escape for the 3 hours I was there and then, just when I was ready to leave, I looked at my camera for a second, looked up and it was gone! I couldn't relocate it but I wished it well. A number of kids enjoyed the view through my camera.

A couple of neat things I saw on Saturday: one of the fledglings (not the one in this picture) flew at the nest hole building, I guess trying to get back to the hole. It ended up stuck to the side of the building like a bat. I'll send you a picture of that when it's ready. The male parent was in evidence through the day and, at one point, grabbed prey out of the nest hole and gave it to the bird on the fire escape. The baby ate a bit of it but dropped it to the ground when it changed position. I checked later and it was a house sparrow.

More later...

Enjoy!

Beth

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Kestrels seem to be re-nesting at 57th street and Third Avenue where a couple of young were recovered this spring from a nest that was in a building cornice on Third Ave that was undergoing renovation.
Hi Bob,

I went up to the roof terrace this evening around 7:30 [Broadway at 69th street]. There was a female kestrel on a ledge near the top of Rob's building. I next located a male on the water tower on the building on the SE corner of 70th & Broadway. I thought at first that it was a young male because the chest didn't appear to be very buffy, but he surprised me a few minutes later (unless he's really precocious). I looked away and when I looked back he had moved down around the side of the water tower, and was up to something. I moved to get a better view and saw that he was copulating with a female. The female I saw initially was still on Rob's building. After a while, that female took off and flew north out of sight. I then saw a fourth kestrel (gender undetermined) fly in and land on a construction cable on the building on the NE corner of 70th & Broadway. A few minutes later that bird took off and caught a small flying bird or insect. It took the prey back to that building and landed where I could only see the kestrel's tail. I suspect the prey was an insect, because I didn't see any feathers scattering because of plucking. Meanwhile, the pair I had seen copulating remained on their water tower.

Carol

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From: Louise Neri
Sent: June 29, 2009 (Monday morning)
Subject: NYU area - Kestrels in New York

Hi Deborah--

I live on University Place on the top (22nd floor) of a pre-war building. Lately I have noticed a din in the early mornings and now I realize that there are several kestrels taking up residence here! When I have my doors open, they are quite bold, coming and sitting on the railing and looking straight in at me or arguing with each other on the balcony. A couple of them (young ones) have been fighting and leaving their fluff around.

The birds tend to be there from 6am to about 8.30am. I have four at the same time. Two obviously younger as they don't have completely developed tail feathers (they are the two that squabble a lot and peck at each other).

Let me know if you are interested....[Yes - see below for more info about NYU kestrels.]

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Subject: Extralimital - Kestrels in NYC (NYU area)
From: Kathy
Date: Monday, 29 June 2009

I had an interesting experience as I looked out a 12th story window off Broadway near 4th St in Manhattan. Initially I was looking out the window observing the rooftops and water towers when my son said "there's a bird on the top of that water tower." Without binoculars I could see the "sideburns" of a beautiful male Kestrel. After I took a couple of pictures with my small digital camera the bird took off. It flew to another nearby water tower and landed just as another Kestrel took off. What a treat a pair of Kestrels in the middle of Manhattan! I am sure they find plenty to eat.

30 June - I was visiting my son on Friday June 26th and we were up on the 12th floor of 721 Broadway looking west. A pair of Kestrels were perched on top of two water towers. They were probably in the vicinity of Mercer
St between Washington Pl and Waverly Pl. I do not know if there was a nest in the vicinity. Pretty exciting for me who is used to seeing them in the fields of PA.

I had posted my sighting on PA Birds and someone sent me your newsletter.

Kathy Stagl
Emmaus, PA

Subject: Re: Extralimital- Kestrels in NYC
From: Dallas DiLeo
Date: Monday, 29 June 2009

There is a vast network of citizen scientists watching and documenting kestrels all over NYC. The NYC Kestrel Newsletter is sent out by email with lots of pix. If you'd like the most recent forwarded to you for a look-see, email me off-list.

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

Dallas DiLeo
Pittsburgh

Above: "Cavity Nesters of Pennsylvania and NYC" = Kestrels; Photo by Paul Karner
Hello Robert,

Weekly Report on the Kestrels in my study area.

The past week was very exciting as I went over 200 young Kestrels banded for 2009 in my study box area. As I checked the boxes I found K's ready to fledge and some that were just starting to hatch. Also I found a few pairs just going down on eggs. I do think these are the K's that had failed eggs due to the bad weather we were having in June and recycled. I had three different boxes last year that recycled and only banded 4 young out of these boxes total. I still have over 12 boxes that I know have young to band.

Next week I'll have some outstanding information on how many adults I have banded for 2009 and how many returning banded adults I found. Since I have Kestrels that nest in my boxes from Hawk Mt. (42 miles as the bird flies), there is a good chance that one of my banded Kestrels could be nesting in your city. Also I could be getting your young Kestrels nesting in my boxes since none of your Kestrels get banded. The amount of un-banded adults that are nesting in my study area every year COULD be from your "city" pairs!

Till my next report,

Keep up the great work all of you guys are doing in NYC!!!!!

Paul

From: Paul H Karner <paulban@epix.net>
Subject: Pennsylvania Weekly Kestrel update....
Date: June 29, 2009 (Early Monday morning)

From: Anita Randolfi
Subject: Re: E 9th St. kestrels
Date: June 29, 2009 (Monday evening)

dear Bob,

Today at 7:45pm was the first time I've seen the female since we saw her last week. Marta, one of the gardeners, said that both were around the usual spots on Sunday, but I did not see them. There is still no sign of activity or new life at the nest, but, there is no sign of decay either. I watched the female for about ten minutes and then she flew off eastward toward the river.

If you and/or Debbie plan to be in the neighborhood, let me know & I'll try to meet you.

anita randolfi

From: Anita Randolfi
Subject: Re: E. 9th St. kestrels
Date: July 1, 2009 (Wednesday Night)

dear Bob,

Watched from 4:40 to about 6:30 pm ... fortunately the Garden was open and I could sit and watch. After about forty minutes the female came to the antenna and stayed there for about a half hour. Then she flew to the nest and stayed inside for another half hour. Every once in a while she would peek out of the nest hole and have a
look around. It was very sweet to see. Then she left the nest for the antenna, but only stayed there a few minutes before flying toward the East River. No sign of the male, or of young that I could see.

anita randolfi

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Above: female American Kestrel trying to snatch a European House Sparrow on the southwest corner of 85th Street and Central Park West at about 1pm on a Sunday afternoon (28 June 2009) - see report below from Brooklyn, May 2000.

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DATE: Sunday, 7 May 2000
SUBJECT: American Kestrel Tale
REPORTED BY: "susan m choi"

hi all.

you know those horizontal pieces of pipe at the top of the traffic light poles, the ones sparrows like to nest in and are popping in and out of all the time? over the weekend we saw a male kestrel clinging to the end of one such, at the corner of union and 8th ave in park slope, and literally trying to yank forth a meal for himself. in the end he left empty-clawed, but it was a dramatic spectacle, and smack in the middle of busy weekend pedestrian and wheeled traffic. - susan choi
From: Tricia Frost  
Sent: June 30, 2009 (Tuesday night)  
Subject: kestrel sighting - 38th St and 3rd Avenue

Dear Ms Allen,

I don't know if you are still interested in kestrel sightings in Manhattan. I have just moved into a 26th floor apartment on 38th and 3rd. I am watching 4 birds that frequent the rooftop across the street. They seem to be kestrels as best as I can identify. I do not have binoculars to see how many are male/female. They light on a cage that covers a chimney. One sits often on or near the cage, while the other 3 come back and forth.

The building they frequent is on the northwest corner of Third and 38th.

Tricia Frost

Date: July 1, 2009 (Wednesday)

Hi Tricia,

Thanks for the report. From your description it sounds like you have two adults and two fledglings, or possibly one adult and three fledglings. The birds may have been on the roof of the building they nested in. They typically nest in a hole in the cornice of a 19th century building. Most of these buildings are 4 to 6 stories tall. This is very exciting since we haven't located a nest in your neighborhood yet. If the birds didn't nest in the building where you saw them, the nest is still probably within a block or two. Either Bob (cc'd above) or I will try to check the area for possible nest sites in the next two days (Thursday/Friday). It will probably be me, since Bob is re-building his computer right now (fried motherboard).

Meanwhile, I've attached the last two issues of our Kestrel Newsletter (pdfs). Please let me know if you'd like to see more.

We get most of our reports from people who see something while looking out the window, either at home or at the office. If you see the birds enter a hole in a cornice, please make a note of the location. That may be the nest.

Again, thanks, and I'll let you know if I/we discover anything in the next couple of days.

Best wishes,

Deborah Allen

"The time to save a species is while it is still common."

Rosalie Edge, Founder of the Hawk Mountain Sanctuary
Don't you wonder sometimes
'Bout sound and vision?

Blue, blue, electric blue
That's the color of my room
Where I will live
Blue, blue

Pale blinds drawn all day
Nothing to do, nothing to say
Blue, blue

I will sit right down, waiting for the gift of sound and vision
And I will sing, waiting for the gift of sound and vision
Drifting into my solitude, over my head

Don't you wonder sometimes
'Bout sound and vision?

David Bowie, © 1977 - http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=wdxIhNOgwBE