21 June 2009

American Kestrel Nest Survey NYC - Issue #12 (2009)
Kestrels are fledging - Part IIIII! - "into the blue painted blue"

Herein we provide a continuing round-up about what is happening with kestrel nests in New York City - with some analysis of what kestrels select for when choosing a nest site - if given a choice.

In Manhattan, at the East 119th Street nest, at least two, or perhaps three, young fledged in the last week (see photos of this nest site from 2007 below and on next page). Nearby at 116th street at Frank Rutella's site, we could see at least three young in the cornice nest above the MetroNorth train tracks on 18 June. They should fledge in the next 2-5 days. This year in NYC, we believe that the peak of the kestrel fledging season is occurring about a week later than last year, and fewer young per nest have been produced on average as well.

As Brian Haimes reported last week from Sunnyside, Queens - there are at least three young in the nest, and these will fledge between 22 June and 26 June. We had a look at the cornices on the buildings on both sides of the street on 20 June, and we noted several important variables that kestrels had to choose between on the wooden cornices there. First, these kestrels selected a smaller opening vs. larger one. Next, they chose a higher cornice rather than one a few feet away which was about five feet lower in height. Finally, the kestrels chose an east facing cornice - and not one across the street that faced west toward Manhattan. Here in NYC we have found kestrels nesting in cornices that face in all directions. However, we think that west facing cornices must be too warm in most years (unless shaded), since those nests (cornices) receive the hotter afternoon sun. On the other hand, this year we have had much rain from an easterly (northeast and southeast) direction - so perhaps east facing nests have a downside in certain years too. Indeed last year we had several kestrel nests that produced five young - this year no kestrel nest has produced five (and only one that we know of produced four).

And we are taking bets as to just when Anita Randolfi will finally see young leave the 9th Street nest in the East Village. Don't give up hope just yet! Anita is our favorite recorder player - when she plays, we listen: Volare'
Kestrel Reports from the Field:

From: Maggie Medina
Subject: GRAND TRIO UPDATE (Amsterdam Avenue kestrels)
Date: June 17, 2009 (Wednesday)

Hi Bob,

I went to see my favorite Kestrels to see three of my babies. They were feeding on what appeared to be a mouse (thought I saw a tail on the prey item). One of them seems to be the last fledgling since I kind of noticed more white fluff on the thigh area and it seemed smaller. I observed the feeding dominance between two of them, but the smaller one stayed away on its own. I think they know about human presence because they flew away as soon as they noticed me. My binocs are great but my cam is not so good - I almost had great pics for you today. I think they were all chicks since they were pretty stationary for a while where they landed and the two huddled puffily after feeding. I'll keep my binocular eye on the small one later. Have a great day!

Maggie

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From: Pat Dubren  
Subject: Bleeker and West 3rd Kestrels (Manhattan)  
Date: June 18, 2009 (Thursday)

Hi Bob,

FYI--on 6/16 (Tuesday) while I was watching/photographing the Riverside Park Red-tailed Hawks at their nest, a jogger who paused briefly to talk while running in place in front of me said--he'd recently seen a Kestrel eating a sparrow on his rooftop: Where? -- located at Bleeker and W. 3rd St. Photos? Yes, and so I asked him was he going to post them and he said he would, most likely on flickr but just google "MacDougal Kestrel" and then before I could inquire further he was off and gone like the wind. Is this in any way useful info? [Yes! - anyone know of a kestrel nest in the lower West Village? See page 6.]

Regards,

Pat

From: Ben Cacace  
Subject: 75th St. Kestrels - Change in Behavior  
Date: June 18, 2009 (Thursday)

Bob,

The female has been behaving differently over the past three days. Two days ago she and the male were perched together on the antenna near me for well over an hour. On two separate occasions she cached some food on a nearby fire escape and some spot that was out of sight. After caching she returned back to the antenna as if waiting for something to happen. One of the cached items was brought to the nest cavity and then shortly after was brought back and placed on the fire escape.

This morning there was a continuous series of calls from the female. As you know it was raining in the a.m. and she was doing the calling from under the eave on the nest building. This went on almost constantly for the time I was at the apartment which was around 45 minutes.

I decided to take a walk along 75th St. to see if one of the young had fledged onto the sidewalk. No sign of this on either sidewalk or on the street itself.

I'll let you know if I see any young.

Ben http://novahunter.blogspot.com

From: Bobby Horvath  
Subject: Kestrels Upper East Side  
Date: June 19, 2009 (Friday)

Hi Bob,

2 more fledglings I picked up yesterday (Thursday 18 June - that really rainy day) from Park Avenue and 77th st., Manhattan. [Yes we have seen a male kestrel catching prey in a school yard on 75th between 1st and 2nd Avenues…and then heading east away from the other nearby kestrel nest on 75th street near 1st Avenue. And
note that these two young birds were picked up on a very rainy day - young kestrels get waterlogged and cannot fly well - ending up on the ground...Anyway, we think this kestrel is from a different nest than the one Ben Cacace monitors.]

Bobby and Cathy Horvath

From: John Wender
Subject: Red-tailed Hawk turned out to be a Kestrel (Chelsea)
Date: June 19, 2009 (Friday)

Hello Bob,

I'm the guy who found the kestrel chick in the middle of 7th Ave near 17th street. We took him to the Animal Refuge place on Columbus and 87th. They said he would be taken to the raptor rehab in NJ. We are grateful we found him in such great shape - smack in the middle of 7th Ave - he couldn't have been there long. Please send along links and info about NYC raptors - thanks for the offer. My 8yo son is really the serious birder, but he has gotten me hooked. [Editor's Note/Opinion - as much as we admire and respect The Raptor Trust in NJ, and its founder, Len Soucy and all of the fine people who work there, we do not recommend sending NYC kestrels to them for re-hab. The reason is very simple: once the kestrel(s) are ready for release, The Raptor Trust will not bring them back to release in NYC... Basically they feel that urban areas are not fit for living things - this despite the fact that kestrels in NYC are doing better than kestrels in NJ. We need to sustain and augment the population here, rather than exporting NYC kestrels to somewhere else - where they are in decline for unknown reason(s). Instead, we recommend all downed NYC kestrels go to Bobby and Cathy Horvath for re-hab. These kestrels are then released back into the city. Just the Editor's dos pesos here - and it is fine to disagree with these ideas.]

Regards,

John Wender
Sent via BlackBerry by AT&T

From: Bobby and Cathy Horvath (+ Christopher and Sadie)
Subject: Queen's nest info (Astoria)
Date: June 20, 2009 (12:50am Saturday morning)

Hi Bob,

Today we got another fledgling from Queens (19 June 2009). It came from a teacher who confirms the nest is in the molding along the roof line on the school where he teaches in Astoria. It's the Mt. Carmel School at 2540 Astoria Blvd. and Crescent Street intersection. It's three stories tall, he said. The baby came down and was out all day, didn't move and sat very close to a film crew that was working at the area filming a movie.

Anita Randolfi

From: Anita Randolfi
Subject: Re: E 9th St. kestrels
Date: June 20, 2009 (Saturday morning before the rains)

Visited the E 9th St. kestrel site at 6:45am, and stayed for an hour. After a half hour, saw the two kestrels together in the willow tree for a very few minutes. Then the female went to the antenna, and the male entered the nest. After another half hour the female was still on the antenna and the male was still in the nest. There was no sign of baby kestrels. --- anita randolfi
Bob,

Thanks for these details and thanks for mentioning that the young in the 75th St. nest are still small. Male and female are still seen daily and the food is being brought directly to the nest and nest exchanges are commonly seen with the female heading to the nest entrance relieving the male who perches on an antenna on the nest building that isn't visible from the street.

I've been watching the male going to roost in the evening and 3 out of 3 occasions he has headed west along 75th St. and appears to spend the evening west of the nest possibly along 1st Ave. or along one of the side streets.

All the best.

Ben [http://novahunter.blogspot.com](http://novahunter.blogspot.com)

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**Above:** Bob in his younger days before he met his future wife. His grade school teacher at the time (Paul Kerlinger) gave him an "F" for this poster presentation. He then began hitch-hiking around the USA, working in construction - and fishing in his free time. Photo by a young Chad Seewagen - just before he began working at WCS - and got his PhD!
Dear Marge and Margaret,

Thanks for the note about (and photo of) the fledgling Kestrel [See below.] Kestrels have been hanging around the meat market for some time -- perhaps because of the large rodent population? Back in the late '80's/ early '90's Joanne and I would occasionally see a Kestrel hunting on the Hiline outside our window (the Hiline then still existed between Gansevoort street and Westbeth). More recently (perhaps 7-8 years ago?) we saw an adult Kestrel on our fire escape (on Washington St. between Horatio and Jane), and would occasionally see either that same Kestrel or its mate flying above the meat market. It's nice to know they have apparently come back! And I hope they don't eat too many poisoned rodents...

Zack [written in June 2007]

Above: just fledged male on a rear fire escape on Jane/Horatio Streets, between Hudson St. and Eighth Avenue in the West Village. Photo taken on 10 June 2007 by Mark Segall.
From: Jelmer Steenhuis  
Subject: Brooklyn Kestrels  
Date: June 20, 2009 (Saturday afternoon)  

My address is driggs avenue in williamsburg, brooklyn. I see these guys through my back window quite frequently now. It may be a mother and possibly two little guys, but I can only confirm one. I would check on the roof for a nest, but there is an alarm that was recently installed. [No need to look on the roof Jelmer - check the cornices of the buildings on your block!]  

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From: KA Peltomaa  
To: Robert DeCandido, Deborah Allen, Pat Dubren  
Subject: Re: Kestrel's Eye  
Date: June 20, 2009 (Saturday afternoon)  

Hi Bob Deb and Pat,  

Yesterday [Friday the 19th] I went over to Amsterdam (the Avenue) at about 6pm. I was let in by a tenant, got up on the roof and stayed until 7:30. Not much action, the young ones have quickly honed their flying skills and were not in a group on the roof as on Tuesday. At ca 6.40 or so, the adult female made one fly-in from the tallest building NW corner Bway/85th street. She flew straight from perching at the top of the water tower to the nest and went inside. Why would she do that? [Good Question...]  

I waited for her to come out again but she stayed inside (at least until after I had left). As I walked home - one of the young males had landed and was perching on one the cell phone antennas on top of the nest building. I will miss bird walking and Kestrel watching with you guys.  

- Anders [who is off to Sweden with his wife for the summer - do visit Falsterbo for us. Meanwhile, are you kestrel fanatics aware of this film about a pair of Eurasian Kestrels (Falco tinnunculus) - filmed in Sweden?](http://www.reelmoviecritic.com/2000/id106.htm)  

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Above: Eurasian Kestrel in Beijing city, China. Photo by Aihua Zheng, a Post-Doctoral student here in the Bronx (Albert Einstein School of Medicine) working on the epidemiology of Dengue Fever.
From: Christina Reik  
Subject: Another pair Upper East Side Kestrels  
Date: June 20, 2009 (Saturday)  

Hi Bob,

Up until a few years ago kestrels frequented the rooftop of the building on the northwest corner of Madison at 74th Street. Once the building put up scaffolding and started a long repair project of the roof and walls, the kestrels disappeared. At the same time there were reports of a hawk attack on a kestrel in this area.

I am enjoying your kestrel newsletters!

Christina

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From: Eileen Jones  
To: Robert DeCandido PhD <rdcny@earthlink.net>  
Subject: It's raining little girl kestrels  
Date: June 20, 2009 (Late Saturday Night)  

Hello Robert,

Friday night, I got a female fledgling from the Manhattan CACC, it was found on Lexington and 78th St. You should have heard the local mockingbird kvetching and dive bombing it as it was turned over to me on my porch. An adult robin joined in on the alarm calls. The kestrel fledgling didn't know what all the fuss was about.

This morning (Sat) I got a female, little too young, and too fat to fledge female from 180 Ocean Parkway, around the corner from me, a block west of the local chimney swift colony. This nest or one in approximately a 2 block radius of it has been active for over 5 years. Unfortunately, the weather is not cooperating on trying to reunite the families. Paul's photo of the young in the nest box is just what I need for the flyer, do you have his contact info so I can ask him about using his shot in the wildlife flyer?

Eileen

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Above: Eurasian Kestrels about to fledge in Budapest, Hungary.  
Photo by Paul Morandini.
Above: "Bucket o’ Kestrels" - to go...for banding. Then Volare’ - Photo by Paul H. Karner on 15 June in eastern Pennsylvania. These youngsters are about 30 days old, and ready to fly. How many females vs. males do you see in this photo? Hint: see color below.

Here's looking at You from Anita, Howie, Debs, Pat, Anders, Ben, Jelmer, Randy, Lincoln, Christina, Cathy and Bobby and their kids - and I think I see David Bird's blue pen too.

Toxicology studies of NYC kestrels are underway.

Send any kestrel reports this way - we'll work them in somehow.

Volare! (Nel blu di pinto di blu) - and don't worry Anita!

Robert DeCandido PhD - 718-828-8262 or rdcny@earthlink.net
http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=oNgSeJzLJFc