

Have You Seen This Bird?



Female



Male

The American Kestrel (*Falco sparverius*)

The American Kestrel (Sparrow Hawk) is the smallest falcon living in New York City. Also called El Cernícalo Americano, it can be found in all five boroughs, from the upper west side through Harlem north to the Bronx, and from mid-town Manhattan south to Brooklyn. It nests in the cornices of apartment buildings on city streets. In Staten Island and Queens, it also nests in boxes placed near abandoned landfills. Kestrels feed on insects such as dragonflies and other small prey including mice and house sparrows.

Sadly, recent scientific research indicates that this falcon is on the decline in the northeastern United States. In New York City, we have no idea how the kestrel is doing. It might disappear as a city resident in the coming years. We plan to study as many urban kestrels as possible in the hope that we can help this falcon survive in New York City.

We Need Your Help!

If you see an American Kestrel, or better yet, if you know of a kestrel nest site, please contact us.

If you want more information, email or call one of us. Thanks!

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All Photos © Deborah Allen

How to spot an American Kestrel? In New York City, these small falcons like to perch on TV antennas atop apartment buildings and other high places such as water towers where they can look for food. They have favorite perching sites. If you think you see one atop a building, chances are it will perch in that place again and again.



Kestrel perched outside of nest opening, Manhattan

Typical nest sites are openings near the tops of buildings, often just below the roof (such as in a cornice). American Kestrels will nest on city streets and get along well with people if disturbance to their nest is minimal. See the nest in the building cornice below and right.



A kestrel nest site in the South Bronx

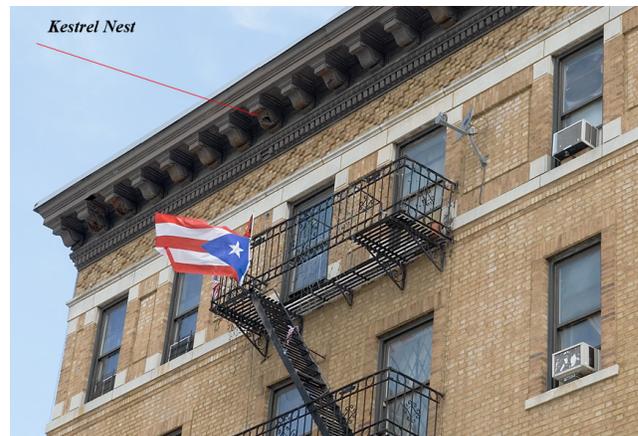
American Kestrels nesting in rural areas have been well studied. However, virtually nothing is known about kestrels that nest in cities in North America. In New York City few observers have described where these falcons nest, what they eat and when young leave the nest. We also do not know if New York City kestrels migrate south in autumn/winter, or if they remain here throughout the year. Our other basic questions are: How long do they live? How many young do they produce each year? Is the same nest site used year after year? What are the greatest threats to New York City kestrels? If you want to help save a long-time city resident from extinction, be on the lookout for this falcon.

To report kestrel sightings or receive more info, send an email or call one of us:

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Closer view of a nest opening in the South Bronx

We thank the many members of our Kestrel Assessment Team (KAT) including: Richard Aracil, Dr. Keith Bildstein, Dr. David Bird, Andrew Block, Rafael Guillermo Campos-Ramirez, Irv Cantor, Robert A. Cicchetti, Bill Clark, John and Judy Day, Fr. Tom Deely, Dr. Alice Deutsch, Dan Driscoll, Carl Howard, Sharon Kass, Coby Klein, David Künstler, Eve Levine, Richard Lieberman, Barbara Loucks, Chuck McAlexander, Christopher Nadareski, Robert Olley, Dr. Robert Paxton, Dr. Jean-Marc Thiollay, Pat Pollock, Christina Reik, Jorge Santiago, Chad Seewagen, Eric Slayton, Dr. John Smallwood, Junko Suzuki, Steve Walter, Perry Wargo and S.J. Wiley. Ms. Christina Reik helped greatly with this flyer.