

## 5 May 2008 – NYC Kestrel Newsletter #5

Hello All,

On Wednesday, 30 April, Richard Lieberman and I had the opportunity to investigate several Kestrel nests on the west side (Broadway area) of Manhattan. We found a male at home at 69th and Broadway where kestrels also nested in 2006 (but not 2007 - there was construction on a tall apartment building just next door - see attached photo made in 2007). Rob Cicchetti has been watching this pair for several years, and his notes about his kestrels have been invaluable to me and many others. See attached photos of (1) the nest at 69th and Broadway; (2) the adult male and female in 2006 (photo courtesy of Rob Cicchetti); (3) the male bringing food to that nest (photo courtesy of Rob Cicchetti); and (4) a photo of the young kestrels about to fledge at the 69th street nest in 2006 (photo courtesy of Rob Cicchetti).





#2. Female (l) and Male (r)



#3. Prey delivery to nest.



Photo #4 – two young kestrels about to fledge in 2006.



Photo #5 – young female kestrel (note down on blue forehead) just out of nest

(Photos 2-5 courtesy of Rob Cicchetti)

Next, Richard and I walked to 80th and Broadway, to see a nest opposite Zabar's (featured in the NYC Kestrel Newsletter #1). This nest was discovered by Kelleye Rosenheim in 2007, just before the young falcons left the nest. (We don't know for how many years this nest cavity has been used.) After about an hour of sitting around in the cold with not much sign of anything, Richard and I were very pleased to see a male kestrel fly in and deliver a small rodent with a very long tail (likely a young rat) to the nest at about 4:30pm. We could hear him calling (killy-killy-killy) as he flew to the nest. We then watch the female leave the nest and proceed to eat 75% of the prey on a favorite "plucking-eating" perch across the street (extensive whitewash below that perch). And we were very heartened to see her return to the nest with the remaining 25% of the prey - indicating to us that she has some very young mouths to feed. (In fact, Chuck McAlexander at his nest site in Chelsea-26th street, is predicting that his kestrels will fledge about 10 May to 15 May...he believes his kestrels will leave the nest a few days earlier than last year.) Finally, while we were at 80th street and Broadway, we were amazed to see a Black Vulture circling above us, and then even more amazed when two Peregrine Falcons (adult male and female) arrived from out of nowhere - not to attack the vulture but to soar in thermals near the larger bird. And when I went home, I found this article that Jorge Santiago once sent to me:

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New York Times  
2 July 1993  
Letter to the Editor

### **Perching Kestrels**

To the Editor:

Birds may be nesting on rooftops (Topics of the Times, June 22), but less so this year in Manhattan's West 80's, where **falcons** (sometimes likened to hawks) have taken up residence. Check out the television antennas around Broadway and 82nd to 84th streets for these Robin-sized birds.

Seth Fielding, New York  
June 23rd, 1993

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Next, Richard and I went to 96th street and Broadway, where our good friend Sharon Kass had watched a pair of nesting kestrels for 2-3 years (2003-2006 or thereabouts). We saw no activity there...but we only spent about 15-20 minutes looking for kestrels flying/perching in the area. In past years kestrels have fledged young from this area - I remember a Daily News story from June 1998 or 1999 when a brood of five young kestrels ended up on the ground in the area of 96th street near the West Side Highway. The Cause? Severe thunderstorms just after the birds left the nest. Once out of the nest and in the rain, the young falcons became soaked and were unable to fly well, ending up on the ground. There they were found by curious onlookers...and ultimately delivered to the Raptor Trust in New Jersey where Len Soucy and Company took care of them until they could fly well. (I think they were released in NJ though...). Jorge, can you help me track down that article in the Daily News (or NY Post perhaps?).

From 96th and Broadway (the active kestrel nest on 86th and Central Park West was not visited

today), Richard and I went north to 104th street and Broadway, where Ben Goloff has been seeing an adult kestrel or two. Ben along with Jacob Drucker have been our primary spies above 100th street on Broadway.

So Richard and I sat ourselves down on a bench in the "traffic island" in the middle of Broadway, facing to the south. Within 10 minutes, a male kestrel arrived to perch on a building on the east side of 104th and Broadway. We then saw this male fold his wings and make a dive at a group of small birds (a mix of starlings, pigeons and house sparrows - he was after the sparrows) about 150 feet north of us, on the same "island." The male kestrel missed his prey - but Richard and I knew we were somewhere within the territory of a pair of kestrels. Indeed as we headed east at about 6:20pm, we found a female kestrel perched on an antenna on 105th street between Amsterdam and Manhattan Avenues - so our best guess is that a nest is less than 200 feet from where we saw that perched female kestrel!

As an aside, our friend Randy Schutz reported a calling male kestrel from 122nd street and Manhattan Avenue - obviously another kestrel territory we will have to investigate.

By 6:30pm, Richard and I were heading home via the north woods of Central Park (in the "Loch" area). Eastern Screech-owls (five including three young) were sitting about 25-35 feet up in a cherry tree. Once upon a time (until the 1950s) both screech-owls and kestrels nested in Central Park. Then something(s) happened, and kestrels now are only found nesting on buildings near Central Park. By comparison, the Eastern Screech-owl became extinct in the park, but because of a restoration project begun in 1998, there are a few pairs nesting in Central Park again...but it has taken 10 years! The morale of the story: it is much better (easier!) to keep what still lives here, than to lose it and try to do a restoration after the species is gone.

So, we seek information about what is still here in order to keep what we already have - and we remain all ears....

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