

16 June 2008

American Kestrel Nest Survey NYC - Issue #11

Kestrels are Fledging!!! – Part 3

This week we provide information about several nests and kestrel territories throughout NYC. We also make one small request from everyone: simply make a discovery new to science. All you need to do is find a kestrel nest in your neighborhood. Not to worry – what we are learning in this study is that these small falcons are nesting throughout our town so long as they can find a suitable cavity in a building. Our research strongly suggests that NYC kestrels are a thriving, successful population. They are the largest population of urban nesting kestrels discovered in North America – probably because no one has attempted to systematically quantify an urban kestrel population in the USA or Canada before.

We are beginning to see copulations at different nest sites here in NYC, and we are wondering if this indicates that a few pairs might nest again this summer.

Beginning in early June, we began to see adult kestrels capturing and eating dragonflies. However, the vast majority of prey deliveries (>98%) we have seen since April have been birds, primarily House Sparrows and the occasional starling. On 13 June, Carol Wood and I watched the adult male return to the nest with a small rat at 4:45pm. Congratulations also to Carol Wood and Rob Cicchetti whose kestrel nest on 69th street and Broadway fledged five young on June 11-12! This is the highest total of youngsters for any kestrel nest in NYC this year (three females and two males). Last year (2007) at this same site, kestrels did not nest but did successfully fledge young each year from 2003-2006. In 2007, large scale construction on a tall (mostly glass) building next door seems to have caused a nesting failure, so to see five young from this nest in 2008 is quite encouraging. Finally, this week we learned of a new nest with fledgling kestrels in Brooklyn. Thank You Arthur Leiz – we include his note below.



© Deborah Allen - June 6, 2008.

A young male American Kestrel making one of its first flights – West 105th street nest (Manhattan)

REPORTS FROM AROUND NYC

From: James Boyer PhD

RE: Kestrels at New York Botanical Garden in the Bronx?

Date: Jun 10, 2008 2:42 PM

Hi Bob,

Dr. Chrissy [Colon] is correct; we ID'd the bird as a kestrel. I attached an image of the young kestrel to give you a better idea of what we saw in June 2007. (**See photo bottom left.**) I'm on the 2nd floor of the Museum bldg, and It flew from the nest (somewhere up on the 4th floor?) down to the pitched roof outside my window.

Let me know what you think...

Jamie

From: Roberto Cavalieros MD

Sent: Jun 9, 2008 8:16 AM

Subject: urban falcons

Hi Robert, quick question before I go into the operating room- this morning as I was about to enter Bergen St. station (Flatbush Ave., Bklyn) I saw, in bad light, a small raptor which looked more like a merlin than a kestrel, swooping up to a cornice on a brownstone, perching vertically in woodpecker fashion, and seemingly looking into a hole, but it did not enter it; the hole appeared to be too small for it; then again, i was in a rush to get to work and light was not great; does this suggest a nest with babies inside? or raptor peering into someone's nest to see if it can get some tasty morsels?

Best,

Roberto

Adult female kestrel in flight



Just fledged male kestrel at NYBG (Bronx)

© James Boyer PhD – June 2007



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From: Arthur Leiz
Sent: Monday, June 09, 2008 9:28 PM
Subject: Help Indentifying a Bird

Hello,

I live in Greenpoint, Brooklyn and every spring a type of raptor nests in a cornice of old brownstones on the block (**not the same cornice each year, but all within a few houses of each other**). It is amazing to watch the babies learn to fly and quite often they end up street level which makes a great opportunity to take a picture or two. Was hoping you could indentify what type of raptor it is? I included a picture that I took just yesterday (that is a fire hydrant the baby is sitting on).

“Two days ago I had the experience of a parent swooping down from its roof top perch to grab a large flying bug [dragonfly?] about ten feet above my head.”

Thanks,

Arthur

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From: Rob Jett
To: "Robert DeCandido, PhD" <rdcny@earthlink.net>
Subject: Re: Kestrels near Prospect Park?
Date: Jun 9, 2008 9:01 PM

Bob,

Last year they (kestrels) were nesting on 11th Street, just off Prospect Park. I haven't had time this year to check it out. However, two nights ago while I was sitting on my roof, an adult male perched on a favorite spot on top of St. Savior's Church (there's a satellite dish on the roof that I've noticed him using for years). After a moment pause, he headed south. I've attached a map.

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From: Carol Wood
Subject: Re: Upper West Side kestrels
Date: Jun 11, 2008 11:45 AM

Hi Bob,

I wasn't able to get up to the roof terrace since the heat wave started. I didn't often see the adults on Rob Ciccettii's building lately, and I was hoping the chicks weren't baking in the nest in the heat. I just went up to the terrace, and saw a female fledgling waddling around on the peaked roof of the water tank above the nest. The light was bad, but she still looked pretty downy. After a few minutes the adult female flew in and took her usual post on the wooden piece on the top of that tank. I watched them for several minutes, then looked around for other fledglings. I then spotted another on top of the other water tank on the nest building. I'm pretty sure this was also a female, and this one looked fairly downy too. I didn't see signs of any others, but I wasn't able to spend a lot of time up there. I need to go run some errands now, but I hope to check on them later.

Regards,

Carol

From: Rob Cicchetti
Subject: Baby kestrels at 69th street
Date: Jun 12, 2008 7:23 PM

Hi Bob,

I can confirm the presence of Kestrel babies at the west 69th street nest; there are at least two, perhaps as many as four. I've seen four falcons together, though they didn't sit still long enough for me to identify sexes. I've also been watching the young on some of their inaugural flights between the buildings on Broadway and 69th....stay tuned!

Rob

From: John Day
To: rdcny@earthlink.net
Subject: Kestrel
Date: Jun 12, 2008 9:31 AM

Bob,

FYI. Last Wed. 6/4 I saw a Kestrel circle over the intersection at 57th and 8th and then land on the top of a brick bldg at the NW section of the intersection. That was about 6:15 pm. I didn't have time to track it further and didn't have my bins with me but suspect that it may be regular in that area?

Regards,

John



In Manhattan: A Second Chelsea Nest

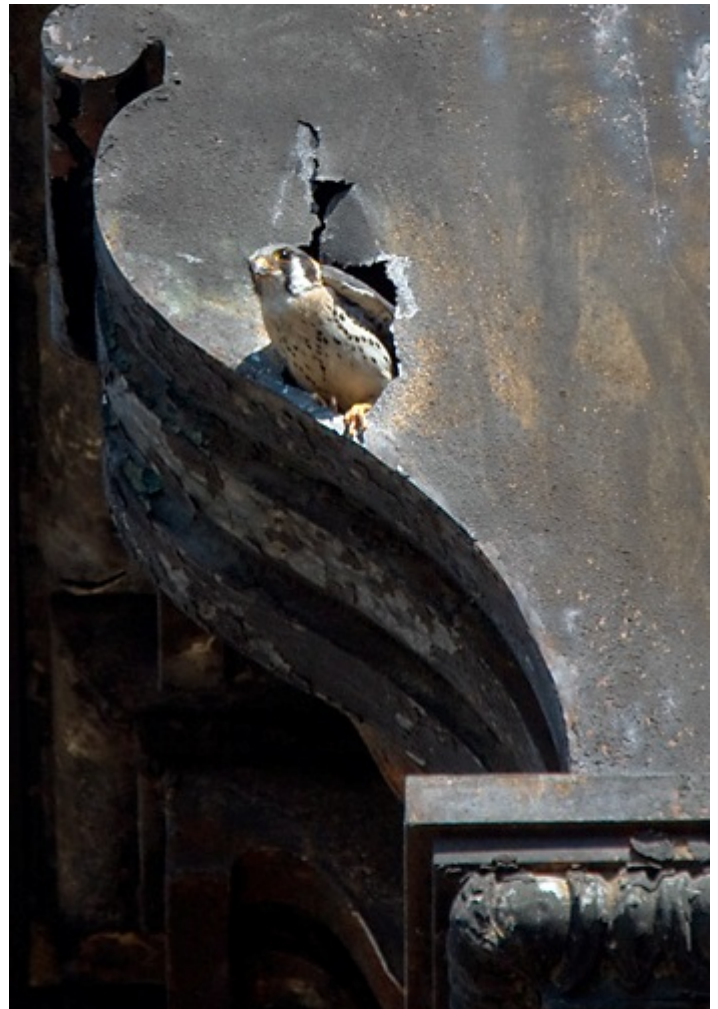
Thanks to Matthew Wills (a Brooklyn resident) who filed this report last week: “A pair seems to be nesting in the very elaborate cornice of 253 W 15th St., just east of 8th Ave. You'll see a hole on the east side of the cornice. Watched male and female hanging out on the fire escapes across 15th St. from the probable nest yesterday late afternoon.” **Matthew gets a gold star and our highest thanks for this report.**



Beginning on Monday 9 June, Deborah and I made a series of visits to this nest. It was hot hot hot, but the kestrels were amazingly active. We observed adults capturing at least two dragonflies, as well as bringing back House Sparrows and one starling. On one occasion, we watched the male pursue a House Sparrow down 15th street, about 10 feet above the cars. (Traffic is a bit lighter on 15th street compared to nearby north-south 8th Avenue.) We could determine that at least one male was still in the nest - perhaps others had already fledged from the nest? (How many young in the nest or recently fledged before we arrived on the scene on 9 June remains a giant mystery to us.) On 12 June, we could see the young male flapping his wings inside the roomy bracket (best known as a modillion: <http://www.answers.com/topic/modillion>) below the cornice. Wherever we have watched kestrels nesting in the cornices of 19th century apartment buildings, we have been pleasantly surprised at how much room these modillions provide for several young kestrels, even when they begin to exercise their wings... Neighborhood residents tell us that these kestrels have been nesting here for quite a number of years (10?). The nearest park to this nest site (the new High Line) is more than 500 feet away. And the nearest nesting kestrel pair is on west 25th street near 10th Ave (see NYC Kestrel Newsletter #2 as well as Newsletter #7 for descriptions of that nest.)

See the following page for a couple more photos...

NYC American Kestrel Nest Survey



**Adult male American Kestrel at nest entrance
of the West 15th nest site**

The two above photos show the typical 19th century apartment building and modillion where most NYC kestrel nests in Manhattan have been found. This 15th street apartment building was built in 1890 – the date is written in stone on the front of the building. Perhaps these architectural embellishments were “descendant ideas” of the cast-iron buildings designed by James Bogardus in the mid 1800s:

<http://query.nytimes.com/gst/fullpage.html?res=990CE3DD153EF933A1575BC0A963958260>

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Remember, just make one discovery new to science this week.

Thanks!

Robert DeCandido rdcnyc@earthlink.net
718-828-8262

For info on the Harlem Kestrels see the following page

The Harlem Kestrels – Photos from the 111th Street nest

A brief photo essay on the 111th street kestrel nest, just north of Central Park. The first four photos (two rows) show the male entering the nest, and then leaving. The fifth (last) photo shows a young female in the nest – looks like she will fly any day now. All photos taken on 13 June (Friday) 2008.

