

27 May 2008

American Kestrel Nest Survey NYC - Issue #7

American Kestrels have begun fledging. In this issue we bring photos of the second kestrel out of the nest in Manhattan – at the west 25th street site watched closely by Chuck McAlexander. On Thursday morning (22 May), Chuck received a phone call from the newest kestrel team member – Robert Goczan (of the nearby 545 West 25th street building). Apparently one young female made her first flight late Wednesday afternoon (early evening), and ended up under a parked vehicle where she was located by Mr. Goczan. Both he and Chuck managed to capture the young falcon, and transport it to the roof of Chuck's building, where his business – the Brass Lab – is located. Meanwhile, from up on the 15th floor, several ladies of the Joan Mitchell Art Foundation had also taken a keen interest in the young female, and were keeping careful watch over her (literally since the latter was on the third floor roof of the building across the street). And late Thursday, Chuck and Robert had to rescue another kestrel that fledged (a male) from the west 25th street nest, and placed him on the same roof. Sadly, a kestrel that fledged several days earlier died after being struck by a car on west 25th street.



American Kestrel
Female - just fledged from the nest
25th Street near 10th Avenue, Manhattan
22 May 2008

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rdcny@earthlink.net

Notice the few remaining down feathers on the female's head.

Some of you might be interested in seeing the habitat where the west 25th street kestrels were raised. See the next page...the nest is located on the face of a relatively small building, and is only about 50 feet above the street. Note how urban the location is...one wonders where the parents capture sufficient numbers of sparrows and starlings to feed their offspring? Yet in 2007, this pair raised five young, and this year three!



The photo on the left shows the nest building (a warehouse). The nest (see white arrow) is located on the front of the building about 50 feet above the street. To take this photo I was standing on the roof of 545 west 25th street, looking to the east. By comparison, the photo above shows the habitat of the 25th street kestrels – and there is some overlap with the photo at left: note the same crane in both photos, as well as the wooden water tank visible in the near (bottom) portion of both photos. Three young fledged here in 2008; and five in 2007.

We have been spending more time at the 111th street kestrel nest site. We are trying to figure out what stage (how old) are the young kestrels in that nest? One way of estimating is to see if the female is spending much time in the nest – especially in the mornings when it tends to be chilly. If yes, then our guess is that she is “brooding” the young birds to keep them warm. Another indirect way to gauge the approximate age of the young falcons is to see how long an adult remains in the nest after delivering a prey item. If a “long” time (i.e., 20-25 minutes), then we believe the adult has to shred and feed the prey to the young. On the other hand, if the adult simply enters the nest, and then leaves, we assume the young are old enough to feed themselves and will soon fledge.



Female American Kestrel entering nest cavity at 111th street

American Kestrel Nest - Manhattan
111th Street and St. Nicholas Avenue
2 May 2008



American Kestrels - 2008
111th Street and St. Nicholas Avenue
Manhattan



Here are two views of the 111th street nest site – above looking north, and on the left the view is to the south (in the distance are the trees of CP as well as Mt. Sinai – the large black building at 100th street and Fifth Ave.). On 23 May, we watched the male return to the nest area to chase starlings away...an almost futile strategy since starlings nest in many parts of the building. The starlings even nest in the bracket (called a modillion in architectural terms – thanks to Christopher Gray for this info) next to the kestrels.

Early in the nesting season, starlings can invade a kestrel nest (if the female is taking a break and not keeping careful watch) and eat the eggs and/or kill the young kestrels. However, kestrels are constantly watching where the starlings (and house sparrows) are nesting...for the adult falcons love to raid the nests of these two bird species. We have often seen them returning with baby birds to feed their young falcons. And female kestrels are large enough to attack adult starlings...This week (beginning on 23 May) we saw the first fledged starlings and house sparrows. These are the two primary food items for kestrels during their nesting period.



American Kestrel
Young Male (just fledged)
© June 2007
Manhattan: West Village
© Mark Segall



On the left is a just fledged male American Kestrel (thanks Mark Segall!) – compare to the just fledged female kestrel below. Above are Eurasian Kestrels in the nest (Budapest, Hungary) who will soon be flying.

N.B. On Saturday, 31 May we will have our third **free** kestrel walk of the year. My plans are to visit the 111th street nest once again, and then perhaps check on the kestrels at 119th street and 104th street (both east side), with a possible visit to the west 86th street kestrel nest site as well....check your email this week for details.

All previous six issues of the 2008 NYC American Kestrel nest survey are available upon request (free) – and all are now PDFs.

To report kestrel nesting activity:

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Young Female American Kestrel at the 111th street nest site

Additional notes:

On 23 May (Friday), we were able to confirm at least two young in the nest at **105th street nest** (the Manny, Blanca, Pablo nest):



And on 26 May, we found a pair of kestrels in the area of the Brooklyn Bridge, undoubtedly with a nest within 150 feet of where we photographed them perched together:

