

PROJECT NIGHTHAWK 2008 SUMMARY



by Bob Hines

The summer of 2008 was the second year of New Hampshire Audubon's Project Nighthawk – a project that is testing the potential for restoring urban-nesting nighthawks by placing simple gravel “nest patches” on flat rooftops. We continued to install additional gravel patches on buildings in Concord and the Ashuelot Valley Environmental Observatory (AVEO) spearheaded the effort in Keene in partnership with Antioch University New England graduate student Ken Klapper. A new effort in the Hanover area was started by volunteer, Lou-Anne Conroy and resulted in the installation of six nest patches. By the end of the 2008 field season, a total of 36 gravel patches had been installed statewide. Volunteers surveyed for nighthawks in towns with patches and monitored patches but so far no nighthawks have used a patch. Males have displayed over several patch locations that are on roofs with large stone but there was no sign of nesting.

NEW THIS YEAR

Project Nighthawk Goes Online

Thanks to the help of volunteer, Len Medlock, there's a new web page for the project that includes project information, a **Gravel Patch Handbook** which gives detailed information about how to set up a gravel nest patch, and a **Photo Gallery** of patches. It's accessible from the *New Hampshire Bird Records* web site or directly at: <http://nhbirdrecords.org/bird-conservation/Nighthawk-main.htm>. Jane Koliass, volunteer Project Assistant, has contributed to all these efforts and is currently finishing up a poster for sites that host a nest patch.

Two Chicks!!



Nighthawk parent and chicks. Photo by Pam Hunt

For the second year in a row we had a unique opportunity to observe nighthawk parents raising young. Two chicks hatched and fledged at an industrial complex in East Concord. The female laid two eggs on June 1. The chicks hatched on June 22 and the younger chick stayed at the site for at least 40 days, according to Stephanie Parkinson who monitored this nest closely. Some fascinating behavior was observed after the chicks began flying, including feedings, practice flights, and chases. There's very little written information on nighthawk behavior after chick fledging and some observations were very puzzling – Is the male chasing away the female? Why won't he let her feed the chick? Is the chick or the female making that funny peent? Who's that third bird? Much of this behavior takes place in the dark and shows how much there is to learn. A special thanks to Sabbow & Company, Inc. for their help and support in monitoring the chicks. *Note cards with this picture of mom and chicks are available in the NH Audubon store or by the enclosed order form.*

Grant Received

In October Project Nighthawk was awarded a \$6,000 grant from The Blake Fund of the Nuttall Ornithological Club. We are very grateful for this support for the project.

CONCORD SUMMARY

Nest Patches. Five new rooftop nest patches were installed and monitored by NH Audubon at the following locations:

- NH Dept. of Environmental Services, Hazen Dr.
- #6 Loudon Road
- Havenwood Health Center, 33 Christian Ave. (2 patches)
- Charter Trust Company, 88 N. Main Street

In addition, two nest patches were installed by NH Fish & Game on Hazen Drive, and one nest patch was installed on private property in Bow. Total patches in Concord to date: 14.

Coordinated Watches. Volunteers conducted coordinated watches in Concord on three dates: June 6, June 18, and July 8. Up to nine males were observed calling and booming regularly at the following locations:

- Concord Public Library - 1
- Steeplegate Mall – 2
- Industrial Park Drive - 1
- Chenell & Regional Drive junction – 2
- Chenell Drive East - 1
- Hazen Drive – 1
- Federal Building/Sheraton Building - 1

Observation Summary. Nine males were regularly observed at the above Concord locations. This is an increase of two birds over last year's total (2007 had seven regularly observed birds). Generally, birds were observed peenting and booming over the same locations as last year. The second bird at the Mall did not appear as regularly as it had last year. One male appeared to be displaying back and forth between the Federal Building and the Sheraton Building. New sites in 2008 with regular display activity were Chenell Drive East and Industrial Park Drive. Two chicks were hatched and fledged in east Concord. Elsewhere in the state there were no reports of confirmed nighthawk nesting but birds were reported in a few potential breeding locations during the breeding season (mid-June through July): one displaying in Chichester, one in Franklin, one in Lempster, one in Lebanon, two birds on Mt. Cardigan (Orange), one regularly from Mast Yard in Hopkinton (by Whip-poor-will monitors), and one male displaying in Pembroke. All were single one-time reports, except for the last three. See also the Keene summary.

HANOVER SUMMARY

A new effort in the Hanover area, spearheaded by volunteer Lou-Anne Conroy, resulted in the installation of six nest patches at the following locations:

- Town of Hanover, 41 S. Main Street
- Lyme Timber Company, 63 S. Main Street
- Lyme Timber Company, 23 S. Main Street (2 patches)
- Other Hanover locations (2 patches)

Lou-Anne has already met with groups interested in helping with Project Nighthawk in 2009. Stevens High School teacher, Joanna Bitter and her Environmental Science Club in Claremont are eager to install nest patches on the high school roof. According to the NH Audubon's Nighthawk Survey records, Stevens High School was a nesting site for nighthawks in the 1980s. The Woodsville High School Principal, Bob Jones and custodial staff are also interested in installing nest patches in early spring 2009.



Two nest patches with white rubber membrane, 23 S. Main St., Hanover. Photo by Lou-Anne Conroy.

KEENE SUMMARY

AVEO and Antioch University New England graduate student Ken Klapper installed eight new patches on rooftops throughout Keene at the following locations: (total number of nest patches in Keene area: 15)

- Keene City Hall, 3 Winchester Street
- Keene Housing Authority, 39 Central Square
- Hannaford Supermarket, 481 West Street
- Keene Cinema, 121 Key Road
- Filtrine Manufacturing, 15 Kit Street
- PC Connection, 450 Marlboro Street
- Smiths Medical, 10 Bowman Drive
- Interface Stereo, 660 Main Street

Coordinated Watches. Volunteers conducted coordinated Nighthawk Patrols in the Keene area on seven evenings in 2008: June 4, June 11, June 18, June 25, July 2, July 16, and July 30. Males were regularly observed diving and booming over Central Square and the Cheshire County administration building on West Street (1 male, likely part of a breeding pair) and over the Keene Cinema parking lot (2 males). Birds were also observed foraging over Keene Cinema, Hannaford, Production Avenue, the Keene State College campus, and the Colony Mill smokestack. On June 11, four individuals were observed simultaneously at 9:23 pm: one west of the Colony Mill, one southwest of the Keene State College tennis courts, one diving and booming over 33 West Street, and one heard peenting from Filtrine. On June 18, four birds were observed simultaneously at Keene Cinema (3 birds, including 2 males) and above Main Street (1 bird). Although this is the same number of individual birds observed in 2007, more diving and booming was observed in the vicinity of nest patches in 2008.

Partners and Supporters. Project Nighthawk is a statewide research initiative coordinated by New Hampshire Audubon and led in Keene by AVEO, in partnership with Ken Klapper. The Melanson Company, Keene State College, the Association for Field Ornithologists and Antioch University New England have generously donated funding, expertise, and materials for the project in Keene

Building a Nest Patch



← Gathering buckets of peastone gravel for nest patch construction. Photo by Ken Klapper.

Pouring peastone gravel onto larger rooftop cobble to make nest patch. Photo by David Moon. →

Raking gravel into nest patch configuration. Photo by Ken Klapper. ↓



HOW YOU CAN HELP PROJECT NIGHTHAWK

The following is a list of opportunities to become involved in and support the efforts of Project Nighthawk.

- Become a nest patch monitor: Assess the condition of a patch in early spring to determine if repairs are needed, then monitor the patch throughout the breeding season for activity. This includes coordinating with the nest patch host to gain access to the roof a few times during the summer to determine whether the patch is being used.
- IT help: We have a camera that we'd like to use for nest patch monitoring and need help to set it up and determine if it is working.
- Join a coordinated watch. Join other volunteers monitoring nighthawk activity at specific locations in the Concord, Keene, and Hanover/Lebanon area.
- Construct a nest patch using the guidelines from the Gravel Patch Handbook or join a patch building team. This usually takes about 2 hours and may include building a patch frame on site, carrying buckets of gravel, spreading and raking gravel, and photo-documenting the patch construction.
- Make a donation: Project Nighthawk is funded primarily by private donations (a donation coupon is attached to the end of this newsletter).
- Donate to the Wish List: 10x10 sheets of rubber roofing membrane, Family Radio Services (FRS) radios, night vision binoculars, sturdy plastic 5 gallon buckets with metal handles (i.e. joint compound buckets).
- *We also have several research opportunities such as setting up a program to assess nest predation.*

Donors, Partners and Volunteers

We'd like to thank the following individuals and businesses whose donations of time, space and funding helped make the 2008 Nighthawk Project possible.

Donors

Mary Boulanger
Sheridan Brown
Deb Callahan
Mr. & Mrs. William D. Chapin
Mr. and Mrs. Harry Conroy
Larry Denoncourt
Mr. & Mrs. John H. Fensterwald

David Healy
Tina Kirkpatrick
Stephanie Parkinson
Arthur & Dawn Stavros
Margaret Watkins
Rob Woodward
Mary Wright

Partners

Antioch University New England
Ashuelot Valley Environmental Observatory
Association for Field Ornithologists
Charter Trust Company
Mark Ciborowski
Concord Public Library, Pat Immen
Corriveau-Routhier, Inc.

Havenwood Health Service Ctr.
Keene State College
Lyme Timber Company
Melanson Company
NH Dept. of Environmental Svs.
Doug Noyes
Sulloway & Hollis, PLLC
Town of Hanover

Volunteers

Volunteer activities included nest patch construction, nest patch monitoring, conducting surveys, photo documenting project activities, and engaging in public education/awareness.

Jean Amaral
Jon Atwood
Phil Brown
Sheridan Brown
Katy Burchett
Auralee Burchett
Mark Ciborowski
Russ Cobb
Lou-Anne Conroy
Peter Davenport
Larry Denoncourt
Kim Dupuis
Joel Friedlander
Tim Garceau
Stu Goldberg
Emily Hague
Doug Hardy

Spencer Hardy
Robbie Harloe
Lindsay Herlihy
Stephanie Herlihy
David Hoitt
Peter Howe
Pam Hunt
Pat Immen
Annie Jacobs
Cary Jardine
Barb Johnson
Ken Klapper
Jane Kolias
Richard Langsner
Gordon Leerse
Marcy Leverage
John Liptak

David Mallard
Jack Marsden
Kelly Marsden
Susan Marsden
Molly McMillan
Gail McPeck
Len Medlock
Byard Miller
Wayne Miller
David Moon
Lindsay Moon
Rory Moon
Ruby Morrison
Kathleen Murphy
Cindy Myers-Long
Robert Norman
Doug Noyes

Gail Page
Kathy Palfy
Stephanie Parkinson
Polly Pattison
Bob Quinn
Scot Reagan
Larry Reynolds
Chris Rimmer
Jen Rost
Jonathan Sachs
Barbara Skuly
Normajean Smith
Norm Spicher
Deb Stevens
Mark Suomala
Rebecca Suomala
Lance Tanino

Brett Amy Thelen
Russ Thomas
Town of Hanover employees
Robert Vallieres
Roy Van Vleck
Matt Walter
Lacie Westbrook
Emily Wilson
Sarah Wilson
Chris Wood
Rob Woodward
Mary Wright
Courtney Younginger

For Information on Project Nighthawk

- In Concord and statewide, contact Becky Suomala, NH Audubon, bsuomala@nhaudubon.org, 603-224-9909 x309.
- In Keene, contact Brett Amy Thelen, AVEO, brett@aveo.org, 603-358-2065, www.aveo.org.
- In Hanover, contact Lou-Anne Conroy, lconroy@dl-c.com, 603-353-4394.

PROJECT NIGHTHAWK – A PARTNERSHIP

Use this form for donations and to request information.

- I would like to volunteer I would like gravel patch information
 I would like to support Project Nighthawk with a contribution of:
 \$50 \$100 \$500 \$1000 Other _____

Name _____ Phone _____
Address _____ Email _____
City _____ State _____ Zip _____

Payment is by: Check enclosed. Make check payable to NHA. MasterCard Visa Am. Ex.
Signature _____
Card # _____ Expiration Date _____

Return this form with payment to: New Hampshire Audubon, Membership Department, 84 Silk Farm Road, Concord, NH 03301-8200.



← [Suet Feeders for Sale \\$25.00 \(while supply lasts, order below\)](#)

Rectangular suet feeder can be used hanging or standing. Comes with two, 42 1/2" poles that can be connected to make one 85" high pole, or can be used separately to make a shorter feeder. Has three separate platforms inside feeder to accommodate different feeding items. **Proceeds from the sale of this bird feeder directly supports Project Nighthawk.** You can order a suet feeder using the order form below. ***Feeders will not be shipped and must be picked up at the Audubon Nature Store during store business hours.***

[Nighthawk Notecards \(order below\)](#)

Packet contains 5 note cards and envelopes. Fill out the information below and include payment with your order. Cards will be mailed to the address on the order form.



Suet Feeder and Note Card Order Form

Suet Feeder: _____ @ \$25.00 each. = \$ _____

Notecards (*packet of 5 cards*) _____ @ \$12.00 per packet (includes postage) = \$ _____

Name _____ Phone _____
Address _____ Email _____
City _____ State _____ Zip _____

Payment is by: Check enclosed. Make check payable to NHA. MasterCard Visa Am. Ex.
Signature _____
Card # _____ Expiration Date _____

Return this form with payment to: New Hampshire Audubon, Membership Department, 84 Silk Farm Road, Concord, NH 03301-8200.