Photo by Mark Suomala

PROJECT NIGHTHAWK
2009 Field Season Summary

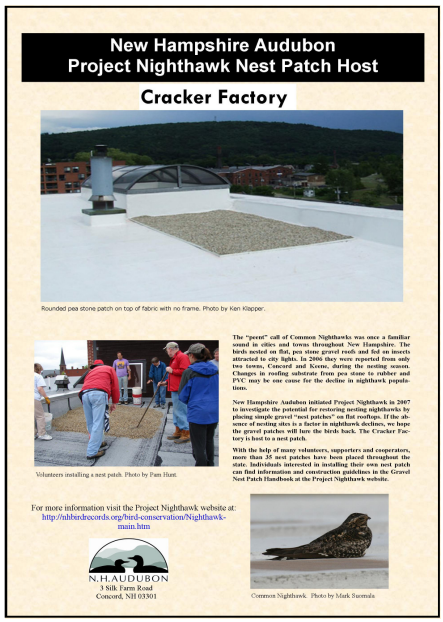
Another field season has come and gone for the staff and volunteers of Project Nighthawk. This is our third season of monitoring nighthawk activity in the state and placing gravel patches at prospective nesting sites. During 2009 new patches were installed at St. Paul's School in Concord (2 patches), Woodsville High School in Woodsville (3 patches), Stevens High School in Claremont (2 patches), 69 Island Street in Keene (1), and Bradford Elementary School (1). To date, we have a total of 45 registered nest patches throughout the state as follows: Concord 16; Keene 16; Hanover 6; Claremont 2; Woodsville 3; Bow 1; Bradford 1.

PROJECT BACKGROUND

Project Nighthawk is a statewide research initiative, coordinated by New Hampshire Audubon, aimed at conserving a state-endangered bird species, the Common Nighthawk (*Chordeiles minor*). In 2007 New Hampshire Audubon initiated Project Nighthawk to investigate the potential for restoring nesting nighthawks by placing simple gravel "nest patches" on flat rooftops. The objective is to determine if gravel nest patches on rooftops will reverse the decline of nighthawks in urban areas. The project is funded by private donations, grants and funds from The Margery and Lorus Milne Fund.

NEW FOR 2009 FIELD SEASON

Posters Designed for Each Nest Patch Site



Volunteer Jane Kolias designed posters for 26 of the nest patch host sites. Each 23"x17" poster displays pictures of the completed nest patch at their site, volunteers constructing a nest patch and an adult nighthawk. There is also a summary of Project Nighthawk goals, and the project's web address.

Two Research Presentations

Rebecca Suomala presented a research poster on Project Nighthawk in April 2009 at the joint meeting of the Wilson Ornithological Society and the Association of Field Ornithologists. The poster included results from a similar nest patch effort in Pennsylvania coordinated by Timothy Hoppe of Pennsylvania Game Commission. A second poster on the Keene effort was presented by Brett Thelan and Ken Klapper at the Urban Wildlife Conference in June, 2009.

Grant Support

Support from the Nuttall Ornithological Club's Blake Fund was a critical component to the success of Project Nighthawk in 2009.The grant helped fund: public information posters, evaluation and repair of current nest patches, a general information sheet on Common Nighthawks for the web site, and coordinated watches in Concord.

Expanded Website Information

The Project Nighthawk website was expanded to include photos of most of the nest patches in the Gallery of Patches, a general information handout, and updates to the Gravel Patch Handbook. Visit Project Nighthawk on the web at:
http://nhbirdrecords.org/bird-conservation/Nighthawk-main.htm.

CONCORD - ST. PAUL'S STUDENTS CONSTRUCT NEST PATCHES

On May 13th, two groups of St. Paul's students constructed nest patches on top of the Environmental Services Building at St. Paul's School. Through coordination with Environmental Affairs Director, Maura Adams, and with the help of faculty member Scott Reynolds, students carried more than 2 dozen buckets of gravel onto the roof. Students constructed two nest patches, one on the northwest corner of the roof and one on the east side. Shade structures made from plywood set on top of bricks were added to each patch.

Photos by Jane Kolias

Concord Nesting Attempt

For the third year in a row we had a unique opportunity to observe nighthawk nesting at an industrial complex in East Concord. Sadly, due to the great amount of rainfall in the spring, the nest flooded and the two chicks were lost. We were able to use what the volunteers had learned about courtship and incubation behavior to locate the rooftop site where they re-nested. Volunteers observed behavior each night and were able to follow incubation and subsequently confirm a second nest failure (at or just after hatch).

Photo by Stephanie Parkinson

Common Nighthawk eggs with coin for size comparison.

Photo by Jane Kolias

Arrow marks approximate location of nest site during heavy rain.

Photo by Jane Kolias

One deceased chick and one pipped egg were found after the rain subsided.

Volunteers conducted coordinated watches in Concord on three dates: June 10, June 25, and July 14. Up to five males and one female were observed regularly at the following locations: Concord Public Library, 1M; Heritage Heights Health Center, 1M; Regional Drive, 1M; Industrial Park Drive, 1M, 1F; Steeplegate Mall, 1M.

KEENE - SURPRISE! A FLEDGLING

On July 23, Ken Klapper and David Moon discovered a nighthawk fledgling on the roof of the Cheshire County Administration Building in Keene. They were excited when it landed 20 feet from them and was fed by the male. The location of the natal nest site is unknown but suspected to be in the vicinity. Ken monitored the chick, taking notes on feeding and flying behavior, until it was last seen on August 29. Photos by Ken Klapper.

UPPER VALLEY ADDS NEW NEST PATCHES

Five new nest patches were installed in the Upper Valley area at the following locations: Woodsville High School in Woodsville 3; Stevens High School in Claremont 2. This brings the total number of nest patches in the Upper Valley to 11.

With the help of volunteer Lou-Anne Conroy, students constructed nest patches at Woodsville High School in Woodsville (bottom photos) and Stevens High School in Claremont (top right photo).
Photos by Lou-Anne Conroy

PLANS FOR NEXT YEAR

- Expanded monitoring to check for rooftop nests anywhere nighthawks display.
- Test the addition of calcium, a possible limiting factor, to selected nest patches.
- Create a public presentation on Project Nighthawk.
- Add a predator shelter to selected nest patches.
- Continue coordinated watches to confirm status.
- Evaluate and repair current nest patches after winter.
- Monitor all nest patches.

HOW YOU CAN HELP

Volunteer

- Become a nest patch monitor: Assess the patch in early spring to determine if repairs are needed, monitor the patch throughout the breeding season.
- Evaluate a camera for possible nest patch monitoring, set it up and determine if it is working.
- Join a coordinated watch to monitor nighthawk activity at specific locations in Concord, Keene, and Hanover/ Lebanon area.

Make a Donation

- Project Nighthawk is funded primarily by private donations (a donation coupon is enclosed).
- Donate to the Wish List: 10X10 sheets of rubber roofing membrane, Family Radio Services (FRS), night vision binoculars, sturdy plastic 5 gallon buckets with metal handles (i.e. joint compound buckets).

DONORS, PARTNERS, VOLUNTEERS

We'd like to thank the following individuals and businesses whose donations of time, space and funding helped make Project Nighthawk possible in 2009.

Antioch University New England
Ashuelot Valley Environmental Observatory
Association of Field Ornithologists
Leslie Casey
Charter Trust Company
Mark Ciborowski
Claremont School District
Concord Public Library, Pat Immen
Mr. & Mrs. Harry Conroy
Lou-Anne Conroy & Jonathan Sachs
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Larry Denoncourt
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Keene State College
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Dr. & Mrs. Donald Niswander
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Mr. & Mrs. James R. Schubert
St. Pierre Gravel, Ray Bernard
Stevens High School
Sulloway & Hollis, PLLC
Town of Hanover
Woodsville High School
Rob Woodward
Mary Wright

Volunteers logged 600 hours of activities including constructing and monitoring nest patches, conducting surveys, photo documenting project activities, and engaging in public education/awareness.

Dan Allard
Donna Baldwin
Rebecca Bierworth
Joanne Bitter
Mike Blackwell
Deb Brown
Sheridan Brown
Karen Byrne
Amber Chicoine
Lou-Anne Conroy
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Larry Denoncourt
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Nina Marro
Coralee Millette
Robert Jones
Ashley Kinson
Ken Klapper
Jane Kolias
Joe Nadeau
Gail Page
Stephanie Parkinson
Bob Quinn
Joseph Quinn
St. Paul's Ecology Students
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Linda Rauter
Udo Rauter
Jonathan Sachs
Katie Cutts Sadis
Suzzanne Simano
Jay Smith
Kim Spaulding
Becky Suomala
Mark Suomala
Chad Tabor
Robert Vallieres
Molly White
Woodsville JAG Students
Rob Woodward
Brad Young

N.H.AUDUBON

Project Nighthawk is a self-funded project of New Hampshire Audubon's Conservation Department. For information contact Becky Suomala: bsuomala@nhaudubon.org or 603-224-9909 ext. 309.