



Aston Campus Wildlife Group

June 2012

Newsletter

Kestrel Review 2012

In 2010 and 2011 the laying and hatching pattern of the kestrels was quite similar. This year they surprised us with early laying and hatching, plus a reduced brood.

Could this mean that this year's couple (or at least female) are not the same as the last two years?

Laying	2010	2011	2012
Egg 1	6 April	5 April	2 April
Egg 2	12 April	10 April	5 April
Egg 3	14 April	12 April	8 April
Egg 4	16 April	15 April	9 April
Egg 5	18 April	17 April	12 April
Egg 6	21 April	19 April	N/A

Hatching	2010	2011 (*guesses)	2012 (*guesses)
Egg 1	12 May	12 May	*6 May
Egg 2	13 May	12 May	*7 May
Egg 3	15 May	*13 May	11 May
Egg 4	16 May	*15 May	Did not hatch
Egg 5	18 May	17 May	Did not hatch
Egg 6	Did not hatch	Did not hatch	N/A

It is highly possible; the average lifespan of a wild kestrel is approximately 10 years, which is why we know that it must be successive generations of kestrels using the campus as its nest site (they've been around for about 30 years). Female kestrels mature to breeding age at around 1 year so this could even be a female from the 2010 or 2011 brood. Males take a bit longer to mature (typical!) and reach breeding age at around 2 years.

Although the webcam often shows an empty nest, I can confirm that at least some of the kestrels are still using the nest to roost and their distinctive shrieking can be heard during the daytime. My office is 2 floors about the nest and I can hear them calling as I write this.

Thank you all who have sent in pictures of our brood, and to Morteza Alamolhoda who kindly recorded the 3 chicks being ringed this year. You can view the video on [YouTube](#) (search for Aston Kestrels if not viewing this newsletter online).



Picture by Morteza Alamolhoda

Words by Denise Jackson

Don't forget to visit Kestrel Cam!

<http://www1.aston.ac.uk/about/environment/kestrels/webcam/>



Dispatches

Thank you to group member Mark Bartlett, for all his hard work in making bird and bat boxes in the past, and for his newly completed 5* bee hotel which will shortly go up on campus.

We will shortly be updating the Aston Campus Wildlife Group [website](#). We are happy to take suggestions on what this should contain. Please email [Denise](#) your thoughts. In particular, we would welcome any photographs taken of the campus to use.

Recent **campus sightings** have included a willow warbler (pictured below) near the Vision Sciences Building and a song thrush nest near the Library.



For the third year in a row we had a stand at the annual **Go Green Week**, which generated a lot of interest in the group. We also had a wildlife walk along a section of the Birmingham & Fazeley canal which was led by RSPB Reserve Officer Chris Edwards.

Congratulations are in order to all members of the Wildlife Group! This year we were nominated (and won) the Aston Excellence Award for Contribution to Sustainable Campus. This raises the profile of the group and hopefully the importance of preserving the biodiversity of our campus.

What to do if you find an injured animal

If you find an injured animal on campus, please contact Carolyn (4317) or Denise (4608) for advice.

If you find an injured animal at home or anywhere else, refer to the [RSPCAs website](#) for guidance.

Animal Incidents on Campus

Over the last year or so we have had the following animal incidents on campus:

- An exhausted racing pigeon (from Essex) was found by the porters in the east yard. The owner was traced by the pigeon's ring. It was taken in and given water and food, but unfortunately the bird was beyond help and died shortly after.
- An injured goldcrest was found near the LIS building and taken in. The bird later recovered and got loose in the library! It was safely captured and re-released outside.
- Staff in LIS have reported a number of birds flying into the windows on the side of the building nearest Vision Sciences. The highly reflective windows reflect the trees and a number of birds have been seen going into the windows. Only one fatality is known (a goldfinch) and this prompted us to take action in the form of kestrel shapes on the windows. We had a very enjoyable workshop (run by group member Mike Wootton) to make and put these up. Hopefully the fake kestrels will prevent birds flying into the windows from now on!



L-R: Gill Pilfold, Nicole Green, Carolyn Taylor, Denise Jackson, Angela O'Doherty. The reflective window shows one of the kestrel silhouettes.