

Barn owls are N.Y.’s newest celebs

NEW YORK (AP) — Manhattan's Upper West Side has been reveling in the company of its latest celebrities: A family of barn owls nested in a water tower atop a building near Central Park.

This is the first documented instance of barn owls nesting in Manhattan in modern history, according to one expert, and the owls have attracted nightly crowds of people in the street eager to get a glimpse of the elusive birds.

“It was, like, totally shocking,” Andrew Farnsworth, a migration ecologist at the Cornell Lab of Ornithology, said of the barn owls. “To the best of our knowledge, like the collective birding knowledge, there hasn’t been a nest in, you know, in Manhattan, at least in recorded history.”

Word of the barn owl family didn't get around until last week, when Elisabeth Williams, an Upper West Side resident, notified a local news outlet on Oct. 6 that she and her husband saw multiple owls at the water tower atop a building on West 75th Street close to Central Park West.

The couple had previously seen a single owl on an apartment windowsill a few days earlier and were shocked even then, Williams recalled.

“In a place like Manhattan, you normally really have to go out of your way to encounter nature,” she said. “And here it was, just sort of right outside our window.”

Barn owl sightings are rare in New York City

It’s not the first time that birds have captivated New Yorkers. Residents have fallen in love with American woodcocks, who are known to stop in Midtown Manhattan’s Bryant Park every year as they migrate north in early spring. And after Flaco the Eurasian eagle-owl died in 2024, dozens of mournful fans gathered to say goodbye to the beloved creature who flew around Manhattan and became a joy to many after someone let him out of his zoo enclosure

the previous year.

But barn owl sightings in New York City parks are very rare, according to the New York City Department of Parks & Recreation. New York is at the northern fringe of the barn owl's range and the barn owl population has declined “at an alarming rate” over time, according to the state Department of Environmental Conservation.

“There’s lots of excitement among New Yorkers, both birders and non-birders alike, about these owls because owls really capture the attention,” said Jessica Wilson, executive director of NYC Bird Alliance. “They’re magical, they’re nocturnal, they are secretive, they’re not commonly seen, especially on the Upper West Side of Manhattan. And to have this chance to see these birds is really thrilling.”

Photographers and casual onlookers have gathered on the street on a nightly basis to spot the owls.

“I’ve only seen one barn owl ever, and that was in California,” said Val Coleman, a retired New York City resident who was on the Upper West Side earlier this week trying to spot the owls. “At dusk, we hope they will come out to hunt. We hope they don’t eat poisoned rats with rodenticide in ’em.”

David Barrett, a Manhattan-based birder who runs the popular social media account, Manhattan Bird Alert, said he’s observed at least one adult barn owl and five fledglings at the water tower. He’s also seen an adult owl carrying rodents back to the water tower. There are believed to be two adult owls, and some photographers have claimed to have seen six fledglings, Barrett added.

“Having one barn owl is a rarity, but it’s not national news. Having a family, for the first time ever, breeding in Manhattan in recorded history, that’s special news,” Barrett said.

Screeching was heard by residents

Before the recent barn owl sightings, Williams and her hus-



An American Barn Owl sits perched on a water tower on the Upper West Side neighborhood, Wednesday, in New York. (AP PHOTO/YUKI IWAMURA)



New Yorkers gather nightly to get a glimpse of a family of American Barn Owls that have taken up residence in an Upper West Side neighborhood of Manhattan. (AP PHOTO/YUKI IWAMURA)

band heard periodic screeching noises outside going back to early September. They initially assumed it was a bird of some kind but were skeptical when a phone app indicated the noise was from a barn owl.

Thomas Obersteiner said that he first heard bizarre screeching and wailing noises from outside one evening in mid-September. It sounded like someone was “being murdered outside,” he said.

“That lasted for two or three weeks, every night, sometimes more, sometimes less, coming from different directions,” Obersteiner added. “But I had no idea what that was.”

On multiple occasions, Obersteiner or his wife ran into their children’s bedroom after mistaking the owls’ screech for a child in pain, he said. It wasn’t until he saw a news report that he realized that owls were making the sounds.

Farnsworth said the screech is typical of barn owls, who use it to communicate with one another. The screech is like a “horror movie kind of experience,” he said.

Obersteiner, who said his roof deck is the “probably the best location in town right now” to watch the owls, has been letting nature photographers access that perch to observe the owls “almost every night” since news of the barn owls spread. On one night last week, 20 people had gathered.

“We can’t say no because it’s so much fun and these people are so serious,” Obersteiner added. “It’s beautiful.”

Williams and her husband were not bird watchers before the barn owl family moved in to the water tower. But that may change soon after their “delightful” experience.

“I think we’re about to become birders,” Williams said.

Ukraine develops first drone to evacuate wounded soldiers

By **SAMYA KULLAB**
Associated Press

Six propellers whir to life, lifting a drone above a field somewhere in Ukraine. A weighted stretcher secured to its frame simulates a wounded soldier in body armor.

Far from the front line, the demonstration offers a glimpse of a far more dangerous mission: flying into a battlefield where enemy drones and artillery can leave wounded troops stranded for weeks or months, then carrying them to safety without an evacuation crew.

The Associated Press was granted exclusive access to a field demonstration of the drone. This week, StarGate was handed over to a combat brigade for evaluation under front-line conditions.

The aerial medical

evacuation drone was developed over the past year by Ukrainian defense technology company SkyFall. If it proves reliable in combat, it could transform battlefield evacuations, reaching soldiers in places that ground vehicles cannot access and potentially saving those so severely wounded that hours of waiting could cost them their lives.

“The idea came directly from the front line, from the trenches,” said SkyFall’s spokesperson, who asked not to be named because of the security risks facing Ukrainian military technology personnel. He spoke to AP wearing a balaclava. The AP was not permitted to disclose the testing location.

In some sectors, the so-called kill zone — the area under constant threat from drones and

artillery — 6 to 9 miles or farther. StarGate has a one-way range of 9 miles, potentially allowing it to reach critically wounded soldiers trapped deep inside the kill zone.

A request from a military commander

The idea grew out of a military request, the spokesperson said. Last year, Flint, commander of the 475th Separate Assault Regiment, known as Code 9.2, approached SkyFall’s founder about developing a safer way to evacuate wounded soldiers from hard-to-reach positions.

For troops in Code 9.2, reaching a front-line position to retrieve the wounded can mean traveling on foot through areas where vehicles are vulnerable to drones. Unmanned ground vehicles have taken on a growing role in evacuating

casualties and delivering supplies, but they struggle through mud, craters and shattered roads. Rivers, mines and drones can stop them altogether.

Ground robots typically take two to three hours to reach a position, depending on distance, road conditions and the threat from above, said KVN, a commander with Code 9.2.

“Covering 10 kilometers in minutes would be a drastic change on the front line,” he said.

Evacuations continue regularly in his unit’s area, he said, but it is not always possible to retrieve a wounded soldier on the same day. For someone with severe injuries, the wait can be critical.

Both Flint and KVN were identified only by their call signs in line with Ukrainian military protocol.

LEGALS

(Published in The Morning Sun on October 16th, 2026)

Legal Publication for U.S.C. 49-5310
The Southeast Kansas Community Action Program, Inc. (SEK-CAP) is submitting application for U.S.C. 49-5310 federal capital grant funds to be provided through the Kansas Department of Transportation. Persons wishing to make comments on the application are requested to do so in writing no later than 4:30 p.m. on October 30, 2026. Comments can be mailed to: Jamey Whitney, Chief Executive Officer, PO Box 128, Girard, Kansas 66743

Public Notice for Operating/Capital

The Southeast Kansas Community Action Program, Inc. (SEK-CAP) is submitting application for capital and operating assistance for transportation under the U.S.C. 5311 (rural public transportation) of the Federal Transit Act. The application will be for capital funds to replace vehicle(s) in our current fleet and for operating funds to help provide transportation services in the area. Written comments and questions regarding this application are encouraged and will be accepted until October 30, 2026, and should be sent to: Jamey Whitney, Chief Executive Officer, PO Box 128, Girard, Kansas 66743

DBE NOTIFICATION FOR CTD ADVERTISEMENT (5311, 5316 & 5317)

The Southeast Kansas Community Action Program, Inc. (SEK-CAP) receives Federal Transit Administration (FTA) operating dollars. This funding is utilized for the purchase of fuel, insurance, equipment maintenance, and storage. This agency is seeking Kansas Disadvantaged Business Enterprise (DBE) certified companies as potential vendors for these services. Please contact Jamey Whitney, Chief Executive Officer, PO Box 128, Girard, Kansas 66743 if you are a DBE or are interested learning more about the DBE program.

KDOT Policy Manual

for late applications is for KDOT to begin the process of transferring all vehicles that are within their Useful Life Benchmark to other KDOT grantee agencies. If vehicles are transferred to other agencies, 20% of the current value of the vehicle will be paid to the agency that submitted the grant application late. Applicants that are awarded capital or operating funding will receive an award letter and budget sheet. Grantees are required to sign an annual contract. Contracts are issued to each provider agency or through the Coordinated Transit District. Operating grant award contracts must be sent back to KDOT immediately upon authorized signature(s) being obtained. Capital award contracts will vary for vehicle awards throughout the funding year. The vehicle award contracts must be immediately signed by the provider agency awarded the vehicle and the CTD chairperson then and returned to KDOT.

Fiscal Responsibility
All applicants must demonstrate in the application the fiscal and managerial capability to manage the funds being requested. Applicants must have experience in managing public funds. They must also maintain an accounting system that is consistent with generally accepted accounting principles, and an accounting system that segregates funds. Applicants must have the ability to establish reasonable safety and risk management procedures. Applicants must also demonstrate the ability to comply with all federal and state regulations and contractual requirements.

To that effect, agencies will be required to provide data to complete a form that KDOT must submit to our Fiscal Services Bureau to set up payments with each new contract. This form will be sent to the agencies with the Agreement documents that require signature. Failure to do so may delay reimbursements from being able to be processed.

Public Notice
A public notice and the DBE advertisement are required for all applicants who are applying for KDOT grant funds. 5310 providers that are only applying for operating funds are not required to do a public notice. A sample public notice is available on the KDOT website with the other grant information. The public notice must be published in the local newspaper one time. The applicant should allow two weeks for comments from the public or any other interested parties. A copy of the ads, documented comments received & proof of publication must be submitted with the grant application. A copy of the notices should not be sent to KDOT with proof of other required advertising (November/May). The proof of public notice & DBE advertisement are only required when the annual application is submitted. All questions must be completed in their entirety, the application and all Certifications and Assurances must be signed by the appropriate parties, and all supporting documents, including but not limited to identification of local cash match dollars, must be submitted to consider an application complete.

BUY

OR SELL

Your Vehicle

IN THE CLASSIFIEDS