

American Kestrel

(*Falco sparverius*)



The brightly colored American kestrel is North America's smallest falcon, measuring just 8 to 10 inches in length. Although formerly known as the sparrow hawk, kestrels feed primarily on insects and small rodents. This fierce hunter adapts well to human-influenced habitats and urban settings, but the species' population is declining in many regions of the United States, including Arizona. Tucson Bird Count data show a sharp reduction in numbers locally since 2010. Kestrels suffer from habitat loss and a lack of available nest cavities. Fortunately, this species readily accepts human-crafted nest boxes.

Nest box programs are currently supporting the American kestrel around the country. Watch for these birds perching on utility wires or hovering in the sky as they search for prey below. You may hear them calling: *killy-killy-killy*.

Nest Box Specs

HOLE 3" diameter
DEPTH 13 5/8"
FLOOR 9 5/8" x 9 5/8"
OTHER swinging side door with fixed stop and safety shelf; inside perch

HABITAT Kestrels prefer semi-open country of all kinds, especially with available hunting perches providing views of surrounding land. In the Sonoran Desert kestrels frequently nest in flicker holes in saguaros. Kestrels also nest in urban and suburban palm trees, underneath untrimmed fronds.

BOX MOUNTING Boxes should be placed between 10 and 20 feet high with a northern or eastern orientation. They can be affixed to houses or other buildings. Boxes should not be placed among dense trees or shrubs, though low, open vegetation is welcome.

NESTING FACTS Kestrel pairs in Arizona deserts begin breeding in late winter. During courtship, the male often performs impressive feats of aerial display. As the time for egg-laying draws near, the male provides more and more of the female's daily food. Kestrels lay eggs as early as March, but the peak of the breeding season is in June. The birds use no nesting material, though eggs deposited on bare surfaces can sometimes lead to poor hatching and breakage. Kestrels occasionally produce more than one brood in a single year. They may return to reuse the same nests, year after year. During the winter, kestrels sometimes roost in nest boxes and cavities.

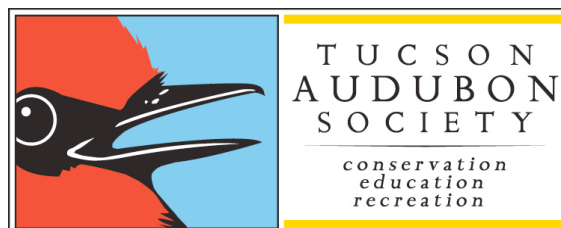


PHOTO: Doris Evans