

American Kestrel

Falco sparverius

General Information:

-The smallest and most common North American falcon is found all over the continent and north to the tree line in the summer. It is sometimes called the Sparrow Hawk, which is a misnomer as the bird is neither a hawk nor does its diet include a significant amount of sparrows or other small birds. In flight it shows the typical long tail and long pointed wings of a falcon. A bird of the open country, it often is seen perched on wires along roadsides. We've had Kestrels nest in old rabbit hutches near our barn on my dad's property.

Song:

-Alarm call a loud quick *klee-klee-klee* or *killy-killy-killy*.

Behavior:

-When perched it bobs its tail. It hunts rodents and insects from a perch or hovers. Also eats bats, small birds, small reptiles, and frogs. Not dependent on drinking water in desert because it extracts water from its diet.



Breeding:

-Monogamous and a solitary nester. During courtship the male brings food and feeds the female in the air.

Nesting:

-Incubation of 29-31 days by both sexes, but the female does more. The 1 brood per year of semi-altricial young stays in the nest for 30-31 days and is fed by the female.

Population:

-Common.

Conservation:

-Readily nests in bird boxes built especially for kestrels. Occasionally attracted to bird feeders to prey on birds. Migratory counts suggest recent decline in the Northeast; other populations seem stable. This is a very nice little raptor to have around!

Shoreline Restoration Issues:

- If you would like to create an environment friendly to the American Kestrel I would suggest planting 1/2 of your buffer zone in a mixture of trees, shrubs, and ferns, and the other half in wildflowers that will grow on your site. I would also highly encourage the planting of emergent aquatic vegetation and a thick planting of Sweet Flag, Blue Flag Iris, Sandbar Willow, Sweet Gale, Swamp Rose, Marsh Marigold, and Wool-Grass along the shoreline.