



How to Help

American Kestrels

The American Kestrel is the smallest falcon in North America. The species is widespread, occupying open areas across the entire continent except for the high arctic. American Kestrels are often conspicuous residents, perching on power lines and scanning for insects and small mammals, their primary food source. The kestrel is attracted to human-modified habitats, such as pastures and parkland, and often is found near areas of human activity, including some heavily developed urban areas. They can be helped by maintaining large open hunting areas and by placing nest boxes on poles.

What American Kestrels Need

Food: American Kestrels hunt for insects and small rodents, particularly mice and voles, in large open areas with short grass or other low vegetation. They are "sit-and-wait" predators that sit on a high perch from which they can scan the terrain below. When prey appears, kestrels drop rapidly to the ground to make a capture, returning to a perch to consume their prize. Birds may also hunt by hovering over fields where perches are lacking.

Nesting: Nests in old woodpecker holes or other tree cavities in open hunting areas of 50 acres or more. Seeks nest sites unobstructed by tree branches or foliage.

Shelter: American Kestrels shelter in their nest cavities during breeding season, and have no specific shelter requirements outside of breeding season.

Other: Kestrels Across America is a research and conservation organization focused on American Kestrels. Their website offers lots of resources for nest boxes, monitoring, and conservation of this species.

How You Can Help

- Mow fields annually to provide areas for kestrel foraging.
- Consider adding 15-20 foot poles as artificial perches in or along the perimeter of fields where kestrels could forage. Perches should be placed well away from roads where raptors are prone to collide with vehicles.
- If possible use Integrated Pest Management or organic approaches to pest control to avoid using pesticides which can reduce prey abundance and possibly poison these falcons.
- Nest-boxes should be placed in open areas at least 10 feet high on a tree, pole, or other structure without branches or other obstructions near the nest hole. Boxes should be about 17 x 8 x 10 inches with a 3 inch diameter entrance hole. The bottom of the nest box should be covered with 2-3 inches of wood shavings to cushion and insulate eggs.
- Maintain nest boxes in good repair.
- Visit www.kestrrelsacrossamerica.org