

## KESTREL BOXES

by James T. Ross  
Department of Psychology  
Alfred University  
Alfred, New York 14802

Some of the members of Raptor Research Foundation would, no doubt, like to become involved in the glamorous aspects of a breeding project, but cannot, due to such demands as school, employment, or lack of adequate facilities. This writer feels that they can, with a minimum of time and effort, become involved first hand in a project such as outlined here.

The project simply is this--put up some Kestrel boxes. The various Fish and Game departments long ago realized that in most cases there were more Wood Ducks flying around in the Spring than there were suitable cavities in which they could nest. The answer was simple--put up some man-made cavities in the form of nesting boxes. The result of this was that there was a beneficial increase in many areas in the Wood Duck population.

The lesson learned from the Wood Duck is applicable to our little falcon, the Kestrel. In the past few years we have had much success with a standard size box constructed of pine or plywood, measuring from 15"-17" in height on a base of 8x8". A 3" dia. hole is a sufficient entrance, cut about 12" from the base. The height that the box should be located at depends upon the area in which it is placed. We have had success with a box located in a spruce only 12' above the ground; however, this area was on a piece of university property almost immune from any type of human or animal interference. Generally speaking, 30 to 40 feet is best.

It is a good idea to put the boxes up in January or February. This might act as a sort of "ecological magnet" to keep any wintering Kestrels in the area. Many times the Kestrels will roost at night in the boxes. Trouble might be encountered from Starlings requisitioning the box before the Kestrels get a chance to set up housekeeping. This can be discouraged by removing their nesting materials. Several times we have successfully reclaimed a box for the resident hawks. Generally, if one follows the basics of raptor ecology some success can be hoped for on the first attempt. In brief one should try to locate the boxes near a source of water and in an area where Kestrels have been known to frequent.

In summary, the effort put forth is well rewarded for there is something intangible in knowing that you were at least partly responsible for seeing a brood of eyasses hatched out and on wing.

I wish to extend thanks to Doug Pineo for his help in this project.