

1. Saw the lumber to the specified sizes.
2. Center the entrance hole 3 inches down from the top of the front and, if you're using planed (smooth) lumber, saw six 1/8-inch deep, horizontal grooves below the entrance hole on the inside to make it easier for the young birds to climb out of the box.
3. Center the sides along the back. Two or three 1/8-inch holes can be drilled through the top and bottom of the back to make nailing the box to the tree easier and prevent splitting the wood. Nail the sides into place.
4. Add the front, then the bottom.
5. Nail the cleat to the back so the box top just slips under it. Use the two inch screw to hold the top in place.
6. Drill five 1/4-inch drain holes through the bottom of the box. An inch or two of coarse saw dust, shavings or dry grass can be placed in the box.
7. Use 3- to 4-inch galvanized nails to attach the box to a pole or tree.
8. If you wish to paint or finish the box, be sure to use a nontoxic material. Light colors are best because they absorb less heat from the sun, keeping the box cooler and preventing the young birds from overheating.

By the time the kestrels finish nesting, the bottom of the box will be covered with prey remains, feathers and droppings. There is no need to remove the accumulated debris or clean the box, but fresh sawdust can be added after the nestlings are gone if you like. Kestrels often return to their previous breeding area, so if the nest box is available and in good shape there is an excellent chance that it will be used again.



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Build Your Own KESTREL NEST BOX



LOTTERY DOLLARS WORKING FOR WILDLIFE

Most people are familiar with bird houses and know what fun it can be to build one and watch the occupants. Bluebirds, wrens and martins are familiar tenants of the typical bird house designs. But did you know that some birds of prey will nest in houses designed and placed especially for them?

Only eight and a half inches long, the American Kestrel is North America's smallest falcon. It is found throughout the continent, including most parts of Arizona, and is commonly seen on telephone lines and poles along roads. You may have seen one hovering in mid-air over an open field, looking for large insects and small rodents.

With a diet of insects and rodents, the kestrel is a friend of people. Kestrels used to be called "sparrow hawks", probably because of their small size rather than their diet, although they do sometimes eat birds and reptiles. Kestrels are also handsome birds to watch. The male is especially striking with bluish wings, rusty red tail and back, and two black bars on each cheek. The female is slightly larger than the male and mostly reddish brown. Kestrels normally lay four to five eggs and incubate them for a month. The young leave the nest about thirty days after hatching and remain with their parents for a few more weeks. You can find more complete information about kestrels in bird guides and other books at the library or bookstore.

Kestrels often nest in cities and towns if a nest cavity and nearby hunting area are available. Kestrels are secondary cavity nesters, meaning that they nest in holes excavated by other birds or in natural

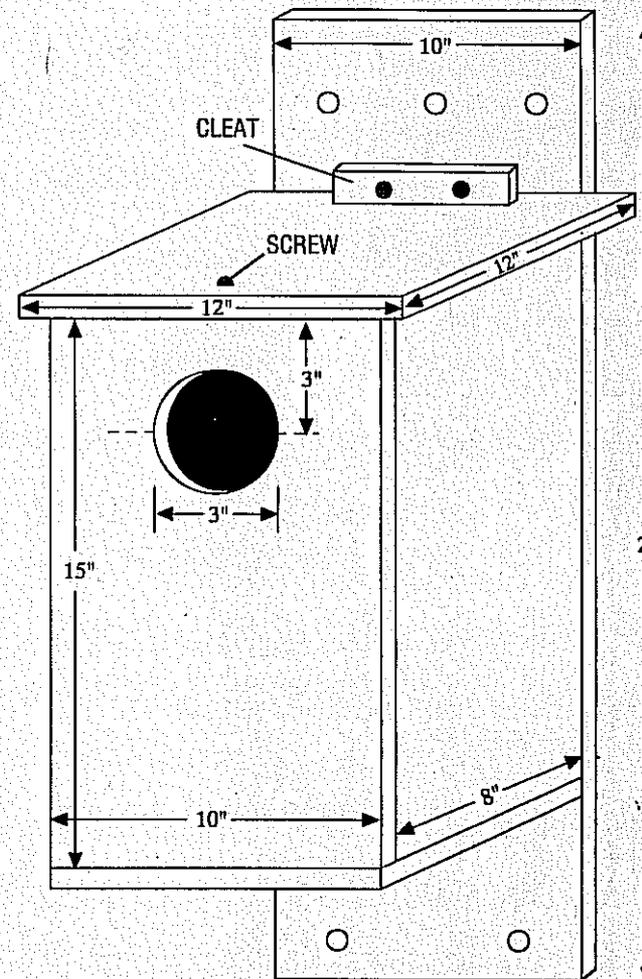
cavities and fissures. Because they often have a difficult time finding suitable nest cavities in urban areas, they are easily attracted to nest boxes. If you live near an open space area and put up a nest box, you may become host to a pair of kestrels in your own backyard.

Kestrels are not choosy about the quality of the box they nest in, but the box must be placed in the proper habitat. Open grassy areas are essential for feeding. Pastures, weedy fields, airports, golf courses, desert and sagebrush are all areas that kestrels use for hunting. Even suburban neighborhoods with few trees or small trees sometimes attract these birds. If you've seen kestrels hunting or perching in your area, it is probably a good site for a nest box.

In Arizona, the nest box should be in place by March. Select a place where it will not be disturbed. It should be ten to fifteen feet from the ground and can be fastened to a tree or pole or even to the side of a little-used building. If the box is in a tree, make sure that branches do not obstruct the bird's access. No matter where the box is placed, it must be in or next to a large open space where the birds can hunt.

BUILDING THE NEST BOX

Kestrels are tolerant of people and have been known to nest in a wide variety of artificial cavities. By following a few simple directions, you can build a durable box that is safe and comfortable for the birds and easy to clean.



Materials

Sides (2): 1" x 8" x 15"

Front: 1" x 10" x 15"

Back: 1" x 10" x 25"

Top: 1" x 12" x 12"

Bottom: 1" x 9" x 10"

Cleat: 1" x 1" x 8"

2" wood or sheet metal screw (1)

Galvanized, aluminum, or resin-coated nails