



Serving, educating and empowering our community for natural resource stewardship

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AMERICAN KESTREL MOUNTING - The American Kestrel prefers open country, especially parks, farmlands, and open areas adjacent to woodlands. Place the box on a tree or telephone pole near an open area, between 10 and 30 feet above the ground. Keep branches away from the box opening. They will readily use a nest box placed in an open area, even along a highway, and the more that are put up, the more kestrels will live in the area. Because of the bird's tendency to sometimes eat other small birds, you may wish to place the box away from those for other species. Placing the house in fields or orchards may benefit crops, as the kestrels will eat harmful voles and insects.

The kestrel does not line its nest, but some experts recommend providing wood chips (not sawdust, which can hurt the baby kestrel's eyes). Kestrel young are tended by both parents. The female broods and feeds the new nestlings, and the male brings all the food. The nestlings are downy white at first, but become well feathered by 20 days of age. The young develop rapidly, leaving the nest 28 to 30 days after hatching.

EASTERN SCREECH-OWL MOUNTING - The Eastern Screech Owl is very common in the suburban/urban backyard. This owl species has been in decline and is eager to use good nesting boxes due to stiff competition and deforestation. In April the female will lay 2-6 eggs with an incubation period of 26 days. The young will leave the nest around 28 days. The diet of the screech owl consists of mice, lizards, cockroaches, and spiders to name a few.

Mount your birdhouse 10-50 feet on a pole or tree. The screech owl is very docile and occasionally viewing the interior of the box for short periods of time can be done. Do not view near fledging time, or the young owls may leave the nest early. We recommend using a baffle on tree or pole to discourage predators. Add wood chips, wood shavings, or straw are added to the bottom of each box.

During late winter, a male screech owl will claim one or two nesting sites and try to attract the female to them by placing food at the nest site. Pairs usually bond for life. The female will not construct a nest. Instead she makes a depression with her body when laying eggs onto nesting debris. The first few eggs are laid over one to two days. The following eggs are then laid every two to three days. Only the female incubates the eggs. During incubation, the female will stay in the cavity except for brief periods during dusk. The male will bring her food during the incubation stage. The incubation period lasts approximately 27 to 30 days. A few days before the eggs hatch, they will make a peeping sound. The owls are born naked and with their eyes shut. The male will bring the young birds food during the nestling phase. During the first two weeks after hatching, the female will brood the young. By the third week the young have developed feathers and their eyes are open. At this time, both male and female will hunt for food for the young birds. During the fourth week, the young will have fledged the nest. The young birds will remain dependent on the parents for 8 to 10 weeks. The maximum life span of an Eastern Screech Owl is 13 years. First year survival rates of screech owls are between 30 and 36 percent.

Once a year the nest box should be inspected for damage, repaired and cleaned if need be. The best time for this will be in late fall around the end of October and November. Discard any wood chips and replace with fresh nesting material, fix any structural damage and make sure it is in good condition for the next nesting season.

MAINTAINING NEST BOXES - Once a year the nest box should be inspected for damage, repaired and cleaned if need be. The best time for this will be in late fall around the end of October and November. Wait until the nesting season is over. After the fledgling kestrels have left and the parents are not visiting the box anymore you can then visit the box. Discard any wood chips and replace with fresh nesting material, fix any structural damage and make sure it is in good condition for the next nesting season.

Managing Our Natural Resources

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