



MONTEREY NEWS



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American Kestrel Falcons

The kestrel falcons are beautiful little hawks less than a foot long, larger than a robin but smaller than a crow, with black stripes under their eyes and down the side of their face to reduce glare from the sun, while hunting high in the sky. They are distinguished by their streamlined, thintapered wings known for their amazing maneuverability when in flight. They have plumes of feathers on their legs and have a small projection on their beaks that is developed into a tooth to kill their prey similar to peregrine falcons with an explosive swoop from above.

And as their population has declined by as much as 50% since the mid-1900s. A primary driver of population decline is clearing woodlands and the removal of dead trees in which other birds create cavities in their search for grubs. As their population has declined they have shifted into the margins of urban areas, sitting along power lines to stalk and then drop down upon small mammals, birds, or insects below. Conservation organizations like the American Kestrel Partners of New England are developing modern methods of tracking technology for recent movements during the migration and climate changes. More northern populations migrate further south than populations to the south, in what is referred to as a “leap frog” migration pattern.



They are cavity nesters who take over holes created by others. They prefer nests as much as twenty-five feet from the ground, though will also nest in boxes that are lower. They generally don't line their nests, and have clutches typically with four to five young, as illustrated.

Since spring is the season of fledglings learning how to fly, it is wise to keep your cats indoors. All the young birds will benefit. This leaves the fledgling kestrels to find and feed on rodents, dragonflies, tomato horn worms in your vegetable garden or garter snakes in your flower garden. — George B. Emmons