



American Kestrels

- The smallest North American falcons, kestrels are about the same size as mourning doves, with a broader wingspan – up to two feet - and a much fiercer nature. They snatch insects, mice and other small prey, usually on the ground but sometimes in flight.
- American kestrels' striking looks include slate-blue wings and heads on males, and a pair of black stripes on each cheek in both males and females, sometimes referred to as their mustaches and sideburns. They're easily identified by their excited cry of "Killy, killy, killy."
- Have you ever caught a glimpse of a swift, graceful flyer while watching a night baseball game? It might be an American kestrel. These little falcons often perch on lamp posts at night to catch insects drawn to the light. Every now and then they make cameo TV appearances during sporting events.
- Some favorite prey, like voles and mice, leave urine trails that show up in ultra-violet light. Kestrels use these trails to track the hapless rodents. After a hearty meal, they stash leftovers in clumps of grass, bushes, fence posts, tree limbs or tree cavities.
- American Kestrels nest in tree cavities, which are becoming scarcer as forests are cleared. Like bluebirds and other cavity nesters, kestrels are declining in parts of their range. In many parts of North America you can attract them to your yard by mounting a nest box 10 to 30 feet off the ground in early February. For nest box instructions visit: <http://www.birds.cornell.edu/nestinginfo/nestboxref/construct>



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