Placement of the Nest Box

SAFETY
1. Children should never put up a Kestrel nest box alone
2. Use a ladder only when it is secured and someone is holding the bottom
3. Have the proper equipment for the task at hand; cleaning, installing, observing

HEIGHT OF THE BOX
1. The most common placement range is 10 to 16 feet off the ground
2. Opening should be southerly to easterly, with an unobstructed clear flight path to the opening
3. Distance between boxes is determined by suitable habitat, usually less than a 1/4 mile distance
4. Avoid heavily forested areas
5. Make sure there is a perch site, a branch, fence post, etc.
6. According to resources a box could go unoccupied for sometime
7. Ideally, the box should be in place by the beginning of February
8. Avoid areas of heavy pesticide/herbicide use

PREDATOR PROTECTION
1. The following are common predators of cavity nesters; raccoons, snakes, cats, squirrels and other birds
2. A baffle of 2 foot wide flashing wrapped around the post or tree about 4 feet off the ground is a good deterrent
3. Metal or flashing around the hole
4. Use large screws, 16 penny galvanized nails or double-headed framing nails
5. Pre-drill holes to avoid splitting the wood
6. Make sure the box does not wiggle a great deal

MONITORING THE BOX
1. Nest boxes are usually checked in the afternoon only
2. Do not check box in inclement weather
3. Keep a journal: record the arrival, nesting and departure of your kestrels
4. Females usually lay an egg every other day, normally up to 5 eggs
5. American Kestrels can double clutch in one nesting season
6. Observe plumage/coloration, size and shape, vocalizations and behavior
7. Kestrels are sensitive to disturbance during the first 2 weeks of a 30 day incubation period

CLEANING
1. Clean at the end of the nesting season, Sept./or October
2. Do any repairs during the fall and remount if necessary
How to Build a Kestrel Box

Materials:
- One 1” x 10” x 8’ board
- Two hinges
- 1 1/2” galvanized nails

Wire Construction:
1. Mark and cut out the pieces as shown.
2. Cut a 3” diameter entrance hole in the front piece, 11 1/2” from the bottom edge.
3. Drill two 1/4” holes near the top edge of both side pieces. Drill four 1/4” holes in the floor piece, as shown, to allow for drainage.
4. Assemble the box as shown in the diagram.
5. Attach the roof on top of the box using two hinges, for easy cleaning access.
6. Place one nail in the side of the roof and one nail in the face of the adjoining side piece, as shown in the diagram, so that they line up vertically. Use wire tied around the two nails to keep the roof closed to predators.
7. Place 2-3” of sawdust on the bottom of the box.

Kestrel boxes have been shown to seriously increase the number of nesting kestrel pairs in an area.

Design Courtesy of Minnesota DNR
Illustration Courtesy of the USGS, Northern Prairie Wildlife Research Center

The American Kestrel in the last several decades is experiencing a 40% below average number count across North America. Iowa is one state that lists the falcon as endangered. Various theories are being tested by science to determine what could be causing such a drastic decline. Four hypotheses exist at this time; Pesticides, 80% of their diet is insects, loss of habitat, increase in predators and West Nile Virus.