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Critter Creek Wildlife Station  
36710 Sand Creek Road  
Squaw Valley, CA 93675



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# Spring Open House

Saturday, March 21<sup>st</sup> - 11:00 a.m. to 2:00 p.m.  
Last Sign-In 1:30 p.m.



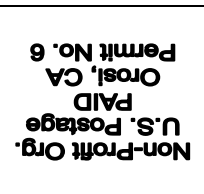
The Open House will be unguided, so the pace is leisurely offering more opportunities to take pictures and spend time with your favorite animal. Come see the foothills blossoming into spring. Admission is by donation. Call (559) 338-2415 for information or look online at [www.crittercreek.org](http://www.crittercreek.org)



SaveMart S.H.A.R.E.S. Program first installment received. If you would like to help out, please let us know and we can send you a card to swipe at checkout. Again, it costs you nothing; but, we receive a quarterly donation.

Also, remember to use Amazon Smile while shopping online, as we receive a quarterly donation from Amazon based on the amount of everyone's purchase.

**Critter Creek Chronicle**  
Animals for Education



# Kestrel Numbers Declining

The American Kestrel is the smallest and most common small falcon in North America and a superb flier. Sometimes you see them referred to as the "Sparrow hawk." Occasionally this small falcon may take a sparrow for a meal, but not often. The sparrow has to be an easy mark. Their hunting technique is from a tree branch or hovering like a miniature helicopter and then dropping down on their prey in open fields. Often you see them sitting on telephone poles or lines. The characteristic tail flick will help you spot them. Tail flicking or bobbing helps the small falcon keep its balance on the small wires. Like all falcons it has a sleek body form and a sharp notched beak. Males and females differ in color and are easy to identify. However, both carry the black vertical stripes through and behind the eyes and white underparts with a rusty coloring. Both males and females also have slate blue patches on their wings and on the tops of their heads. The males have bluish gray wings with a rust colored tail ending with a black tail band and white tips. The females have black and rust splotches on their wings with many thin dark bands on their tails. Kestrels will nest in cavities made by woodpeckers or from weathering. They will also use abandoned buildings and nest boxes provided by humans. The kestrel's natural diet includes small song birds, bats, lizards, small snakes, and a variety of insects common to its territory (taken from Wildlife Health News published by The North American Wildlife Health Care Center).



## Why Put Up A Nest Box?

In recent years, researchers have become alarmed by kestrel population declines across North America. Since nesting habitat is important for this species' success, The Peregrine Fund is encouraging anyone with enough open space to put up a human-made nest box. The birds love them, and they offer a front-row seat for watching raptors raise a family.

## Spring Is Here

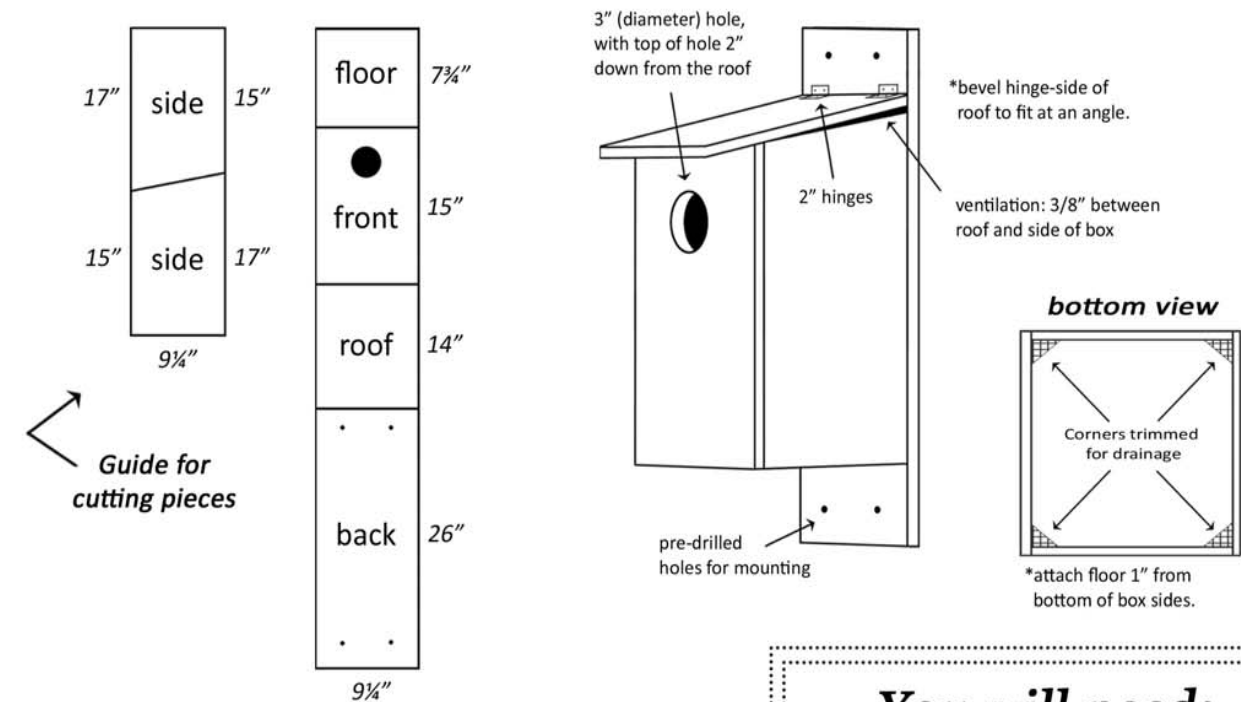
- Reminder please put off trimming trees.
- Remember that with the exception of the turkey vulture most birds have little sense of smell, so if you find a baby bird that has fallen from its nest, you can place it back into its nest without causing problems.
- Never relocate an animal during the spring, because you will doom its young to starvation.
- If you own a swimming pool, frequently check your yard for wild, nesting ducks. Baby ducks just don't appear in your pool.
- Remember for many days deer leave their fawns hidden in a safe place and return only to feed them until they are strong enough to keep up with the herd. So if you find one leave it alone unless you know the mother is dead.

## Newsletter Renewal Notice

Spring Cleaning is hitting our mailing list. If you have not renewed your membership after 2013, you will be removed from our mailings and this will be your last newsletter. Please renew today.

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[www.peregrinefund.org/american-kestrel](http://www.peregrinefund.org/american-kestrel)

## Plans for Installing an American Kestrel Nest Box



### Instructions

- Cut lumber using a table saw and entrance hole using a jig saw. Assemble box as shown, with wood screws. Pre-drill holes in back if using 3" screws to mount box.
- Do not use paint or preservatives.
- Place 2" of wood shavings in the bottom of the box for bedding.
- Mount box at least 8 feet off the ground. Space multiple boxes 1/2 mile apart.
- Install nest box by mid-February, before the breeding season.
- Clean the box, make repairs, and replace wood shavings every January.

**A note on placement:** For kestrel parents to find prey around their box, there should be plenty of small rodents or insects nearby. Generally this means low vegetation (lawn grass doesn't count) with a few isolated perches. Avoid wooded areas. Live in a city? No problem! Mount a box on the side of a building. Also be patient, since kestrels don't always move in during the first breeding season.

Isolated trees, wooden poles, barn walls and even low-activity house walls (no doors) are excellent nest box stands. Get permission from your local utility or DOT before mounting boxes on power poles or road signs, and always get permission from public or private property owners before installing boxes.

**Safety First!** Make sure that nest boxes can be safely accessed for maintenance and monitoring.

### You will need:

- 1" x 10" x 8' untreated cedar or white pine (1" x 10" boards from the store actually measure 3/4" x 9 1/4").
- 20-30 galvanized 1 1/2" wood screws.
- Two galvanized 2" hinges.
- Coarse wood shavings (NOT sawdust).
- Materials for mounting the nest box (Four 3" screws or steel straps).

