

Prescott Audubon Society's American Kestrel Nest Box Program

2024 Progress Report

Change in Program Management

The Prescott Audubon Society (PAS) continued to participate in the American Kestrel Nest Box Program under the management of Dave Frechette. However, at the end of the 2024 kestrel breeding season, Dave “retired” from this volunteer position. Dave has adeptly managed the program since its inception in 2017 with a level of dedication and enthusiasm commensurate with his knowledge and concern for the welfare of this charismatic falcon. His direct involvement will be missed, but he is training Cathy Wills and Kurt Baden for future co-management of the program. We hope to continue this Prescott Audubon program as successfully as Dave did.

Nest Monitor Volunteers Observed Total of 11 American Kestrel Fledglings from 2 Nests

About 23 kestrel nest boxes exist in the greater Prescott area and were monitored for breeding. One nest box in Chino Valley was used by a mated kestrel pair to raise 5 healthy nestlings from all 5 laid eggs. The brood of 3 male and 2 female nestlings were banded by Tuk Jacobson, the Raptor Management Coordinator of Arizona Game and Fish Department. In subsequent days, the fledglings were observed outside the nest box and being fed by their protective parents. This same Chino Valley nest box was also successfully used in 2022 (producing 5 banded fledglings) and in 2023 (producing 4 banded fledglings). We suspect, but do not know, if the same unbanded mated adults are returning to this box each year.

A few known tree cavities in the area were also monitored for nesting American Kestrels. One such cavity, high in a dead tree in the Prescott National Forest, was used and produced 6 American Kestrel fledglings. Because of the potential instability of the tree and the height of the cavity, the nestlings could not be safely reached and banded.

2 New Nest Boxes Installed and 3 Inactive Boxes Removed

At the location of the dead tree mentioned above, and several months after breeding ceased, a new nest box on a pole was erected a fair distance from, but within view of the dead tree. After installation, a male kestrel was observed “checking out” the new nest box. It is hoped that the new nest box will be used if the dead tree ever falls. If so, the nest could be visually monitored and the nestlings banded. Banding provides researchers with vital information about this species’ seasonal movements and territories.

One avid supporter of the nest box monitoring program and an active Arizona Master Naturalist requested a site visit of her own property near Willow Lake to determine if it was viable American Kestrel habitat for nesting and breeding. Kestrel’s have been observed near her property in the past. With Dave Frechette’s evaluation and approval, the new nest box was installed.

Three nest boxes, having been inactive or unmonitored by private landowners, were removed after the 2024 breeding season.

Thank You to PAS's Active Partners

Thank you to all of our nest box hosts and observers.

Thank you to Tuk Jacobson and AGFD for the opportunity to participate and for your time and resources that you invest in banding kestrel nestlings.

Thank you to Prescott Creeks and to its Executive Director, Michael Byrd. Prescott Creeks currently hosts 3 American Kestrel nest boxes and 4 Wood Duck boxes within the Watson Woods Riparian Preserve.

Thank you to the City of Prescott and the Prescott National Forest for allowing program nest boxes to be installed in suitable kestrel habitat and accessible to nest monitors.

Thank you to the Arizona Master Naturalist program and to its host sponsor, the Highlands Center for Natural History. Your support of the kestrel nest box program in the form of increasing public awareness of it and in actively recruiting volunteer monitors is appreciated.

If you would like to host a nest box on your property or help monitor one of our existing boxes, please send a note to contact@prescottaudubon.org .

Please report any sightings of an American Kestrel with a large blue or black band on the left leg to us at contact@prescottaudubon.org .