

## AMERICAN KESTREL NEST BOXES

Population numbers of American Kestrels across the United States have decreased sharply over the last 50 years. Several years ago the American Kestrel Partnership (AKP), a project of The Peregrine Fund, began a program to install and monitor nest boxes for kestrels in an effort to understand this decline. Prescott Audubon's participation in this program began in 2017 with 4 nest boxes and has expanded to 23 boxes in locations from Prescott to Paulden. This year Tuk Jacobson, Raptor Management Coordinator for the Arizona Game and Fish Department (AGFD) which manages the program in Arizona, banded 9 kestrel nestlings in two of our nest boxes.

Although Prescott Audubon does not analyze the data we collect for AKP, observations over the last few years have raised intriguing, though unanswerable, questions. Is it the same kestrel pair which returns to a previously used nest box? That's possible, perhaps even likely. If a kestrel pair has successfully raised young to fledging in a nest box, why would the box remain unused the following season?

Three of our nest boxes had successful nests for three consecutive years and then were not used after that. Others were abandoned after just one or two seasons. Did something happen to one or both parent kestrels? This could have happened when a pair was seen together near a box which had been used the previous year. After a while, the male was no longer seen and the nest box was ultimately taken over by House Sparrows. Would a change in the surrounding area cause the kestrels to find another nest location? In one instance, removal from an adjacent property of a large tree in which newly-fledged young kestrels had sheltered may have resulted in abandonment of a nest box which had been used successfully for four years.

These possible explanations for our observations are speculations; we will never know the kestrels' reasons for choosing or not choosing our nest boxes or any other nesting locations. This was the third consecutive season for each of the two boxes which had successful nests this year. We hope that use continues.

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

Prescott Audubon would like to thank Tuk Jacobson and AGFD for the opportunity to participate in the kestrel nest box program. We also thank all of our nest box hosts and observers, Prescott Creeks Preservation Association, and the City of Prescott for their help with this program.

## WOOD DUCK NEST BOXES

Wood Ducks build a nest of wood chips and down feathers, usually in tree cavities. In 2017 Prescott Audubon installed six nest boxes for Wood Ducks to help make up for the loss of suitable trees in Prescott, one of only a few regions in Arizona where these ducks are known to breed. An initial clutch in 2017 remained unhatched. Beginning in 2020, ducklings hatched in and then left one of the boxes and, in 2021, in a second box as well. Wood Ducks

have used both of those two boxes successfully since then. Inspection after the breeding season this year showed that the two boxes had a total of ten hatched eggs and two unhatched eggs. The ducklings are not banded since they leap out of the nest about 24 hours after hatching.