

Kestrel Nest Box Program

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The Calvert County Natural Resources Division started the American Kestrel Nest Box program to help provide nesting habitat, gain a better understanding of the local breeding population and to promote conservation research of the species.

SKILLS NEEDED

- Ability to work independently
- Ability to identify American Kestrels, European Starlings (eggs, nestlings and adults)
- Hike across uneven and overgrown terrain, including off established trails, to get to nest box locations.

Optional, but Preferred, Skills

- Access to a smart phone or tablet with go pro app

VOLUNTEER DUTIES

- Monitor nest boxes using binoculars and go pro camera setup

REQUIREMENTS & EXPECTATIONS

- Check boxes independently or in teams
- Be exposed to ticks, chiggers, mosquitoes, bees/wasps, poison ivy, bad weather, and other wild life

TRAININGS

- Learn how to properly monitor nest boxes and receive nest box list

PROJECT DATES

- **Winter:** prepare nest boxes
- **Spring:** monitor nest sites, remove starlings
- **Summer:** monitor nest sites, remove starlings
- **Fall:** data management, volunteer appreciation

Summary of 2020 Activities

In 2020 due to Covid-19 we did not have volunteers monitoring nest boxes. Gene Groshon checked in on most of the nest boxes but no evidence of Kestrels nesting were found. There were also no sightings of kestrels anywhere near the nest boxes during the breeding season. There was breeding activity (copulation) seen on MI Bowen Rd on 3/22/2020. Gene have not been able to reach out to the landowners about installing a box though.

Future Plans

Gene will be removing nest boxes as they are not able to be sufficiently monitored and they have proven to be heavy starling nesting areas with no kestrels seen in the area during the breeding season. He will try to get a box installed on MI Bowen Road since that appears to be a possible breeding area. His focus with kestrel research will now mostly be on winter trapping and banding. The nest box program will continue and he will try to do some monitoring trainings/meetings with prospective volunteers. Perhaps a power point training video could be used to gain interest of volunteers. He will type up a set protocol for monitoring visits (how long to watch during a visit, frequency of visits, etc.) As an incentive, give volunteers a chance to join the winter trapping, a thank you for their efforts since it is an arduous task monitoring boxes with minimal reward.