

**BACKYARD BIRD NEWS
WILDLIFE HABITAT
APRIL 2017**



AMERICAN KESTREL

The American Kestrel, is our smallest and most common Falcon. It can be seen with regularity, both winter and in appropriate areas, summer, along the highways and roads of the Midwest. They like to hunt from “high wires” and tree tops, for mice and other small rodents, in the mowed ditches and other grassy spots. As with all raptors, Kestrels have great vision and are sometimes seen hovering, over these areas as they spot their prey.

Kestrels are “cavity” nesters and will use properly placed nest boxes along many Interstate Highways. In the more natural scenes, they may use old Pileated Woodpecker or Flicker holes as their nesting spots. The nest defense, may begin as early as February, but the actual Egg laying and incubation, normally occurs in April. They are solitary types and the male will start bringing food to his mate, long

YOUR INFORMATION STORE

APRIL IS THE FIRST BIG MIGRATION MONTH OF SPRING

MANY OF OUR WINTER VISITORS WILL BE GONE BY THE MONTHS END

BLUEBIRDS WILL BE NESTING

GOLDFINCHES WILL REALLY TURN TO GOLD THIS MONTH

THIS IS "GET READY FOR ORIOLE AND HUMMINGBIRD" MONTH (SEE BACK PAGE FOR DETAILS)

A FIELD GUIDE WILL HELP NEW BIRDERS TO KNOW THESE NEW VISITORS

WE SELL ONLY CLEAN NYJER SEED TRY “GOLDEN SAFFLOWER”

before the nesting time. She stays near the nest site and he will bring food to her, announcing his arrival with loud cries. If she is in the nest, she leaves and they fly to a spot nearby, where the food transfer occurs. A normal clutch is four eggs and it takes about thirty days for incubation. The female does most of this, but he gives some daytime relief. When they hatch, the female will brood them for about nine days and there after only at night. The nestling period is about thirty days and then the young will venture out into the real world. If the nest is in a tree, the young will race around the branches, constantly checking their flight capabilities and are still fed by both parents. This will last about two weeks and then they are seemingly on their own.

Young Kestrels, will sometimes flock up in late summer for a few weeks. These groups eventually split, either by migration or mature birds, driving them off, for their winter hunting territory. Many seem to migrate South, but a goodly number will remain up here for the Winter. These are beautiful birds, with their rusty body color and smart sideburns. The female's body is all reddish brown, while the slightly smaller male has slate colored wings.

Make a habit, even now, to see these lovely little Falcons, the next time you are on the Interstate or any country road. As one of my early mentors told me, "watch the wires". Always look for something, that doesn't belong there.

APRIL RAMBLINGS

April is one of the 2 most exciting migration months of the year. We will welcome back many of our summer favorites to the yard once again. The Brown Thrasher, Catbird, Towhees and Chipping Sparrow to name a few. The Goldfinch are yellow again and all is well. This might be the year you introduce moving water to your yard. This seems to be as great or even greater attraction than a food source.

A note of sadness as well, for the Juncos and White Throated Sparrows will be returning back up North to their breeding grounds. Purchase a good field guide, if you don't have one and enjoy these birds even more. It is fun to be able to identify these new strangers as they arrive. We get many calls on bird identification and it is helpful if the caller has a guide to describe the mystery bird. It also adds to your enjoyment as you figure them out on your own.

Bluebirds will get serious about their nesting as the weather warms and the winds

subside. If you have Bluebirds, be sure you have their houses protected from snakes and Raccoons, as many well meaning people just set them up for these predators. If you don't know how, we can tell you how.

The plantings in your yard will be the long time barometer for the birds you will attract, so plan it carefully and you won't be disappointed down the line.

ORIOLE FEEDERS

Orioles are not only beautiful to observe, they can be easily attracted to your yards, most years. I say this, because some years, they just seem to straggle up here, as cold fronts either are too dominant or long-lasting. They seem to love jellies, Oranges (Grapefruit et al), and Hummingbird nectar. Some years, fruit flavored suet products are also favored. To attract them here in the Midwest, we must be vigilant about getting the feeders up and ready before the Orioles arrive. The normal arrival date is about May 1, so I always have my feeding stations ready a week in advance. They migrate at night, so are tired, hungry and often cold on the morning they arrive. They usually hit the feeders with vengeance and the new birds soon catch onto the feast. If you see the Orioles in your yard and then say "I must get my feeders up" you are already too late. These birds are a great delight, so try it this spring.

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