



Nest Box News

Grafton Land Trust

Preserving Grafton's open spaces since 1958

March 2016



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VOLUNTEER



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Submit Your Pics!

Got a cool photo from a recent monitoring trip? Send it to kestrel@graftonland.org and we'll publish it in the "Photo of the month" section of *Nest Box News*.



We are a member supported organization that relies on you - *birders* - as well as hikers, equestrians, hunters and other recreational users to manage our lands. Please [become a member](#) today!

Dear Kestrel Project Volunteer,

RE: Nest Box Maintenance / Spring Monitoring Season

Christine Thurber and I took advantage of the great weather last Saturday to conduct annual spring maintenance on all nine of our kestrel nest boxes. We removed last year's nesting material and wood shavings, scraped and cleaned the inside of the boxes, and placed a fresh bed of Aspen wood shavings at the bottom of each box.



A pair of American kestrels bring prey items to their four chicks during the 2015 breeding season. (Photo by Troy Gipps)

We placed 10 nest boxes in 2015, but one that was placed on private property near North Brigham Hill Road met an unfortunate end last fall when it was run over by a tractor ... in the middle of an open field! The 15-foot 4x4 that supported the nest box snapped like a twig when the tractor struck it. We are now using that nest box for training purposes. We will replace it if we can find a suitable "tractor-free" location in that area.



In this video, Kestrel Project Volunteer Coordinator, Christine Thurber, describes the process of cleaning and preparing our nest boxes for the return of breeding pairs of American kestrels. For best results, watch the video in HD. (Video by Troy Gipps)

Monitoring Season

If you are interested in remaining involved with the project this year, Christine and I would like to hear from you. Please send the following information to us at kestrel@graftonland.org. The monitoring season will start very soon, so we want to ensure we have coverage at all of our nest boxes.

1. Your Full Name
2. The nest box(es) you are planning to monitor. Visit our [Kestrel Project page](#) for a list of nest box locations. See the Quick Links section on the left side of this newsletter for our Monitoring Form.
3. Your email address
4. Your phone number

We are very excited about the prospect of another successful kestrel breeding season in Grafton. Last year, which was the first year of this project, we had a pair of kestrels use one of our nest boxes. With the help of MassWildlife's State Ornithologist Andrew Vitz, we successfully banded all four of the kestrel chicks. This was significant, as the closest known pair of nesting American kestrels last season was at the Bolton Flats Wildlife Management Area. It may take kestrels a few years to find our nest boxes, so as each year passes we hope to see higher nesting rates. We are also curious to see if the mild winter will increase our success this year.

One lesson we learned last year is the importance of removing the nesting material of invasive species, such as [House Sparrows](#) and [European Starlings](#). If you observe these birds bringing nesting material into the kestrel boxes, please note this activity on your Monitoring Form so we can visit the boxes and remove the nests *before* the eggs of these invasive species hatch.

We appreciate your support of this important project and we look forward to working with you all again this year.

See you in the field.

Troy Gipps
 Vice President & Kestrel Project leader
 Grafton Land Trust
kestrel@graftonland.org



Photos by Christine Thurber, Troy Gipps and Rob Aberg.

Hunting Season Notice - Spring Wild Turkey

As you may know, the Grafton Land Trust allows hunting on its properties with written permission, and most of the Town of Grafton's properties are also open for hunting.



A hen wild turkey takes to flight in Grafton. (Photo by Troy Gipps)

The [Massachusetts spring wild turkey hunting season](#) opens on Monday, April 25th and runs through Saturday, May 21st. A wild turkey [Youth Hunt](#) is scheduled for April 23rd in Zones 1-13. Spring hunting hours begin 1/2 hour before sunrise to 12:00 noon.

There are typically more turkey hunters out on Saturday mornings (hunting is not allowed on Sundays in Massachusetts), so you may want to shift your monitoring activities to Saturday afternoon or Sunday if you prefer to monitor boxes on the weekends. This will accommodate the multi-use nature of our properties and will likely enhance your monitoring enjoyment and success.



A flock of wild turkeys carefully walks the edge of a Grafton field. (Photo by Dean Cerrati)

Photo of the month



Four male American kestrel chicks await banding in 2015. This initial success gives us great hope that the kestrels will return to Grafton again this year and the kestrel chicks. (Photo by Troy Gipps)

The Grafton Land Trust is a private, non-profit, member-supported organization that preserves, maintains, and advocates for open space in Grafton, and promotes environmental education and stewardship.

The Grafton Land Trust, P.O. Box 114, Grafton, MA 01519

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