

Troy Gipps, Vice President / Kestrel Project Leader Christine Thurber, Coordinator, Kestrel Monitoring Program kestrel@graftonland.org, 508-887-0065



Agenda

- Introduction
- Differences between Falcons and Hawks
- Why the American Kestrel?
- Site Selection
- Installation
- Monitoring
- Challenges
- Banding
- Call for Volunteers



Introduction

- The Kestrel Project is a community wide effort led by the Grafton Land Trust to increase nesting opportunities for the American Kestrel.
- Project Partners
 - Grafton Land Trust







- Town of Grafton / Conservation Commission
- Massachusetts Division of Fisheries & Wildlife
- Private Landowners
- Volunteers!

Difference between Hawk & Falcon

Hawk	Falcon
Accipitridae family	Falconidae family
Shorter wings (twist and turning in woodland/forest habitat)	Long, narrow, tapered and thin wings (diving in field/grassland habitat)
Robust bird	Slim bird
Smooth beak with a simple curve; capture and kill prey with talons	Shorter beaks with notch/angular bend; capture and kill prey with beaks
Fly at moderate speed; gliding on descent	Fly at high speed (Peregrine Falcon dives up to 200 mph)
Larger bird of prey	Small bird of prey

Difference between Hawk & Falcon



Photo credits: Google Images







Why Kestrels?

- The American Kestrel is among the most precipitously declining birds in Massachusetts.
- Distribution shrunk by more than 50% in 30 years (Mass Audubon: State of the Birds)





Conservation Action Urgent

- Cavity nesting; does not excavate
- Open space / grassland / field habitat



Site Selection in August 2014

- Referred to USDA NRCS Pamphlet
- Sought advice from MassWildlife



• Identified 10 locations with suitable habitat



Pell Farm



Google Maps

Pell Farm



Tufts Vet School



Google Maps

Tufts Vet School



Potter Hill Meadows



Google Maps

Potter Hill Meadows



Hennessey I



Google Maps

Hennessey I



Nest Box Locations

Location		GPS Coordinates	Property Owner
Potter Hill Meadows	\bigcirc	42.206167, -71.718472	Grafton Land Trust
Pell Farm		42.202453, -71.646916	Town of Grafton (Con Com)
Webber CR		42.236514, -71.697501	Town of Grafton
Hennessey I		42.223732, -71.652484	Town of Grafton (Con Com)
Hennessey I	\bigcirc	42.219401, -71.649745	Town of Grafton (Con Com)
Merriam Road Conservation Area		42.217104, -71.664687	Town of Grafton (Con Com)
Tufts Veterinarian School	\bigcirc	42.250198, -71.672323	Tufts University Vet School
North Brigham Hill Road	\bigcirc		Crater/Ferraro
North Brigham Hill Road	\bigcirc		White
Old Upton Road			Holberger

Installation on Nov. 8-9

- 25 volunteers installed 10 boxes
- Boxes supplied by MassWildlife





Photos by Troy Gipps

Installation Orientation



















Winter



Volunteer Orientation on 3/26



Photo by Dean Cerrati

Volunteer Orientation on 3/26





Photos by Dean Cerrati

Monitoring

- Phases:
 - Pre-season check
 - Early breeding season
 - From late March onward
 - Focus on breeders
 - Mid-season
 - Post-season
 - After birds depart



Photo from Google Images

The Nitty-gritty of Monitoring



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				est Box Data S strel@graftonl			
Monitor(s):	Christine and	d Cecelia Thu	rber				_
Location:	Hennessey						_
Date:	<u>6/7/15</u>		Start Time:	12:33 PM	End Time: 1	:33 PM	_
Weather (cor	dition, temp,	wind):	68 deg F, 3 m	nph winds, clea	ır		
Kestrels pres	e nt? (List #, ag	ge, sex):	Observ 2, M, Fadult	vations s			
Status:	courtship	incubation	nestlings	fledglings	occupied but i	inactive	unknown
feeding (FE),	prey exchange	e (PX), incuba	ation (IN), gro		M/F/O) flight (Fl etc. over an hour predators.	·	
	-		1 male, 1 fem				-
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Photos by Christine Thurber



Photo by Dean Cerrati



Kestrel Life Cycle



Photo by Troy Gipps



Volunteer Monitor Appreciation

We couldn't have done it without you!

Alex Molnar Cecelia Thurber Claire Straus Travis Mast Ruth Mazzeo Amelia Walters Dan Hastings Troy Gipps



Helen Cheney Nathan Withman Narmada Shenoy Tom Miele Sean & Shana Kelley Peg Ferraro Heather Graham Ken Holberger

Also Dean Cerrati for his excellent photos, Drew Vitz & Rob Aberg for nest checks, and Steven Molnar for assisting with boarding up boxes.

Nest Checks



Image by Sean Kelley



Photo by Troy Gipps

Photo by Christine Thurber

Checking for Kestrels with MassWildlife


Nest Check Results

- Native non-target species
 - Tree swallows





Photos by Troy Gipps

Nest Check Results

• Invasive species!





^{photo} by Dean Cerrat

Removing Starling Nests on 5/2





Boarding up boxes repeatedly infested by House Sparrows on 6/20



Avian Species Reported for 2015 Monitoring Season

Species Using Nest Boxes	Predators/Brood Parasites	Others Present	Others Present, continued
Eastern Bluebird	Blue Jay	Red-winged Blackbird	Yellow Warbler
European Starling	American Crow	American Robin	Northern Cardinal
House Sparrow	Cooper's Hawk	Turkey Vulture	Field Sparrow
Tree Swallow	Red-tailed Hawk	American Woodcock	Ruffed Grouse
Eastern Phoebe	Brown-headed Cowbird	Northern Flicker	Ovenbird
American Kestrel		Gray Catbird	Osprey
Red-tailed Hawk		Mourning Dove	Canada Goose
		Black-capped Chickadee	Ducks
		Tufted Titmouse	
		Song Sparrow	

Monitoring Season Recap

- 16 volunteers
 - Submitted 38 formsfrom 3/15-6/7
- 58 checks 3/15-7/18
- 10 boxes
 - 7 had Tree Swallow nests
 - 2 had House Sparrow nests
 - 1 had American Kestrels!
 - 4 males fledged



Found Kestrel eggs on 5/29

- Hennessey I
 North side of property
- Three weeks prior we removed a European starling nest from this box.





Google Maps







The Kestrel eggs hatch on 6/23



Monitoring Feeding Activity









Photos by Dean Cerrati



Photo by Dean Cerrati





Photos by Dean Cerrati







Photos by Dean Cerrati

Banding chicks on 7/13









Photo by Troy Gipps





Photo by Rob Aberg









Photo by Rob Aberg



Photo by Rob Aberg





Preparing to fledge





Photos by Dean Cerrati

A banded male fledges



Photo by Dean Cerrati

Public Relations

- Local media coverage
 - The Grafton News
 - Community Advocate
 - Worcester T&G
- Social Media
 - Facebook
 - Posts reached 1,700 3,500
- Video

Produced videos to promote project (Vimeo)



Project Budget

Category	Item	Cost
Materials	Nest Boxes (10)	FREE
	4x4x16 pressure treated (10), Carriage bolts, washers, nuts, screws, wood shavings	\$240
	Werner 10-ft Fiberglass Type 1A Ladder	\$190
	Power Auger rental (two days)	\$216
Volunteer Orientation	Guest Speaker: Keeping Company with Kestrels	\$200
	Food/beverages	\$70
	TOTAL:	\$916

Future Plans

- Monitor and maintain existing boxes
- Place additional boxes on suitable habitat
- Recruit additional volunteers







BECOME A VOLUNTEER TODAY: kestrel@graftonland.org 508-887-0065