

Kestrel Video

The American kestrel is fairly common on both sides of the continental divide. Kestrels have been wrongly referred to as sparrow hawks, but in truth they aren't hawks, and don't regularly feed on sparrows. This handsome bird is actually the smallest falcon found in North America. The kestrel sits nine to twelve inches high and has a wingspan of twenty to twenty-four inches.

The species has proliferated since the settling of Colorado, taking advantage of utility poles and cottonwood trees for shelter and high perches.

The males differ from the brown winged females by having blue-grey wings interspersed with black spots, and a tail bordered with a wide black band against solid reddish brown feathers.

Kestrels prefer to nest in holes in trees, or even cactus carved out by flickers and woodpeckers. They aren't above nesting in the eaves of houses or other buildings if there is adequate access.

Kestrels are short lived; the average expectancy in the wild is only about fifteen months. Banding studies have shown that many kestrels are shot. As a nongame species, the kestrel, like all hawks and falcons found in Colorado, is protected, and may not be legally hunted.

With the Colorado Division of Wildlife, Jeff Butler, News Four.