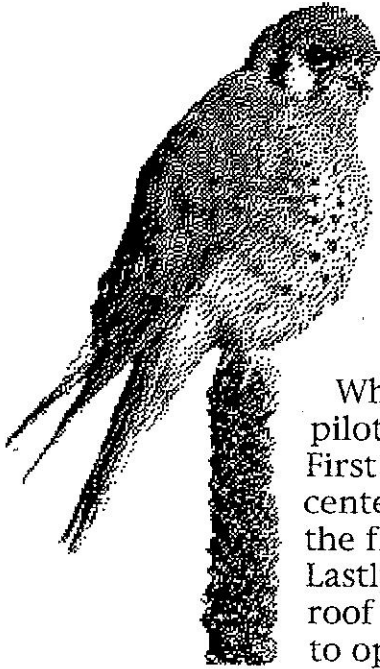


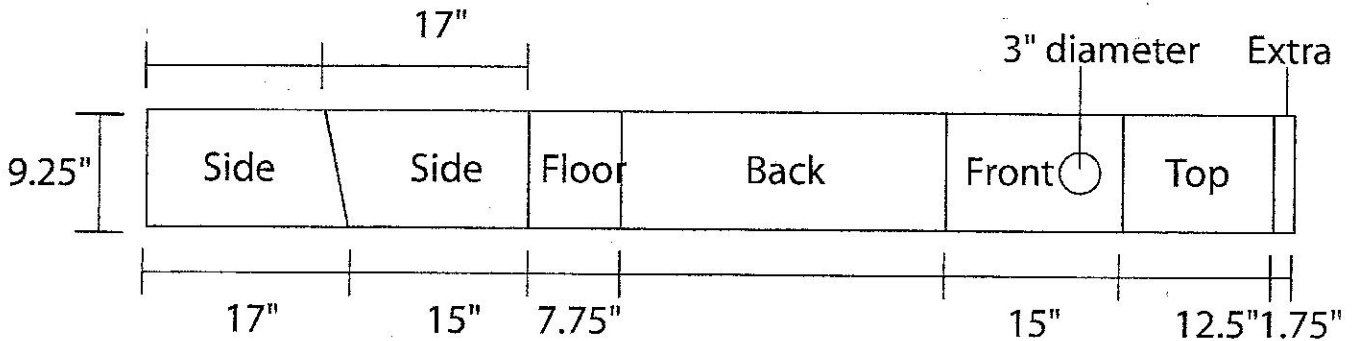
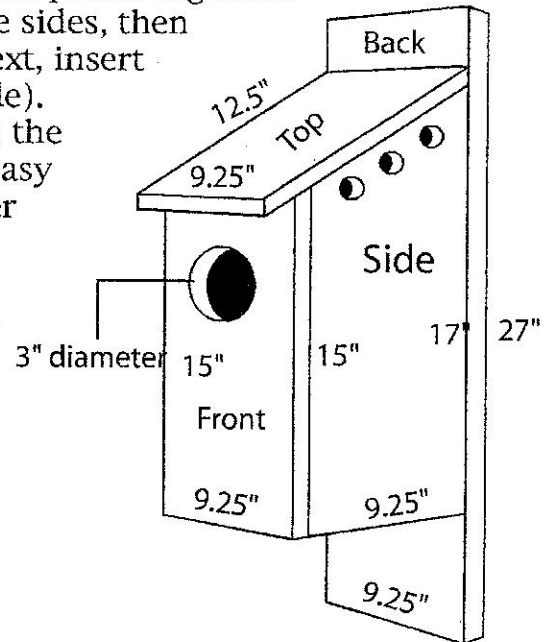
Building a Kestrel Nest Box



Building a nest box is fairly easy. You can make the whole thing from an 8 foot long, 1 by 10 inch pine or cedar board. First, cut your board into six pieces as shown below (you will have a small piece extra). Drill two 1/4 inch holes near the top of each side and four 1/4 inch holes in the bottom for ventilation. Then cut a 3 inch diameter entry hole in the front ten inches up from the bottom. You can trace a food can to draw your circle.

When you put the box together, it works best to pre-drill pilot holes, then glue and screw the pieces together. First attach the front, flush to the sides, then center the back and attach it. Next, insert the floor piece (it should fit inside). Lastly, use small hinges to attach the roof to the back. This makes it easy to open the box for cleaning after the nesting season is over.

Finally, put one small screw eye on the side of the roof and another a few inches below on the side so you can wire the roof closed. This will keep predators out. Put an inch or two of bark chips in the bottom. Don't use cedar sawdust, as it can injure the young kestrel's eyes.



PUTTING YOUR NEST BOX UP

Building a kestrel nest box is easy; the challenging part is putting your nest box up in just the right place and in just the right way so kestrels will use the box. Be sure to follow all of these important tips to increase the chance that kestrels will use your nest box.

1. You must put your nest box in the right habitat. Kestrels are open country birds. They don't nest in forests. Look for places where you often see kestrels hunting. Your nest box is designed to take the place of natural nesting cavities in large trees. If there are plenty of large trees with woodpecker holes already there, keep looking. Ideally, you want to find a place where kestrels are hunting but not nesting: a place where there are no large trees for nesting, but there is still open country with mice and insects for hunting.
2. Kestrels will nest fairly close (1/4 mile) to people, houses, etc., but they will not nest in your backyard in town. For best results, make sure your nest box is at least 200 yards away from people and buildings.
3. Farms, ranches, orchards, croplands or other agricultural areas are often ideal places to put up a nest box. It's great if your family, or a friend owns the land, but if not, don't trespass! You must get permission from the landowner first. You might need to teach the land owner about kestrels. Be sure to explain how kestrels help control the populations of rodents and insects.
4. Be safe! Children should never put up a kestrel nest box alone. Make sure at least one adult is helping. Contact professional tree climbers, pole climbers, firemen, or utility workers and ask if they will help you put the nest box up. Use a ladder and make sure someone holds the bottom of the ladder. Don't work alone!

MAINTAINING YOUR NEST BOXES

Once a year the nest box should be inspected for damage, repaired and cleaned if need be. The best time for this will be in late fall around the end of October and November. Wait until the nesting season is over. After the fledgling kestrels have left and the parents are not visiting the box anymore you can then visit the box. Discard any wood chips and replace with fresh nesting material, fix any structural damage and make sure it is in good condition for next year's nesting season.