

Buena Vista Grassland American Kestrel Survey



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The American Kestrel is the most numerous and most widespread North American falcon, yet certain areas in the Northeast United States are experiencing an apparent decline in their populations.

Abstract

The Buena Vista Kestrel Research program has been running continuously since the well-known naturalist Frances Hamerstrom started it in 1968. One of the main objectives is to provide data on the Buena Vista birds to the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources and other kestrel researchers around the United States. We also hope to learn more about nest site fidelity, natal dispersal and clutch success rates while providing education and hands-on opportunities to the public.



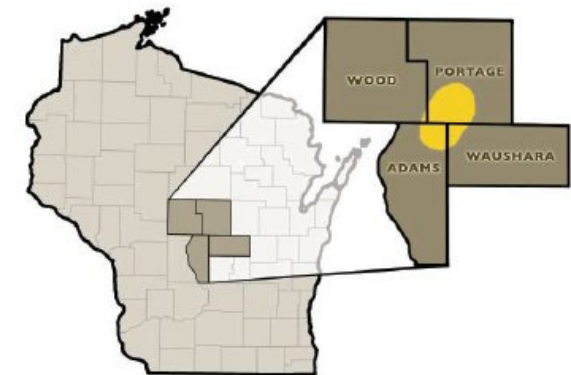
Methods, Study Period, and Citizen Involvement

The kestrels are monitored with a telescoping pole and a wired camera. The camera is connected to a DVR that has the capability to record what the camera is seeing. The Kestrels were monitored from May 1st until the beginning of August when all the birds had fledged.



Approximately 80 individuals visited the marsh this year to see the nest boxes, hear our talk on Kestrels, or actually help monitor, band, weigh and release birds. Visiting individuals included: attendees of the Prairie Chicken Festival, a Natural Resource Foundation trip, and a workshop held by raptor researcher Eugene Jacobs and Loren Ayers from the WDNR called "Introduction to Raptor Techniques".

The study area straddles Portage, Adams and Waushara Counties. In the early 1900s this area was swamp and marsh. Farmers ditched and drained it, transforming the land into pasture and cropland. The Buena Vista and Leola Grasslands have been managed for the Greater Prairie Chicken since 1954. The WDNR manages the grasslands, which totals more than 12,000 acres. This management involves a 3-6 year rotation that includes burning, mowing, grazing and leaving fields fallow.



Research

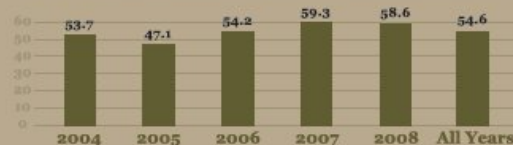
Even though the kestrel has been studied in great detail throughout North America, additional information on their nesting biology from a variety of environments will improve our understanding of their populations. While kestrel numbers have been on the decline in other areas of the country, the population in the Buena Vista and Leola Grasslands has held steady.

In 2008, 24 adult Kestrels were captured; 11 of which were already banded, providing the program with very valuable information. This feat was made possible by the purchase of a new mechanical Great Horned Owl, which was funded completely by the citizen-based monitoring grant.



	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008
Successful Nesting Attempts	63.9%	59.4%	78.1%	62.9%	73.5%
Failed Nesting Attempts	36.1%	40.6%	21.9%	37.1%	26.5%
Banded Nestlings	86	67	114	99	105

Percent of nest boxes occupied by American Kestrels



of young American Kestrels produced per occupied box

