

OF BIRD HOUSES AND BIRD WATCHING



Mountain Bluebird

Juhachi Asai

BIRD TRAILS

I always enjoy reading articles on Mountain Bluebirds as my wife and I have built with 300 houses which we started in 1960. We have been banding since 1960.
— Roger Johnson, Box 555, Calgary, Alberta. T0B 3S0

BIRD HOUSES AND BIRD WATCHING

Bird watching and building bird houses keeps me busy — no stress — no boredom. During winter I build bird houses and in summer I am busy checking them. I had a successful year in 1989.

I have 286 houses along road sides and pastures. Of these, 186 were occupied by Tree Swallows, 54 by House Wrens and 12 by Mountain Bluebirds.. There were 8 with House Sparrows and 2 with field mice. Only 24 boxes were unoccupied. Some of those I had placed about 20 or 30 yards apart. Since Tree Swallows are territorial I had hoped bluebirds would occupy them, the swallows leaving the one nearer for the bluebirds . It has worked in some instnaces, but there are not enough bluebirds to go around. The overall occupancy rate in 1989 was almost 92%.

The bluebirds had two hatches, the first with 5 or 6 eggs and the second with 3 or 4 eggs. Several friends put out a few boxes and each was able to attract a pair of bluebirds.

One House Wren laid a surprising eight eggs. All hatched. The box was full of gaping, hungry mouths! Mrs. Wren must not have known about the pill. At any rate, all eight left the nest successfully.

I remember in the 1950s when Stuart and Mary Houston showed their slides in a nature talk to the Melville-Yorkton teachers' convention. I was one of the teachers present, although retired now.

My winter feeder is busy. I do my bird watching from my living room window. Chickadees, Downy and Hairy Woodpecker, an occasional Pine Grosbeak, but no redpolls this winter. — John M. Hicke, Box 291, Grayson, Saskatchewan. S0A 1E0

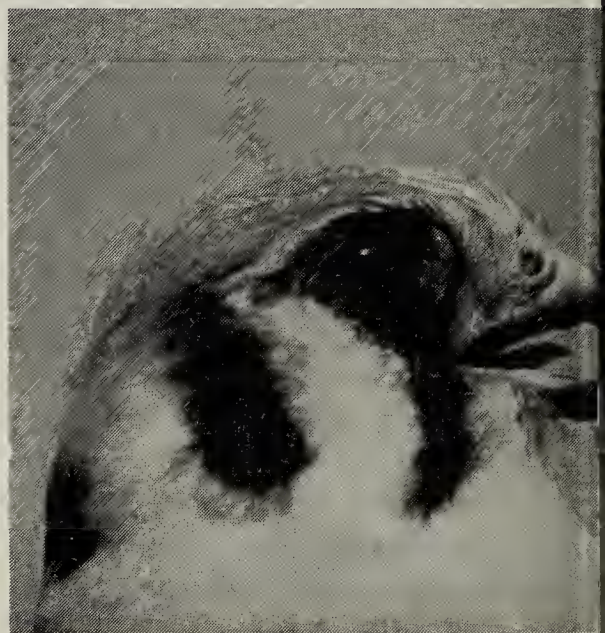
AMERICAN KESTREL IN NESTBOX

During the summer of 1989 we had eight pairs of Kestrels nesting on the yard and I strongly suspected a ninth as a nest was frequently in the vicinity of the house and nearby garage. I looked in various places I thought were all the possible places for a nest, but found nothing.

Then one day I heard a flutter of wings above my head, and, looking up, I saw a young kestrel taking its maiden flight across the yard and beyond it. Peering into the opening of a small bird house, normally used by House Sparrows was another young kestrel.

It never occurred to me that a kestrel could get into that house so I measured the opening and it was 1 7/8 in. wide with a curved arch beginning at 1 1/2 in. height in the centre of 2 1/4 in. There was no perch on the front of the house.

Inside measurements of the bird house are 6 3/4 x 10 1/2 in. I only saw the youngsters, but there could have been some flying earlier. — Sig Jordan, White Bear, Saskatchewan.



American Kestrel

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