

American Kestrel Nest Box Plan

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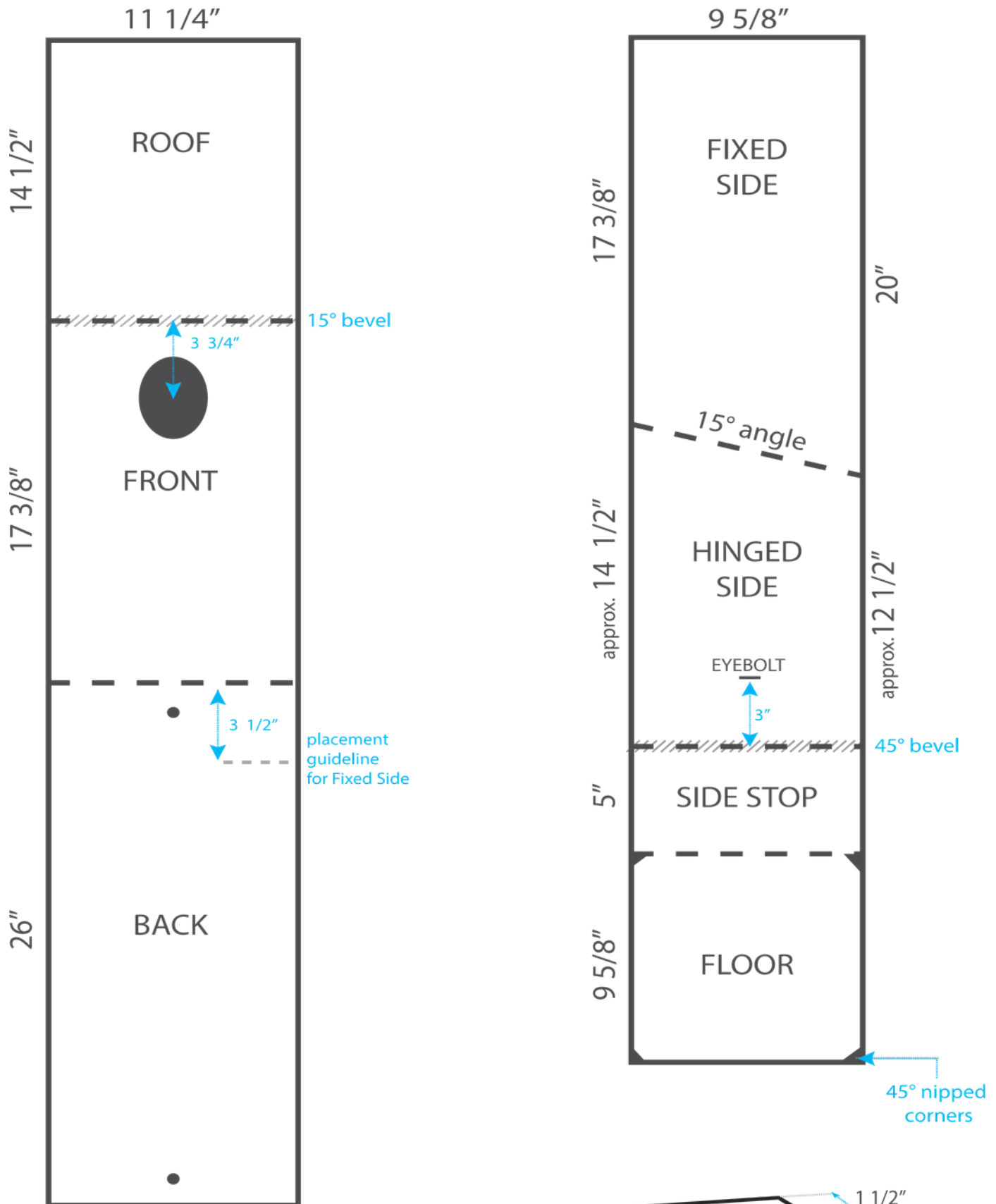
These plans for the construction of an American Kestrel (*Falco sparverius*) nest box are based on experience gained during more than thirty years of field work in northwest and north-central Connecticut (National Audubon Society and individually) with a now successful, well-established population of kestrels. It is hoped that the information will be used by raptor enthusiasts elsewhere who are interested in the welfare of this open country falcon, whose numbers continue to decline in several regions of North America.

Notes on Design

- The **side-opening design** of the nest box -- with fixed Side Stop -- serves a number of practical purposes. The box is much safer to monitor than if it were top-opening; wood shavings, eggs and nestlings are secure; and adult birds and nestlings are easier to capture for banding and research work.
- The **floor size** for this nest box design provides almost 93 square inches, which is close to 50% larger than the 8"x 8" floors recommended in the majority of American Kestrel nest box designs available in the literature or online. Having observed breeding kestrels using wood duck boxes in drained beaver swamps years ago, I realized that more living space was significantly advantageous for broods of five or six nestlings which spend up to a month in the nest boxes.
- Though a 3" diameter entrance hole is standard on many plans, a **3"x 4" vertical oval hole** provides more room for older nestlings looking outwards from the inside Perch, and may also offer a place for adult male pair-bonding display early in the breeding season.

Further notes regarding *Nest Box Sites and Installation* (choosing good American Kestrel breeding habitat, selecting ideal box locations, and options for safely erecting and monitoring a kestrel box) will be available. Good luck with your own efforts in assisting these beautiful raptors, and I welcome inquiries regarding wildlife management work with American Kestrels.

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Diagram of a rectangular perch with dimensions: height $\frac{13}{16}$ inch, length 6 inch, and width $1 \frac{1}{2}$ inch.

Notes on Materials

- A great choice for lumber is Type EWP, 1x12 “rough one side” white pine, which is not only easy to work with, lightweight and quite aesthetic, but also inexpensive. It is most often found in a thickness of 13/16”. Approximately 10’ of 1x12 EWP lumber is needed per box, allowing for minimal waste and avoidance of knots, cracks, etc. Average 2015 prices are \$1.50 per lineal foot. Cedar is also a good choice, but pricier, and oak, though durable, is heavier than needed. Avoid using 1” rough-cut sawmill pine, which is much harder to work with and creates a heavy, unwieldy nest box which can be unsafe to deal with during installation on post, tree, or building.
- For fasteners, Torx-head GRK screws (2” x #8 **Trimhead type) are superb. They are strong, easy to use with a cordless drill, look good, and most importantly, they will not split the lumber near the ends of pieces (which may happen with standard GRKs, decking screws or nails). Approximately 35 screws per box.
- The use of a light bead of high quality PL Premium construction adhesive on all joined edges guarantees a strong, weatherproof nest box with tight joints.
- Do not paint or otherwise treat with a wood preservative. The EWP pine will weather to a warm gray color naturally and last in all weathers and seasons for several decades, if well constructed.
- Approximate cost for lumber & hardware materials is \$ 20.00 per nest box, at 2015 prices.

Assembly Sequence:

1. Attach Back to Fixed Side, then secure Floor to Back and Fixed Side.
2. Attach Front (with oval entrance hole and inside Perch) to Fixed Side and Floor.
3. Attach Roof to Fixed Side, Front and Back.
4. Cut 45° bevel across Hinged Side, check fit, and secure Side Stop to Back, Front and Floor.
5. Finally, attach Hinged Side using hinge nails.



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