

## **Warne in the Wild Yukon American Kestrel Nest Box Program**



## **Yukon Fish and Wildlife Enhancement Trust Results Report**

**Prepared By: Mitchell Warne  
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### **Project Activities:**

The American kestrel nest box program in the Yukon was originally applied for to include up to 24 American kestrel nest boxes to be installed in the Watson Lake area of the Yukon, however, it was requested at the time of funding approval to include Whitehorse as well. Because of this the program expanded to the Whitehorse area and beyond with the additional funds.

The goals for the program include:

- 1) Provide safe and secure nesting site for kestrels particularly in areas with a mix of ranching and farming. Ideally this would help their populations stabilize or even begin to recover, at least in localized areas while monitoring the nest box use trend.
- 2) Engage landowners and the public using citizen scientists to monitor and maintain the kestrel nest boxes.

The objective of the program during the fall of 2018 was originally to install or distribute 24 nest boxes (later became 36) on land that either volunteers owned or where they would monitor the nest boxes. All 36 nest boxes were used on either private land or crown land where the volunteer installed the nest box(es). The majority of the boxes are on private land (~32) with a few boxes still waiting to be installed by the volunteers in early spring once the temperatures are not so cold and prior to the kestrels returning from their breeding grounds. In total there are 19 individuals who are monitoring the nest boxes in the Yukon.

Through the course of the program the nest boxes were spread out across southern Yukon including; Watson Lake Marsh Lake area, Carcross area, Whitehorse area as far north as Fox Lake and as far west as Haines Junction. This occurred for three reasons 1) it was requested I go to Whitehorse, 2) when I was looking for volunteers I was able to find volunteers across those areas and not many near Watson Lake 3) the funds allowed me to go further than originally planned (more details in the funding section).

This program will now allow for the monitoring of kestrels using nest boxes throughout the southern Yukon with a focus on private land where kestrels are more likely to be found than forested areas dominating the Yukon landscape. The nest boxes themselves with citizen scientists monitoring them potentially opens up the opportunity for researchers to conduct a study(ies) using the nest boxes already in place.

When landowners are able to directly interact with science projects, studies or have the opportunity to see wildlife up close they are more likely to expand into other areas of interest with wildlife and the environment, which nest boxes can help to bring about.

When completing this project I went late enough in the fall that the tourism had slowed down significantly but the weather was still good. This allowed me to cover a lot of ground quickly, which if I were to redo the program I would factor in a slower pace even in excellent weather.

For example I wouldn't plan to drive from Haines Junction through Carcross and over to Watson Lake in one day while getting 3 kestrel boxes out but would break it up into two days.

### Communications:

To date there is very little to report beyond the completion of this report. This is because the nest boxes will not start to get used until the summer of 2019 after which annual reports will be completed showing the nest box use and trend. The reports and its findings will be included on the Yukon American Kestrel Nest Box webpage at <https://www.warneinthewild.com/yukon-kestrel-nest-box-program>. On the same webpage the YFWET has been shown as a sponsor with the YFWET logo also being a link to their webpage that opens in a new tab.

When looking for volunteers I advertised on any wildlife, bird or farming/ranching Facebook group I could, emailed different bird and wildlife groups about the program, and I also contacted people I knew living in the Yukon. Through all three of these methods I was able to find the 19 different individuals who are part of the program. The individuals include: acreage owners, farmers, ranchers, orchard owner and those who live in town but have property outside of town or installed the boxes on public land. The following is an example of what I posted when looking for volunteers (which had 49 likes and comments in June and a second post had 65 likes and comments in August):



Mitchell Warne ▸ Yukon Birds  
June 30, 2018 · 🌐

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The Yukon American Kestrel Nest Box Program is a Citizen Scientist initiative that involves the installation of nest boxes throughout southern Yukon to help kestrels find safe and secure places to nest and to facilitate observation and monitoring by citizen scientists. American kestrels, or kestrels for short, are the blue, brown, white and orange birds that are about the size of a gray jay that are often seen perched on power lines hunting for voles and grasshoppers. Kestrels are the smallest falcon in North America and are also a cavity nesting species that readily use nest boxes.

This fall 2018, I am seeking suitable locations to install the kestrel nest boxes from Watson Lake to Carmacks, Whitehorse and back to Watson Lake. The preferred habitat for kestrels is pasture or hay land. However, the habitat can also be a mix including some agriculture. If you would like to volunteer to have a kestrel nest box installed on your property and/or to observe/monitor any nest box(es) please contact myself, Mitchell Warne, at [info@warneinthewild.com](mailto:info@warneinthewild.com).



The following picture is an example of one of the kestrel boxes that was installed along the edge of a farmed field near some pastureland.



**Conclusion:**

Overall this program exceeded my expectations in the number of boxes and volunteers, how large of an area the boxes cover, how close I was able to keep the budget and how nice and friendly the people and the Yukon Territory was to travel in.