



Despite being known for their hovering hunting technique, kestrels will quite happily just sit and wait on prey from a hunting perch on a building, rock or pylon for example. These latter techniques will help conserve energy. Kestrels often hunt at daybreak and dawn, being adapted to this, and it helps reduce competition.

It is more common to class the kestrel as a cavity nesting bird and this is rather unusual for a British bird of prey. The bird prefers cracks or crevices on cliffs, tree cavities and holes in buildings. In North Lanarkshire, we also have them successfully breeding on quarry faces, behind signs on buildings and old crows nests. They will also, quite happily, use a vacant barn owl box but, much to their preference is a nest box built solely for this species alone. We have found that kestrels take quite quickly to a nest box that is erected within, or close to, good habitat and/or within an existing territory. The correct placement of kestrel boxes are the main contributing factor in the conservation and enhancement of our breeding population. Working quarries throughout our area are also vital, and play a huge role, to our North Lanarkshire council areas breeding kestrels needs. The reasons that our kestrel still requires assistance from us are evident. We have found that kestrels tend to distance themselves from nesting within woodland where buzzards hold a territory and our buzzard numbers have plummeted. Grey squirrel populations alongside kestrel hunting habitat also hold the species back. We are identifying also that there is enough hunting habitat for the kestrel for their numbers to be greater and that there are available territories to accommodate them. Although barn owl and kestrel do come into conflict, and will overlap a territory, we have them breeding alongside each other and producing fledged owlets/chicks annually. It obviously helps that the barn owl is nocturnal, on this point, daybreak and dawn are collision times for them.

Kestrel hunting ground, within our North Lanarkshire Council area, includes a mixture of the following habitats:

- rough grassland, supporting a high field vole population
- damp, tussocky grassland in fallow or lightly grazed pasture
- weedy field margins
- hedgerows with rough margins
- woodland edge
- stubble fields
- drainage ditches
- farms and outbuildings
- roadside/motorway verges
- . quarries
- . large gardens
- . urban parks and greenspaces

Additional data collated from the Scottish Raptor Monitoring Scheme (SRMS)

Kestrels, that are intending to breed, begin to establish nesting territories from March to late April.

During the breeding season, home ranges overlap, the degree of overlap increases with distance from the nest.

