



California Wildlife Center

Patient of the Week

June 26, 2026

Patient of the Week - America's Smallest Falcon

The American Kestrel is the smallest falcon species in North America and one of the smallest birds of prey. This species has a striking appearance; the males exhibit rust-and-blue plumage with a black-spotted pattern, while the females tend to be more muted but similarly patterned. California Wildlife Center recently admitted a juvenile American Kestrel who is currently receiving care in our ICU.

The patient is showing early signs of trichomoniasis, a parasitic infection that can cause lesions in the mouth and throat. Fortunately, this condition is treatable, and the patient is receiving care that includes treatment of the lesions, medicated soaks, and subcutaneous fluids. During the initial assessment, the kestrel was also found to be dehydrated and underweight. Since beginning treatment, our team has observed that the patient has a strong appetite and is eating well.



American Kestrel patient in ICU.

American Kestrels, though small, are fierce hunters and hunt a variety of insects, small rodents and birds. This type of bird caches food and does so to ensure they have a small store to rely on when prey is scarce. Interestingly, this species can see ultraviolet light which may assist in their hunting activities; this skill is suspected to help them detect the urine of prospective prey as they hover in the air.

While the American Kestrel is not endangered, their numbers have been slowly declining over the years. This decline is likely due to habitat destruction, pesticide use, and the prevalence of other pollutants in the environment. Pesticide use not only reduces insect populations that the species relies on to eat but is also thought to affect egg quality and quantity.

American Kestrels don't make their own nests and instead find already constructed cavities, like vacant nests or tree cavities, to lay their eggs. One way to encourage nesting and provide a safe space for these birds is to place a bird box in your backyard.

Our young patient is doing well and improving each day. We are looking forward to watching them progress to their eventual release!