

# Kestrel not a hawk but falcon

During the winter I periodically spotted a kestrel near some open fields west of the city of Wixom, in the town to open (May 1) Lyon Oaks County Park.

The grassy fields are perfect habitat for this small bird of prey.

Years ago the kestrel was named the sparrow hawk. Kestrel is a better name for this species because it is not really a hawk.

It has a hooked beak like a hawk, but to ornithologists it's a falcon.

Falcons are in the same big family as hawks and eagles, but there are some differences. Wings of falcons are much more tapered and pointed than those of hawks and eagles. A tapered wing gives them a better wing/aspect ratio which enables them to fly faster.

Though a kestrel does not often attack a flying bird, other members of the falcon family do. In order to overcome a flying bird a falcon must fly faster than its prey.

All falcons have a "tooth" on their upper mandible. It looks like a small protrusion pointing downward from the middle of the bill.

No one is sure of its function, but people speculate that it may be used to help kill an animal. Birds of prey will bite their prey behind the head at the base of the neck to dispatch the animal they subdued.

Michigan is home to three other falcons — the peregrine, merlin and gyrfalcon. Both peregrines and gyrfalcons are large birds, 16 and 22 inches long respectively, but are uncommon.

A merlin (10 inches) is about the size of a kestrel (9 inches), which is about the length of a robin.

Small falcons like the kestrel rely on smaller prey. During the summer they will capture and eat beetles, grasshoppers, frogs and mice.

On a warm day a couple weeks ago I saw one fly away with a worm. Voles are the primary prey for kestrels in winter. When I walk through the fields in spring, vole tunnels can be seen everywhere.

I was not surprised to discover that the bird is a female, since females are larger than males and produce the choice hunting areas.

She has black bars up and down her tail and black barring on her wings. This is in contrast to the male who sports blue wings and a solid red tail with a black tip.

Both have the characteristic black "sideburn and mustache" on the side of the head. When I spotted her near the fields she was often perched on the top of some tree branches. Her broad head gives a hunched appearance. Combine this feature with a long tail and the only bird close in appearance is a mourning dove. Doves have a small head.

One of the best ways to identify a kestrel is to see one hovering over the field. Not many birds of prey can hover in one place as they search for voles and insects below.

In an effort to keep her in the area, I erected two bird boxes suitable for her to nest in. They like to be in open areas, so I put the boxes on trees with easy access and a view of the open fields.

No sign of nest site selection yet, but I remain hopeful.

*(Livonia resident Tim Nowicki is a naturalist with the Independence Oaks Park north of Clarkston in Oakland County. He can be reached at (248) 625-6473.)*



TIM NOWICKI

## CLUB GYMNASTICS

Farmington Gymnastics Center team members participated in the Great Lakes "Puttin' on the Glitz" meet in Okemos Jan. 19-20. The event was a state qualifier. To qualify girls need to have an all-around score of at least 30.00 one to go to the silver meet or 33.50 twice to qualify for the gold meet.

**LEVEL 8**  
Danielle Brosso: 8.55 vault, 8.95 bars, 8.35 beam, 8.55 floor, 34.40 all-around.  
Chelsea Fox: 8.8 bars, 8.4 beam, 8.7 floor, 33.80 all-around.  
Elana Cooke: 8.30 bars, 8.5 beam, 8.55 floor, 32.90 all-around.  
Lindsay Hage: 8.05 vault, 8.475 bars, 8.525 beam, 8.35 floor, 33.40 all-around.  
Kyla Pohl: 8.3 vault, 8.85 bars, 8.05 beam, 8.5 floor, 33.70 all-around.  
Becca Puetter: 8.35 vault, 8.8 bars, 8.375 floor, 33.425 all-around.  
Tori Roney: 8.45 vault, 8.2 bars, 8.775 beam, 8.5 floor, 33.925 all-around.  
Kelsey Twigg: 8.85 vault, 8.3 bars, 8.275 beam, 8.3 floor, 33.725 all-around.  
Casey Ayres: 8.35 beam, 8.3 floor, 32.30 all-around.

Kim Donah: 8.3 vault, 30.45 all-around.  
Krisin Hage: 8.075 vault, 8.0 beam, 8.125 floor, 31.025 all-around.  
Emily Niemyski: 8.25 vault, 8.1 beam, 8.1 floor, 32.90 all-around.  
Amy O'Hair: 8.15 vault, 8.8 beam, 8.15 floor, 32.90 all-around.  
Jennifer O'Hair: 8.15 bars, 30.85 all-around.  
Michelle Pitt: 7.7 vault, 7.05 floor.  
Emily Rito: 8.15 vault, 8.25 bars, 8.525 beam, 8.25 floor, 33.175 all-around.  
Lauren Ruffolo: 8.25 vault, 7.95 beam, 8.525 floor, 32.475 all-around.  
Kaitleen Steinbock: 8.4 vault, 8.075 beam, 8.6 floor, 32.025 all-around.  
Morgan Thomas: 8.05 vault, 8.4 beam, 8.375 floor, 32.775 all-around.  
Valerie Ziegler: 8.2 vault, 8.3 bars, 8.2 beam, 8.1 floor, 32.80 all-around.

**LEVEL 9**  
Adrienne Mastey: 8.5 vault, 8.45 bars, 8.35 beam, 8.0 floor, 33.90 all-around.  
Laura Mernit: 9.0 vault, 8.45 bars, 8.55 floor, 33.575 all-around.  
Rachel Wasson: 9.0 vault, 8.3 bars, 8.2 floor, 33.30 all-around.  
Nicole Dahi: 8.4 vault, 8.75 beam, 8.0 floor, 33.15 all-around.  
Jacqueline Gazette: 8.6 vault, 8.2 bars, 8.225 beam, 32.95 all-around.  
Jill Duffey: 8.4 vault, 8.475 floor, 31.475 all-around.  
Courtney Smith: 8.05 vault, 8.05 beam, 32.90 all-around.

**LEVEL 7**  
Wendy Ross: 8.975 vault, 8.35 bars, 9.325 beam, 8.8 floor, 35.30 all-around.  
Amanda Perelli: 9.075 vault, 8.2 bars, 9.175 beam, 8.85 floor, 35.05 all-around.  
Keli Weickel: 8.925 vault, 9.25 beam, 8.0 floor, 35.125 all-around.  
Sarah Tomkovich: 8.35 beam.

**LEVEL 8**  
Michelle Jordan: 8.725 vault, 9.125 bars, 9.075 beam, 9.1 floor, 36.025 all-around.  
Caitlin McPherson: 9.025 vault, 8.25 bars, 8.875 beam, 8.7 floor, 34.85 all-around.  
Jenna Bennett: 8.25 vault, 8.325 bars, 8.85 beam, 8.05 floor, 34.475 all-around.  
Nicole Dunn: 8.925 vault, 8.05 bars, 9.125 beam, 8.0 floor, 34.70 all-around.  
Calista Harbaugh: 8.025 vault, 8.2 bars, 8.4 beam, 8.9 floor, 34.125 all-around.

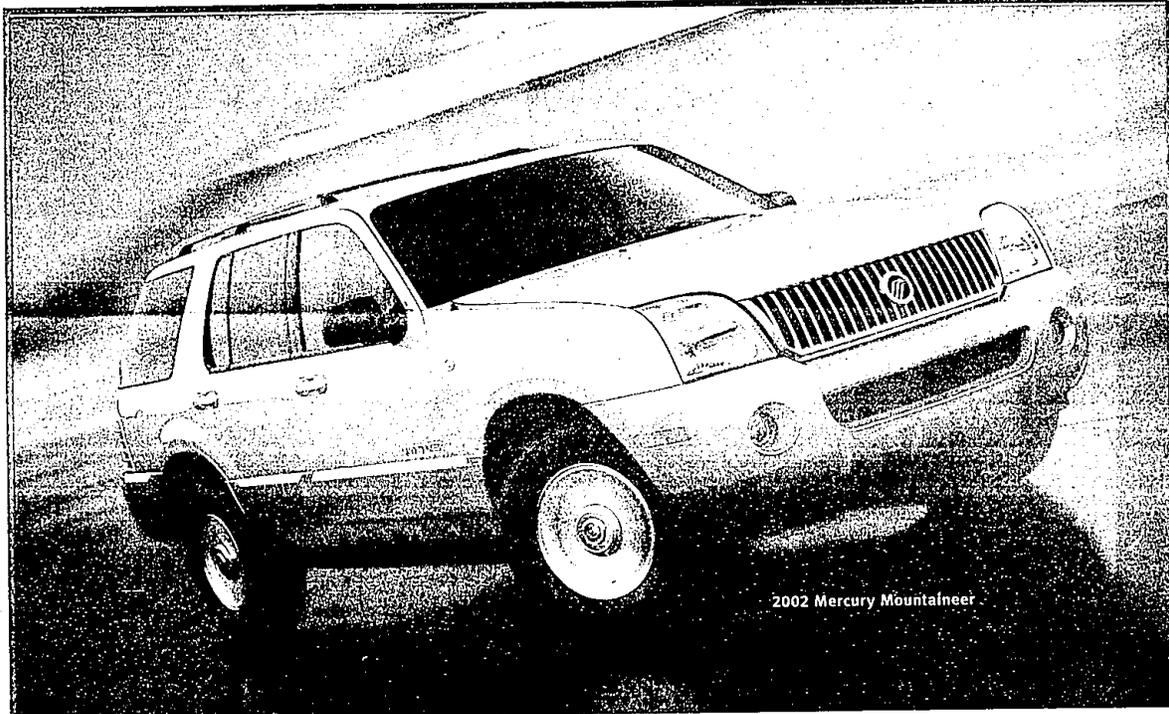
**MAG CHRISTMAS CLASSIC**  
Dec. 7-9 at Westland Gymnastics  
**LEVEL 5**  
Kelsey Twigg: 8.85 vault, 8.3 bars, 8.275 beam, 8.3 floor, 33.725 all-around.  
Tori Roney: 8.8 vault, 8.4 bars, 8.35 beam, 33.50 all-around.  
Danielle Brosso: 8.8 vault, 8.675 bars, 8.05 beam, 7.85 floor, 33.475 all-around.  
Krisin Hage: 8.1 vault, 8.05 bars, 8.45 beam, 8.425 floor, 33.205 all-around.  
Kyla Pohl: 8.05 vault, 8.8 bars, 8.5 beam, 33.175 all-around.  
Emily Rito: 8.0 vault, 8.05 bars, 8.05 floor, 32.00 all-around.  
Keli McKay: 8.05 vault, 8.2 bars, 8.25 floor, 31.725 all-around.  
Valerie Ziegler: 8.1 beam, 8.15 floor, 31.55 all-around.  
Morgan Thomas: 8.15 vault, 8.2 floor, 31.20 all-around.

**LEVEL 6**  
Elana Cooke: 8.1 beam, 8.05 floor, 31.10 all-around.  
Becca Puetter: 8.35 bars, 31.10 all-around.  
Emily Niemyski: 8.1 vault, 8.05 beam, 30.90 all-around.  
Casey Ayres: 8.25 vault, 8.05 beam, 30.90 all-around.  
Nicole Dahi: 8.4 vault, 8.75 beam, 8.0 floor, 33.15 all-around.  
Jacqueline Gazette: 8.6 vault, 8.2 bars, 8.225 beam, 32.95 all-around.  
Jill Duffey: 8.4 vault, 8.475 floor, 31.475 all-around.  
Courtney Smith: 8.05 vault, 8.05 beam, 32.90 all-around.  
Wendy Ross: 8.975 vault, 8.35 bars, 9.325 beam, 8.8 floor, 35.30 all-around.  
Amanda Perelli: 9.075 vault, 8.2 bars, 9.175 beam, 8.85 floor, 35.05 all-around.  
Keli Weickel: 8.925 vault, 9.25 beam, 8.0 floor, 35.125 all-around.  
Sarah Tomkovich: 8.35 beam.  
Michelle Jordan: 8.725 vault, 9.125 bars, 9.075 beam, 9.1 floor, 36.025 all-around.  
Caitlin McPherson: 9.025 vault, 8.25 bars, 8.875 beam, 8.7 floor, 34.85 all-around.  
Jenna Bennett: 8.25 vault, 8.325 bars, 8.85 beam, 8.05 floor, 34.475 all-around.  
Nicole Dunn: 8.925 vault, 8.05 bars, 9.125 beam, 8.0 floor, 34.70 all-around.  
Calista Harbaugh: 8.025 vault, 8.2 bars, 8.4 beam, 8.9 floor, 34.125 all-around.

Emily Niemyski: 8.1 vault, 8.05 beam, 30.90 all-around.  
Casey Ayres: 8.25 vault, 30.90 all-around.  
Lauren Ruffolo: 7.8 vault, 30.35 all-around.  
**LEVEL 6**  
Nicole Dahi: 7.0 vault, 8.4 floor, 31.00 all-around.  
Lauren Duda: 8.525 vault, 8.35 floor, 32.175 all-around.  
Jacqueline Gazette: 8.674 vault, 8.0 bars, 8.075 floor, 32.30 all-around.  
Jill Duffey: 8.35 vault, 7.85 beam, 8.1 floor, 31.75 all-around.  
Jill Haapioemi: 8.8 vault, 8.4 bars, 7.95 beam, 8.475 floor, 33.025 all-around.  
Emily Lujan: 9.225 vault, 8.0 bars, 7.9 beam, 8.65 floor, 33.775 all-around.  
Adrienne Mastey: 8.25 vault, 7.75 bars, 8.05 beam, 8.2 floor, 32.25 all-around.  
Laura Mernit: 9.15 vault, 8.775 bars, 7.0 beam, 8.1 floor, 33.025 all-around.  
Courtney Smith: 8.75 vault, 8.0 beam, 31.40 all-around.  
Rachel Wasson: 9.0 vault, 8.3 bars, 7.8 beam, 8.2 floor, 33.30 all-around.  
Megan Wallen: 9.175 vault, 8.2 beam, 8.35 floor, 32.725 all-around.

**LEVEL 7**  
Keli Weickel: 9.125 vault, 7.05 bars, 9.3 beam, 8.025 floor, 35.00 all-around.  
Wendy Ross: 8.75 vault, 9.025 beam, 8.85 floor, 33.375 all-around.  
Amanda Perelli: 9.15 vault, 8.35 beam, 8.025 floor.  
**LEVEL 8**  
Michelle Jordan: 8.725 vault, 9.3 bars, 8.7 beam, 9.15 floor, 36.025 all-around.  
Nicole Dunn: 8.925 vault, 8.75 bars, 8.625 beam, 8.85 floor, 34.75 all-around.  
Calista Harbaugh: 8.05 vault, 8.3 bars, 8.7 beam, 8.7 floor, 34.35 all-around.  
Jenna Bennett: 8.25 vault, 8.25 bars, 9.1 beam, 8.875 floor, 34.60 all-around.  
Caitlin McPherson: 8.8 vault, 8.1 bars, 8.425 beam, 8.675 floor, 34.00 all-around.

**LEVEL 9**  
Keli Monstrol: 8.6 vault, 8.4 beam, 8.6 floor, 32.60 all-around.  
**LEVEL 10**  
Michelle Wasieleski: 9.025 vault, 8.7 bars, 8.575 beam, 9.125 floor, 35.425 all-around.



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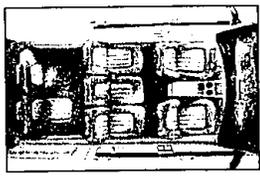
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