

Make your own Kestrel Kite or Kestrel Decoration

Created by Alan Poxon, Professional Kite Maker

KESTREL

Kestrels are a familiar sight, with their pointed wings and long tail, hovering beside a roadside verge. Numbers of Kestrels have declined since the 1970s, probably as a result of changes in farming, and so it is included on the Amber List. They have adapted readily to man-made environments and can survive right in the centre of cities.

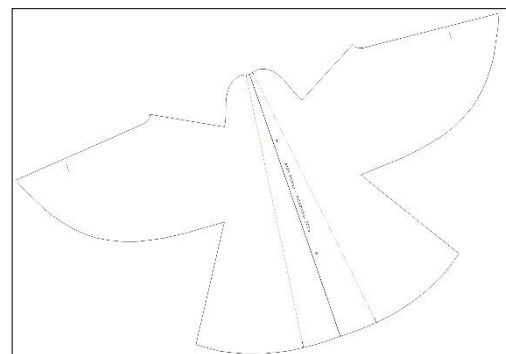
Both males and females have pale undersides with black speckles (not bars like on a Sparrowhawk), but the males have a slate-grey head and upper-tail with a single black band at the tip, while the females are browner all over, with bars all along the upper-tail. Both males and females have dark 'tear' marks extending below each eye.

Wing tips are more pointed than a Sparrowhawk's, and they have a longer tail than other falcons, with a black band at the end, often fanned out while hovering.*¹

Make your own Kestrel Kite or Kestrel Decoration

You can make your own Kite or Decoration (non-flying) using either the ready coloured or blank template. If you are really careful and very accurate when making, your Kestrel will work as a kite to fly in light winds. .

The templates below are available on the [Friends of the Dales](http://www.friends-of-the-dales.org.uk) website to download and print off ready to cut out and make.



1* Information taken from the RSPB.org.uk website.

You will need:-

- access to an A3 printer, or make multiple prints and paste the sheets together.
- A thin bamboo skewer 300mm long (11.8"). Alternatively an art straw or drinking straws joined together to make it the correct length. This is for the strengthening Spar across the back of the kite.
- Some fine string to hang your Kestrel or fly it as a kite.
- A pencil, a long ruler or Straight-Edge, a pair of scissors, a small single-hole punch or an Awl (small pointy thing), and some 25mm (1") wide sticky tape.
- Pencil crayons if you wish to draw your own bird.
- An additional Tail if you want to make your Kestrel fly like a kite. This can be anything approximately 20mm (¾") wide and about 2metres (78") long. For example recycle an old plastic bag by cutting to size and joining with tape.

Instructions

1. Start by downloading the template for your bird. Chose the coloured template or the outline – if colouring in, now is the best time to do it.
2. Cut out the black outline as carefully as you can, using a pair of scissors. Don't cut down the centre line!
3. Now fold the template **precisely** in two (wrong sides together). Either hold it up against a window and exactly matching the wingtips and creasing the centre-line, or lay it flat on a table with the coloured side facing down and again line up the very wingtips.
4. To make the 'Keel' (the white triangle shape in the centre of the bird's body), place your ruler onto the dotted blue line, and using your fingernail or a blunt point score/crease the line gently to make it easy to fold.

Fold the white part over the bird's body, and then turn it around on the table and **do the same** on the other side.

The bird should be flat on the table with the coloured side up, and the keel will be standing up – see picture below.



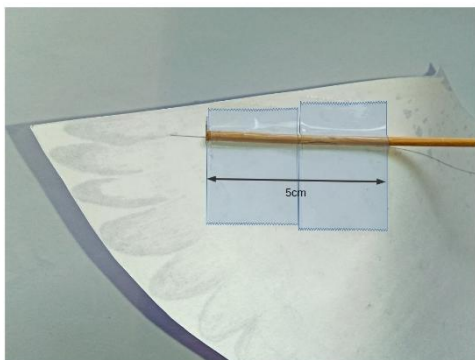
5. Turn the bird over (picture-down) and lie it flat with the keel folded underneath one side, and use **sticky tape to fasten the two sides of the bird** together along the whole length of the keel down the bird's "back".

6. Now we need to attach the strengthen Spar, made from the bamboo stick or drinking straws (for lengths see page 1).

First find the faint brown lines 4.5cm from the wingtips on the **front** of the bird, and with a pencil, transfer these two lines onto the **back** of the bird (hold it up to the light so that the lines show through).

Now draw a **faint pencil line** from the point of the wingtip to the other wingtip between these two marks. We will attach the Spar between these two marks – the line helps us get the position correct.

See picture below. Take about 4cm (1.5") of sticky tape and, lining up one end of the spar with the transferred mark and along the pencil-line, stick the tape **ACROSS** the spar level with the very tip, and press it down well. Add a second piece of tape behind this one (not on top), so that 5cm (2") of the spar is taped down.



Then repeat this on the other wing, but **be careful as the bird will no longer lay flat on the table so take care not to crease the paper.** Use the **same final width of sticky tape** for the second attachment so the kite is balanced.

See picture above - If you now hold the bird by the Spar it should hang below in a 'V'- shape with the wingtips out sideways. **You could just hang it up now as a decoration** but to make a kite continue with the instructions!

7. To fly your bird you will need to add a tail, and a some string; a short piece to attach it to a stick (a plant stake or garden cane perhaps) to wave it gently, or a longer string on a handle to try to fly it as a kite.

* A word of warning – this is a very small kite and only requires the lightest breeze to fly. Running with it may make it too windy and it will loop-the-loop very quickly. Its stability will also depend on how accurately it has been made. **Always fly your kite safely – never near roads or overhead wires.** More information on the [Kite Society](#) website.

8. On the Keel are two marks at 6cm and 16cm from the top of the head, to attach a 'Bridle' line – which is a piece of thin string onto which you fasten the kiteline.

Reinforce the dots on the Keel with sticky tape before punching small holes through the tape and the paper.

9. For the Bridle, take 62cm of thin line (string, thick thread, or cord) and **mark one end with a felt-tip or pen.**

Measure back from this end using a long ruler and use a felt tip or pen to mark points at **10cm, 29cm, and 52cm** (leaving 10cm at the very end). Accurate measuring is important!

Thread the **marked-end through the top hole on the Keel and tie a secure knot** around the Keel leaving the 10cm mark just showing above the knot.

Thread the other end through the bottom hole and tie it to the Keel leaving the 52cm mark just showing.

Having tied the Bridle, making sure it is secure, you can **trim the loose ends** back to a few millimetres with scissors.

10. Most good kites have an adjustable Bridle to help the kite to fly properly, depending on wind conditions. So we need to attach another loop of thin line to the bridle that can be adjusted up and down to trim the kite.

Make a **loop out of 25cm of line and tie the two ends together** with an overhand knot. **Pass the knot under the Bridle and up through its own loop and do this TWICE.**

When you pull on the knot you have a 'Prusik' hitch on the bridle line that can slide up or down to make adjustments, and pulled tight to lock in place. The photo below has coloured string to make it easier to see the Prusik hitch in action.



11. As a starting point, fasten the sliding loop at the 29cm mark on the Bridle. The Kestrel should hang with its head slightly raised from level – see photo below.



12. The last part is to add the tail to your bird to help it to fly. So that it looks more realistic and the kite-tail can't be seen so easily, I used clear polythene strips cut from a bag, and made a strip 2cm wide and 2 metres long. Attach this with a small piece of tape onto the back edge of the bird's tail.

13. You're ready to go! Either use a short string on the end of a cane to fly your bird (gently remember), or attach some fine kiteline to the loop on the bridle and wait for a very light breeze to lift your kite.

14. NOTE: You may need to adjust your kite for proper flight: if it fails to lift in a slight breeze (or when walking with it), adjust the Bridle-point slightly towards the head. If it spins, adjust the Bridle-point backwards slightly. In a strong breeze the kite may not settle. Remember it is only small and very light.

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Alan Poxon is a professional kite maker who worked with Friends of the Dales to create a realistic template of a Kestrel to fly as a small kite in light winds, or hang up as a decoration, to support the charity's Eyes on the Skies Campaign. To download your templates and learn about the Campaign, go to [Friends of the Dales](#). Please consider joining or making a donation to support the charity's work. If you enjoy making the Kestrel, please let us know how you get on and share any stories/photos with us!