

# Gillespie Creek Journal

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**Earth**, the “Blue Planet” that gives us life is always evolving. Now in our brief time as a member of its family we are gifted with the opportunity to observe the incredible story of the interactions that sustain our planet’s health. These weeks the **Gillespie Creek Journal** features the activities of wildlife protected within the Cape Romain and Francis Marion National Forest located North of Charleston, South Carolina. These fragile ecosystems have been protected from development for nearly a century.

It is a wondrous experience to hike through miles of the waterfront trails, relax with a picnic lunch and silently make panoramic observations of the unfolding drama in action from under water into the troposphere .

The American Kestrel is our smallest and most common falcon. Its prey consists of worms and insects, lizards, snakes, mice and small birds. It nests in cavities of trees, cliffs and other structures.



**American Kestrel**  
**12-6-23. 10 AM**  
**Forest Perched**  
**Cape Romain, SC**



**American Kestrel**  
**12-6-23 2 PM**  
**Meadow Perched**  
**Cape Romain Wildlife**  
**Refuge, SC**

The American Kestrel is found within all of the continental United States from North to South and East to West. The size of a Dove or Blue Jay the Kestrel will perch for hours scanning the area for prey only flipping its tail and nodding before striking. In a nanosecond it will dive or perhaps hover like a hummingbird. The draft from its wings assist in kills.



**Female American Kestrel**  
**Photo by Travis Audubon**



**Male American Kestrel**  
**Photo by Travis Audubon**

My daughter is an employee of the Coastal Conservation League, an organization working with other nonprofits and governmental entities to meld the needs of human society with the fragile natural ecosystems. These weeks I have had the privilege to take it all in. A highlight was a day within the territory of the American Kestrel. Have you ever seen one? They are about the size of a Dove, the Kestrel, also called a Sparrow Hawk or “Killy Hawk” which describes its calls.

**Now please help me identify the Kestrels that I photographed last week. Are the two falcons perched left male or female? Are both the same raptor?**

Here is the criteria:

Males are the most colorful raptor in America  
 Females have bars on their tail feathers  
 Males arrive first in their nesting area  
 Males prefer hunting in the forest  
 Females hunt within meadows.