**CUPPING AN AMERICAN KESTREL NEST BOX**

**What is cupping**: Cupping is when you are not allowing a Starling or House Sparrow into a box while they are looking for a cavity to nest in.

**Procedure:** If a starling is detected in your kestrel box, remove the nest and install a “SOLO” cup in the opening for two weeks. This forces the starling to look elsewhere for a cavity. Cupping works best if detected early and before eggs are laid. After the two-week period remove the cup and install clean shavings and continue to monitor your box as usual. Note: Most starlings are nesting by mid-May so time to block entrance can be reduced to 1 week. Repeat as needed. Kestrels can nest as late as mid-June and fledge late summer.

Why this should be done:
This should give the kestrel that may still be looking for a cavity an opportunity to use this box. Leaving the box tipped down may cause the Kestrel pair to move on and abandon the box & territory.

**Detecting non-native species in Kestrel boxes:**

Starlings usually remove most if not all of the wood chips and start adding nest material, straw, green leaves, grass and sometimes feathers. Nest is very shallow as they prefer to lay their eggs on the bottom of the box or close to it. Starlings eggs (usually 5) are light blue and larger than a robin’s egg.

House Sparrows leave wood chips in place and add lots of grass, straw, feathers, paper etc. and fill the box up. They usually make a tunnel down to the nest and often lay eggs on the floor. House Sparrow eggs are grey/white with brown specs. Usually lay 4 eggs.

**Remember**: Native species like Tree Swallows, Eastern Bluebirds, House Wrens and Black-capped Chickadees should be allowed to nest in boxes. They are protected by the Migratory Bird Act. House Sparrows & Starlings are not protected.