

Rough
Draft.



I'm watching
you!

Mr. H.

It has happened twice now, so I really need to figure out what kind of bird this is. Before the sun comes up, Dena and I take our three dogs for a brisk morning walk, and twice last week a bird swooped at us right on our porch. The second time it happened, I got a pretty good look at him, and I'm confident now that he is a Kestrel -- or "sparrow hawk" -- who is hunting from the post on my front porch.

In this report I want to tell you some interesting things I learned about Kestrels in order to write this report. I want to tell you about his appearance, his place in nature's food chain, and how he hunts.

First, he is a really pretty little bird. I do mean "little." He's only seven or eight inches tall, which makes him a pretty short raptor. His coloring is gorgeous. He has a rufous (reddish) breast and back and silvery gray wings. When his wings are spread out, they have a span of about two feet. His face is really pretty, with its small beak and the blue-gray streak that looks like it's dripping from his eyes.

Second, he is a hunter, but he can also be hunted. I couldn't find too much information about what hunts him, but I'm still looking into that. As

far as what he hunts, I hope it's voles. Voles are pesky little rodents that live in the rock wall in my yard. Voles eat new growth off my plants and bushes, and they made a mess of my garden this last summer. I'm pretty sure Mr. Kestrel is perched on my porch to see if he can catch sight of a vole moving through my yard. Kestrels also eat grasshoppers, mice, dragon flies, and lizards, all of which I've seen in my yard too. Seriously though, I hope he came to eat my voles!

Finally, I found some information on how Kestrels hunt. They are actually small members of the falcon family, and they can be trained to hunt from your arm like those guys with the big gloves do. I don't think I'll train this one though! When hunting naturally, Kestrels do it in one of two ways: 1) they hover in the air and swoop when they see something edible on the ground; or 2) they perch some place high (like on my porch post) and wait for movement on the ground. I hope Mr. Kestrel catches tons of voles.

OK, so I told you about his appearance, his place on the food chain, and how he hunts. I hope you'll become as excited as I was when I realized I had a Kestrel on my front porch.