

## Australian Kestrel (*Falco cenchroides*)



(Photo copyright A.G. Wells)

A bird of the open woodland and coastal dunes, the Australian Kestrel, or Nankeen Kestrel as it is sometimes called, is most easily recognised by its hovering ability. The bird is able to remain poised at a spot in mid-air for several minutes at a time before flying to another position to hover again in its search for prey on the ground.

When it sights its prey, the bird drops lower and lower before dropping rapidly the last few metres on to its victim. Insects are its main food item but the bird also eats small mammals, particularly house mice, and occasionally small birds and lizards.

The Australian Kestrel requires open grassy areas for hunting and although most common in open woodland and coastal dunes it is also often seen on cultivated land where house mice and insects abound. If not molested the birds become relatively tame and fearless of people in these places.

The bird breeds between August and November but does not build a nest, instead laying its clutch of from 3 to 7 eggs in tree hollows, crevices in cliffs, or even on ledges of city buildings. In *Birds of Western Australia* by D.L. Serventy and H.M. Whittell there is a report of a pair of kestrels nesting in a tower of the Perth Town Hall in Barrack Street in 1971.

Its eggs are rounded, white with brownish-red blotches, or are sometimes so heavily marked that there is little of the white colouring showing.

**Common Birds of Perth Number 2**