

"PIGEON NOTES" by Vin Blanden

RESEARCH FINDINGS

The results of research into homing pigeon navigation by two American scientists have been published.

The findings of Martin C Michener and Charles Walcott, both of the Department of Biology, Tufts University, Medford, Massachusetts, USA, were published in "Science", on October 21, 1966.

Their investigation was carried out with the aid of an aircraft and a radio transmitter. Ten birds were tracked on 131 flights during 1964 and 1965.

From the reaction of individual birds and their influence on a flock as a whole, the paths or flight pattern of single-up birds was determined.

Because the visual tracking of a lone bird was difficult each bird carried a 28 gram 52-Mcy transmitter, the signal of which was tracked by receivers in the aircraft.

The transmitters were attached to the birds by means of a harness weighing two grams, making a total load of 30 grams.

The tests began by releasing the birds at increasing distances from a point 35 miles West-North-West of the loft.

On the average it was found that unloaded birds homed faster than those carrying the harness, or the harness plus transmitter, yet the fastest flying times recorded in all three experiments were about the same.

It was found that loaded birds were more likely to sit on release but when they flew their speed was about the same as unloaded birds.

The important part the sun plays in homing pigeon orientation was further shown by the experiments.

The pigeons' behaviour on light cloud days (when the sun was visible) was the same when the sky was clear, but when the sun was not visible, their behaviour was entirely different.

Six releases of more than 35 miles were made when the sun was not visible and in every case the birds sat until the sun was again visible. Eleven tosses were made from a distance of ten miles and the birds homed just as fast as they did on sunny days.

The researchers added:- "On seven other releases from distant points, the sun was obscured intermittently during the tracks; pigeons flew only as long as the sun was visible and perched whenever the sun was obscured for more than two or three minutes. Results from a comparable number of flights in 1965

agree closely with those from 1964. Pigeons we studied refused to fly at all if more than 10 miles from the loft, unless the sun was visible to a human observer."

STRONG WINDS

Another interesting discovery was that strong winds did not blow birds to either side of the home course.

The article deals with the part landmarks play in navigation and includes several charts depicting the flight patterns and places where the birds sat.

It has much to recommend to the studious fancier.

SAHPA SHOW

About 250 owners and guests attended the SAHPA's annual presentation fixture on Saturday night.

Country and interstate bodies were well represented with fanciers from Mildura, Renmark, Whyalla, Port Augusta, Port Pirie, Moonta, Kadina, Murray Bridge and Strathalbyn.

The Victorian Racing Pigeon Union was represented by secretary Harry Parkinson who made the trip from Melbourne for the sixth year in succession.

Two former association officials, Messrs. L McCarter and F Delsar were also present.

Trophies won during 1966 were presented by Mr Parkinson who commented on the wide interest shown in the sport by various SA business houses and the Press.

The West End Trophy went to V Kirk (Finke) and the John Martin bowl was won by D Wing (Oodnadatta).

K Wickham won The Advertiser trophy for the second consecutive year.

The main presentation, the aggregate and champion of the year award was made to F Fraser who recorded the grand feat of taking the honor in his first year with the association.

A pleasing feature of the function was that most of the trophy winners were first-time winners of major association events - for many a fitting reward for their patience shown over a long and almost fruitless period.

A report of the Association's activities during the past year was given by the secretary, Mr D C Green.

NEW CLUB

The Salisbury Invitation Racing Pigeon Club was formed recently to cater for owners residing in the surrounding areas of Salisbury Downs, Madison Park, Brahma Lodge and part of Para Hills.

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TO RESTORE ENERGY (24th March 1972)

Adequate rest and a proper diet will soon restore the physical condition of a bird which returns home in an abnormal state of fatigue.

The novice will find that a tired bird will not exercise with enthusiasm and if it is given its freedom, will interfere with the exercise routine of its loft-mates.

It should be isolated until its zest for flight returns. In normal cases when the loss of energy and weight is due to a prolonged period on the wing (not sickness), its confinement will last no longer than a week if it is fed the right diet.

Birds which have returned late in an almost weightless state have recuperated to such extent that they have performed well six weeks later in hard races of more than 500 miles.

A mix that contains a fair proportion of protein and carbohydrates – and a high fat content – is necessary if the bird is to recover quickly.

The storage capacity in the muscles and liver will need to be filled quickly if the pigeon is to be put back into the race basket.

Protein is needed to repair the muscles and as fat releases the most energy per ounce, a high percentage of oily seeds should be used in the diet.

An ideal mix for the purpose is one of equal parts (by weight, not measure), of linseed, rapeseed, millet and sunflower seed.

This composition contains an approximate average content of 18 p.c. protein, 43 p.c. carbohydrates and 28 p.c. fat.

It is a good idea to confine the tired bird in a vacant breeding barn in the stock loft where it is not molested and is allowed to rest. A feed pot filled with the mix and a constant supply of clean, cool water should be provided throughout the whole recuperation period.

Formulated tonics or other additives to the drinking water are not needed.

CLUB NEWS

Campbelltown has bestowed life membership on Allan Pearce and Len Williams who share the distinction of being the first of its members to be given the honor of the club.

Formed this year, the Marion Invitation HC has joined the SAHPA.

It is expected that about 12 owners will compete in the club's first year.

Vitesse and Skyline Continental Clubs will soon hold a series of short races prior to the opening of the SAHPA programme.

The SAHPA will add \$1,600 to some of its races this year – \$200 will be allocated to each of its six events of more than 400 miles, and \$200 will be added to each of the two derby races to bolster the 50¢ one-bird nomination which will be split into five prizes.

Convoing fees have been fixed at 4¢ a bird for all country and affiliated clubs and 5¢ a bird, which includes 1¢ for administration, for associated clubs.

All clubs will pay 10¢ a bird for Temora and Forrest races and junior clubs will be charged 3¢ a bird for the ten universal events and 4¢ a bird for Cook and Morundah events.

The Grandfather, The Century and others

Story by Richard Clingan - Part 2

"Gentlemen, as I am about to begin this auction, there is no point in me telling you that here tonight we have as fine a draft of distance pigeons as have ever been gathered together under one roof. You have seen the quality for yourselves, they are the very best from Willie McAlpine and as usual they highest bid secures. Thank you and goodluck." In my estimation with this little speech Bert had put all of these birds completely out of my reach. At that moment my son George, then all of 10 years old, sensed something and said to me, "Daddy, you can have my money". I fought back all the usual parental responses that told me to thank him and politely refuse because I knew that by hook or by crook I must have these birds. It turned out that George had approximately 300 pounds in the bank, which at the time was a lot more than I could muster. Before I knew it the words had slipped out, "Thanks son I'll square you up next month when I get paid." As I knew Bert, I was now in a position to pay him by cheque and make up the difference in my account the next day. Owing to this generous, warm hearted little 10 year old, (He is now almost 18, man big, and he hasn't changed a bit) I now stood a good chance of going home with what I came for.

The auction opened and the first few pigeons, as in most auctions, did not make their true value. Then came Lot 5 the 521, my big red cock with the magic eye, complete with cluster. I watched very carefully and noticed to my right a well built tallish man was making the running. Each time a bid was put on this man topped it, eventually buying it for 160 guineas. Months later I was to meet the same man who turned out to be Alan Brown of Dundonald. An excellent flier of a pigeon, who at that time had one of the best stock lofts in the country. (His birds were a delight to behold and maybe later on in my tale I will go through some of his more notable ones). He told me that this 521 was without any doubt the best eyed pigeon that he had ever come across, not being an eyesign man I really didn't know. But who was I to contradict such an eminent fancier.

After Lot 5 the next lot that I was interested in was Lot 13. I had my son all primed to bid on this one. If I touched his leg he was to put his hand up. Lot 13 was 02548 the cheq pied cock, he opened at 50 guineas and then slowed down. He looked magnificent in the pen in front of the auctioneer. When he reached 75 guineas, George raised his hand, we were in business. On at 80 guineas and rising to 98 guineas where it stopped. I was thinking that our opposition, a fairly rotund man with a big nose might hopefully have 100 guineas as his breaking point. George again put up his hand, Bert shouted, "One hundred guineas" and before I knew it he had dropped the bird to George. You know! I believe now, as I did then that I saw him look at George and throw him a wink from the side of his eye. Anyway, wink or not, the bird was ours and because we bought him for the princely sum of 100 guineas we called him the Century. Little did we know that the name Century, in times to come would be talked about in company much more revered than that at our humble abode. Next came Lot 14, the 560 the Century's hen as selected for him by the master. A direct daughter of the 918 and we bought her too for 60 guineas. All the little men inside my head went into celebration mode, the cheering was incessant, I was visibly bouncing in my