

The Invitation Challenge



Racing from France in the National Flying Club 2018 Young Bird National

Chapter 2:

At the time of writing all the youngsters have now arrived from the seven participating lofts, but they are quite spread out regarding ages.

Their detached, dedicated 12' x 8' two compartment loft is divided in half with one side for the project birds and the other half for storage. As all the participating lofts use the Darkness System, which I have never done before, I did have to update the interior to accommodate this method. I also added a small outside aviary for their use when not flying out in their allotted time period.



Their compartment has six hen boxes which I shall open up for those who want to pair up nearer to the NFC young bird race from Coutance in France.

Unfortunately, within a matter of days of them having their first time liberty to investigate the world outside the confines of their aviary, the poor things had to contend with a Sparrow Hawk visit, which resulted in most having their first night out. Thankfully they returned in dribs and drabs, spread over a five day period; but I must admit to being worried sick that my project was heading to be over before it had even started. However, the Gods were looking favourably on me, because fortunately I suffered no losses and none had any visible injuries other than loss of tail feathers. It did however take a little time for a few of them to pluck up courage to even go out into the safety of the aviary.



Safe from the Hawks

Unfortunately, I was not so lucky with the next hawk visit, as once again some had a night out but one is still missing and it never did return, so the team is now down to 12 youngsters.

As I had never done the Darkness before, it came as a real shock to find just how many small feathers greeted me each morning from such a relatively small number of youngsters, giving the appearance of August not March and April, because they developed great sways of missing neck feathering. It just beggars belief how it has taken me twenty years to find out this fact of Darkness, as I had never read about it anywhere. So for you budding authors writing a book on 'How to keep racing pigeons', remember to add it and not expect new starters to know it.

At one stage I was beginning to wonder if these youngsters would ever actually take to the skies, because in the early weeks all they would do is flip flop from their own loft roof over to the old bird loft roof. Worst of all my next door neighbour has a lovely Gazebo and one of those Swiss Chalet type wooden constructions where they hold regular barbecues with friends and which he erected right next to my young bird loft. Yes, you guessed it, these youngsters just loved to do walkabout all over his Gazebo. However, my neighbour was very helpful and just tapped a long stick on one of the beams and off they would go back onto their own loft roof and I'm now glad to say they are over their inquisitiveness to see what's going on in his garden. I'm also blessed that my neighbour's father used to race pigeons and on a Saturday he will ask me what time I expect the pigeons to arrive and he very kindly makes sure he is not down the garden doing any noisy jobs.

There has not really been much to report other than the last arriving donated project pair at last are taking off with all the other youngsters, so it should not be long before they hopefully start ranging.

UPDATE: Due to my own ongoing health problems, there has been a few weeks gap between finalising my first published Chapter 1 article and the content of this one above, so when you read this update, news wise it will probably only be a week or two old.

I start this update on the sad news I had yet another hawk attack last week which resulted in another night out for some of them and one is still missing. I guess I have to face reality and accept it's unlikely it's going to return and so I'm now down to 11 youngsters

from the original 14. I would add all carry telephone number rings should they go into another loft for safety, but then the likelihood of them being reported is practically nil. It appears to me that many so called pigeon fanciers just have the 'Chuck-em up' attitude and can't be bothered to even make a phone call to see what the owner would actually prefer. Most generally use the excuse of not phoning because a great many other so called pigeon fanciers can't be bothered to do the right thing. However, this subject along with the RPR sanctioned ridiculous number of birds which can be crammed into the race basket is one where I plough a very lonely furrow.

These continual hawk visits really are very reminiscent of my time in Wales when the relentless Peregrine and Goshawk attacks eventually cleaned me out. I'm hoping the poor babies will at some time get relief from this particular Sparrow Hawk, because it comes in low from the woods (see photo) and flies between the bungalows. Now whilst I have never seen it take one of the babies, the mere sight of it suddenly appearing from between the bungalows has all the youngsters take off explosively in all directions.



Hawk low incoming flight path between houses

This same hawk actually returns back on the reverse line of flight direction, but it is always carrying the remains of what I presume is either a sparrow, or some other small bird. Nevertheless this once again has them taking to the sky in sheer panic and for some reason last year's abundance of crows is down to quite small numbers this year and so my pigeons often have no warning the hawk is about. Perhaps you're wondering how my few old birds are coping with the hawk, well the next paragraph answers that.

The youngsters are now sort of part ranging in that they only disappear for short periods of about fifteen minutes between each flight and on their return they now perch in my old oak tree which hangs over their loft. This is where the old birds perch between flights and is the reason I very rarely lose one of them. I'm quite relaxed about them not losing time on race days, because when they are yearlings and older I have no problem with them trapping on race days.



Oak Tree overhangs the young bird loft

I have now attached the youngsters' ETS rings ready for training and racing, So you can now go to the my web site link which is at the bottom of the page and where after selecting TRAINING/RACES you can see on the new TOPigeon iPigeon ETS owner's Free Cloud facility, not only the trainers and races, but each day's live arrival returns from their exercise period.

Ranking	Loft	Ring	Arrival Time	Longitude	Latitude	Map
1	SO1013	GB18N04016	17:41:46	001° 00'47"	050° 51'08"	
2	SO1013	GB18N04254	17:41:47	001° 00'47"	050° 51'08"	
3	SO1013	GB18S24455	17:41:54	001° 00'47"	050° 51'08"	
4	SO1013	GB18N04031	17:42:00	001° 00'47"	050° 51'08"	
5	SO1013	GB18N13761	17:42:05	001° 00'47"	050° 51'08"	
6	SO1013	GB18N07549	17:53:17	001° 00'43"	050° 51'32"	
7	SO1013	GB18B04785	17:55:38	001° 00'43"	050° 51'32"	
8	SO1013	GB18N04222	18:05:20	001° 00'43"	050° 51'32"	
9	SO1013	GB18N04016	18:05:52	001° 00'43"	050° 51'32"	
10	SO1013	GB18S24441	18:13:58	001° 00'43"	050° 51'32"	
11	SO1013	GB18N04042	18:16:27	001° 00'43"	050° 51'32"	

Internet Live Arrivals

After selecting TRAINING/RACES, the arrivals page loads and you then select the date you're viewing and if nothing is there, select the previous date. When I eventually advise they are on a race, which is now not so far away, just change the Item box from Train to Race. Because the iPigeon clock comes with everything as standard without the need to purchase further hardware devices, or getting trapped into expensive monthly SIM card contracts, I can sit on my patio and watch as each bird traps and within seconds a text message arrives informing me which bird has trapped and at what time, so no need to enter the loft on every arrival. Plus as it can also text up to 5 mobile phones, I even get texts on my car mobile when I'm driving home having released them on their trainer. It all helps relieve the stress of Young Bird training, knowing they're back safe and sound often before me.

These game fanciers provided me with both youngsters and agreed my management will be on a consensus of opinion:

Tony Cowan, Mark Gilbert (Southfield Lofts), Crammond & Langstaff, Roger Lowe (Orbital Lofts), James & Pete Parker (J.P.S. Lofts), Wearne & Neilson and Brian & Viv Wall (Gem Supplements). For those who don't know, Ian Crammond sadly died shortly after he and Nigel agreed to participate.

To be continued . . .

KEITH THOMAS

www.invitationchallenge.com
www.meridianracingpigeons.com