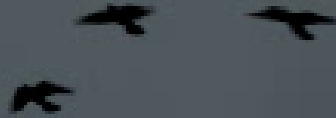


Flying In The Dark



The following articles are a testament of the dedication and vision of past and present flyers and their belief that a Tippler is without limit.

For this reason they continually pursue a challenge of the highest risk yielding the greatest reward...the challenge and the art of flying in the dark.

Can a Pigeon See in the Dark?

D. Hammond

This question seems to spark very different answers from different flyers. Some will say yes, once dark trained or obviously they would fly into things, others differing in percentages of the pigeon's vision once flying into the dark. In racing pigeons, great attention is paid to the eye as a means of choosing racers and producers. A pigeon with little eye-sign or lack of depth in the coloration would be a poor producer and almost certainly a moderate racer. Could we draw any conclusions to help us with Flying Tipplers into the dark? I have done the following tests:

Firstly, I took a pigeon from the loft, which was already dark-trained. I took him in daylight, in good weather conditions and out of distance of his usual flying patterns (about 5 miles) and released

him. Within a short time he was back to the loft. I waited for dark and took the same bird to the same position and released him. He returned the next day in daylight. I did this three times with three different dark-trained Tipplers and not one could get back to the loft in the dark. Could we conclude from this the urge to return was present, only the ability to do so in the dark was lacking.

As we know, when a pigeon is flying in the dark he sticks to certain flying patterns. I released the same three birds individually along route of the bird's fly pattern (about 1 ½ miles) from the loft. This time, all three birds made it back to the loft in the dark within a couple of minutes. I am now asking myself how much does the pigeon actually see in the dark and how much is he using his intimate local knowledge of the area built up from his many hours of dark training?

I am now trying out some more detailed tests, but am of the opinion that a pigeon's vision is reduced

in the dark by about 80%, although I am still of an open mind. One thing is for sure. When we train in the dark we are asking our birds to do something that is totally unnatural to them and great care and patience is needed. More good birds are spoilt trying to get them to flying in the dark than for probably any other reason. Is it all worth it? Hope this is of some use to any novices thinking of dark training.

NTU Yearbook, 1990/91

NIGHT FLIGHT

by K.D. Spurling

The first thing to consider is that night time flight is not natural to pigeons and they must be introduced to the concept on a gradual basis at an early age.

So for example, let's say that we have 20 squeakers that we are starting to fly. After they have been flying well for several weeks time, we begin to liberate them a little later in the day in a way that they will be landing at about dusk and for a week we fly them at a time that will have them land at dusk. If one begins to land early, we chase it back up with the flag until it is forced to land during the dusk. You will note that at first, during this dusk time flying that they will fly fast, low and very erratic simply because they are not comfortable flying at this time of day. After about a week of this, we begin flying them a little later, say 10 minutes later than prior so that the pigeons are forced to fly through dusk and land in the early twilight hour. We continue this for another week and of course pigeons which continue to try to land early are flagged back up. In the meantime, for Racing Homers (and also other breeds if you wish to fly them correctly), they should be road training during the morning hours from short distances of say, for Homers, if they are now 7-8 weeks old, they should be out 5 to 10 miles by then after going one mile, then two miles, then to five miles, 10 miles, 25 miles, 50 and so on as they mature. For other breeds, I would go in 1/2 mile, 1 mile, 2 miles, 5 miles and then top out at 10 miles. The purpose behind the road training is in case the birds are jostled by winds or that their landmarks are shrouded by nighttime fog and the kit strays miles from the loft to avoid major losses. On the third week, we are now landing in the full darkness of say one hour after sunset and by this time; any birds, which habitually land early, are terminated. At this stage, I'll flag one up only once and that's it. The next week we are liberating in full darkness and by this time, you will note that the birds are no longer erratic or fast flying in the darkness. On near full or full moon nights they will fly very evenly and quite high and this is a very serene, beautiful and nearly poetic.

Something should be said about the loft needs. It is the practice of most to use a lighted landing board to get the birds back in. The principle is this: the kit is trained to drop on a signal; a whistle, a shake of the feed can (my cousin use to beat on a trash can lid with an axe handle to drop his kit). So when you want them to drop, you make your usual signal and you also throw on the lights at that same moment. Eventually, they will grow accustomed to those lights and the moment they come on, they will immediately drop to the loft.

Personally, I am not a big believer in the lit up landing board because it is obscured so easily (I don't use landing boards or traps anyway) and also, a simple light is easily mistaken for the landing board. A friend of mine used to use simple lights to drop them, but he had a street light set on a timer up the road and the pigeons would see it switch on and immediately drop onto the light post. What I use is a system that my mentor the late Al Krauss developed. This consists of a wooden box that is a 3-foot circle with enclosed sides. Three lights forming a triangle are mounted into this circular box and pointed skyward. These lights were made from headlight type spotlights and are quite powerful. Each light is mounted into a hole, inset slightly and over the top is a colored filter like used in theater spotlights. They are respectively blue, green and red in no particular arrangement. This system runs off a standard car battery or off electric (electric is cheaper, but I had the car battery portion installed when I was flying off a 3 story rooftop in NW Washington and I couldn't get enough cord to reach the roof.) Once the power is activated, the lights kick on and the beams alone will extend a few hundred feet skyward and are visible to a kit even at relatively high altitudes. Since the birds are adjusted to these particular lights, there isn't much of a chance of another light a few blocks over dropping them.

Training Flying Tipplers To Fly Into The Dark.

By Gordon Hughes, Derby, England

With regards to training a kit to fly into the dark, it is first essential to learn how to fly them throughout the day. When one can do this one must then consider training in the dark. Fanciers in England vary in their methods, but my own method is as follows:

1. Birds must have undergone a thorough training as youngsters and must have made the minimum of mistakes when in training as youngsters. (I do not

train young birds to fly in the dark; I commence dark training with yearlings.)

2. I keep the birds inside the loft and aviary during the winter, and after this period I arrange to liberate them for the first time at the beginning of March. Bearing in mind that the birds wings will be stiff one must cut the winter feed down, and get the birds hungry before liberation in the first instance, otherwise they will tend to alight somewhere else, other than the loft. After about one week, after being liberated on seven successive days the birds will be flying normally, perhaps for two or three hours in the daylight. Now is the time to make them very hungry, when commencing their training, especially in the dark as they cannot be controlled.

3. Now lights must be affixed on top of the loft, two 60 to 100 watt bulbs are sufficient, depending upon the size of the loft. Shades, (reflectors) should be fixed over the bulbs in order to throw the light downwards. The lights should be fixed on a strip of wood approximately three feet above the top of the loft.

4. The kit should normally be liberated in the daylight, and arrangements should be made for them to come down just before dusk. When the birds alight they should be left on the top of the loft with the lights turned on, and with the droppers out, until at least one hour after dark.

They should not be frightened or disturbed in any way, and the fancier must stay with the birds in order to ward off any cats, or other animals that may attack them. If the fancier has two lofts whereby he can get the birds to fly from one loft to the other and back again in the dark, by throwing corn (grains) here and there, this will be an advantage, and teach the birds to alight in the dark. When the fancier is certain that the birds are fully used to being out in the dark, the kit should then be liberated about fifteen minutes before dusk, and left to fly about five minutes after dark, when the light should be turned on and the droppers liberated, and the birds must be gotten down as quickly as possible. This can be repeated night after night. Bear in mind that if the birds are not very hungry



when first liberated in the dark they may not come down until the next day, in which case they may not be of any further use for competition in the dark.

Flying Tipplers Into Darkness

Gordon Hughes

My father taught me at the age of ten that Tipplers must always alight on the loft after flying and never upon the rooftops. Otherwise that if they did not do this I should never be able to fly them a long time, and never be able to control them. I never liked killing pigeons, but I have witnessed the execution of hundreds by my father because they had made the mistake of dropping upon the house roof or wireless aerial.

Generally the dark flying rules go something like this – Dark is termed as being ten minutes after lighting up time, as can be ascertained from your local paper. The birds as a kit must be seen at least once very hour. If the birds split up after dark, only one hour is then allowed to induce the birds to alight on to the loft. The birds are termed as still being in a kit if they can all be seen at the same time regardless of how far they are flying apart. As you can imagine they would not have to be far apart in the dark, otherwise you would not be able to seem them all at the same time. If the birds split for the first time,

then one hour only is allowed to get them in. You have no need to turn your lights on straight away. You may leave your birds flying in a split condition for as long as you wish, but bear in mind have only one hour, to induce the birds down after splitting, and if you were to risk everything by leaving them split for say fifty minutes, you would then only have the remaining ten minutes left to get them down if you had left them flying split for nearly one hour before putting the lights on and the dropper out.

Personally I generally put the lights on within a few minutes of the kit splitting especially if they are flying low. You know that “unity is strength” and whilst they are flying as a kit I always believe they are safe from anything that can befall them in the dark, but when they are split, I do not know how they feel, or if any particular one is feeling tired. I have never known this to happen, but I am always afraid when the kit is split, of one bird suddenly taking it into its head to make a dive for the shed. This would not be a bad thing in itself, but if the bird did this in the pitch dark, and missed the shed, and landed in the tall grass, which abounds around my loft, I may then not be able to find it, and consequently be disqualified.

Something happened to my kit when I was flying at Easter 1960, which has always induced me, since then, to turn the lights on shortly after the birds split. I have become fed up with losing by the odd few minutes and so at this Easter I decided to let my kit go as long as possible. I left them thirty minutes flying split. The referee and I could see them quite well at a few minute intervals flying in a two and one

formation. However, after they had been flying one and a half hours in the dark the odd one decided to fly very low and as he came over we saw him collide with an uncovered wire, and search as we liked we could not find the bird either on the roof or in the grass. Consequently I was disqualified, and when the results were known, I could have put my lights on twenty minutes earlier and won the National comfortably. So you can see it does not generally pay to leave your kit flying after they have split. Just one point I would like to make clear. If the birds split in the dark, you have only one hour to get them down, and should they get together again after they have first split, no extra time is allowed. They definitely have one hour only from the first split.

Now bear in mind the total number of hours spent by myself, and any other fancier who trains in the dark, also bear in mind that I flew cocks this year that I had been training for four years. You can imagine that I know now their every path of flight. I know their every movement in the dark. I know exactly which bird out of five, six or seven will alight first after the lights are put on. I know which bird will come last. When the birds split I know which one will come down immediately without any fuss, within seconds of the lights being put on. I would say that the birds will perform in all ways on competition days, exactly as they have been taught in training.....



It has been suggested to me on odd occasions that for a pigeon to fly in the dark it must have been bred from birds that had been used to doing this over the years. It is not natural for pigeons to fly in the dark; therefore, I do not believe this theory. But I will say that if the parents of the pigeon flew successfully in the dark, then it is quite safe to say that the offspring will also do so. I think that the credentials for good dark flying Tiplers would be stamina, genuine easy flying capabilities and some inbreeding to give them nerve. Many of you must have had Tiplers which have flown many hours during the day, and then after their usual dropping time they have flown long into the night; consequently you have either lost them or you have enticed them down onto the loft the next day. These, in my opinion are the type to make good dark flyers. I do not mean these particular birds, as they would probably be of no further use for training to dark, after spending the night out; but I do mean the birds of the same strain, which must have not made this mistake.

SETTLING YOUNG TIPLERS TRAINING TO DARKNESS

D. A. Fellows

Pigeon Review, Tippler Special May 1983

At five to six weeks old, I put my squeakers on top of the trap; it is about twelve to fourteen feet off the ground. They sit there all day with the droppers moving around them. As they get stronger I then bring them inside of the trap with a couple of placid droppers. At eight to ten weeks old, they are coming under the discipline of the droppers inside the trap. When I think they are ready, I then take the corn feed away for three or four days, if not satisfied. Then I get up about 3:30am to 4:00am to start breaking them one at a time. The reason for this is because I'm in the middle of a lot of Tumbler flyers. After getting them round one at a time, I increase the time by four to eight minutes. My youngsters are in and out of the trap all day, after the third day they should start kitting up. Then I increase the flying time by thirty minutes. The youngsters are then flown twice daily for 5-6 days getting them up to 2 ½ hours each time. If successful, I train every other day for 4 to 6 hours. Then when the birds are coming to the trap and getting good corn feed training is twice per week.

First of all, the lights on the shed (loft) should be well placed so that there aren't any shadows; it takes a bit of sorting out. But it can be done. The first stage is then for the droppers. Fix a lamp over your trap then ½ an hour before darkness put out your droppers inside the trap and get your light on. When the droppers are settled down throw a little corn in and make them run after it. Then after one or two nights when really hungry play with them on top of the shed, after that it's all practice and patience. Then we come to the Tiplers. Put your Tiplers out later in the day and have them flying to the sunset, go gently with the birds and have the lights on in the daylight at first, so as the daylight fades you drop your birds. Continue this method at the same time, always feed your birds under the lights after coming in. You will find that the birds will fly longer in the darkness as they get more practice. Then when you think the birds have had enough, you then put on the lights and the droppers out.

TRAINING TO LIGHTS

P. Field

First, fix a good weatherproof light so that it lights up the cage and top of the loft. This being the only place you wish your birds to drop. Try to get the light concentrated on this point so that your droppers, which you can use either in the cage or loose on the top, are clearly seen the whole time. With a pair of droppers, I should suggest keeping the hen in the cage and have the cock out on top, this should encourage him to flap about and so attract your kit. The main thing, first of all, is to give your birds confidence to be out in the dark.

This also applies to your droppers, as it is fatal in my opinion if your droppers are nervous. Try to avoid having to drive them to make them work as in doing so you may be scaring your fliers also as they will be watching these birds below. I suggest that you train your dropper cocks first of all as suggested previously. Put the hen in the cage and get the cock out on top, doing this before dark. When dusk, get him used to the light going on without scaring him off, meanwhile throw a bit of seed occasionally just to keep his attention. Next, you have to teach him to into the cage when required.

After progressing this far and if the weather permits, even if you do not have him out each night, give the droppers feed in the cage after it is dark, for a week, they will become used to the light quicker. I always feed my flyers by artificial light right through the year, as I think that this makes them realize that the lights mean feeding time. Do the same with the birds you wish to fly, let them into the cage when it is dusk and when dark put on your light and throw them a bit of corn feed or seed and get them confident enough to feed in the cage. Whenever you approach the loft especially when dark, talk to your birds, you will find that they start to coo knowing that it is you and are not frightened, having got your birds used to the light going on. Before it is dark, have them out one at a time letting them flap about and pitch back to the loft. Have the rest of the kit in the cage and your droppers out the



whole time. This method allows them to get used to their surroundings again, leave them out but watch out for cats and when dark switch on your lights, make sure to take care and not scare the birds at all. After they get used to this get them back in to the cage with a little seed. After a while you will only need to open the cage door and your birds will automatically go in. After settling them in this manner turn them out for a spin making sure that the birds will be ready to come before dark, but remember when you have reached this stage put out your droppers and switch on the light even if it is not really dark, for preference when the street lights go on as the kit can see their surroundings and do not get confused. If you are patient enough and can spare the time to persevere on these lines and use a little common sense everything should be OK.

Some birds are different in temperament to others and react in a different way being more unreliable.

If you get a bird acting awkward in training do not let it spoil the rest of your kit but persevere with those that give you satisfaction. You will find it will take a little time and patience to get the results you require but it is worth the effort.

Once trained, your kit will come easier in the dark. Once the lights and droppers are shown, they will respond more definitely and not as sometimes happens when

it is still light. The birds show for the loft and then lift away again. Do not condemn a bird that makes a mistake whilst in training, as some fanciers suggest. If a bird pitches away, I never trust the bird again, as I consider this a serious mistake and could spoil a whole kit. A bird dropping before lights are shown can be entirely different, this could be caused through lack of condition, and the result of too low a diet or that it is falling sick. Also look to your self as you may upset the routine in some way. Always check before liberating your kit, handle each bird to see if the condition seems normal. Many birds have made the mistake through being flown when not in condition. This is a point I always stress when giving advice on my method. Youngsters can be successfully trained on the same lines.

Pigeon Review, Tippler Special May 1983

Flying Young Birds To The Lights

M. Price

I part my birds from their parents at 25 days old and from then on I put them out on top of the loft for an hour or so, weather permitting, most afternoons along with a couple of hen droppers. Before they are old enough to fly, I switch the lights on for half an hour most days so they get used to the lights on and have no fear of them. As they get older, I split them into teams of about six and put them on barley and water once a day.



I only have a small loft, 8ft. x 8ft. and breed from six pair of stock birds. I usually get about 10-12 youngsters in the first round. Once the youngsters are on the wing and kitting, I box them up. By the time they are 7 weeks old, each team is doing about 3 to 4 hours every other day. I never have them out in the morning always afternoons, timing it so that they are do drop about an hour before dark; the lights are always on when I drop them. I stand out by the loft when I'm dropping them and scattering a few grains of barley about the top of the loft until its' quite dark and then get them in and feed them.

Each time I have them out I let them fly a little bit later until eventually they go right into the dark. One tip I have when flying any birds to lights is to have my dogs out there with me. I have two Jack Russell Terriers. The birds are used to them and the keep the cats away, having a cat jump up onto the back of the loft will undue all the hard work you've put into the birds.

Most of my birds are badges or are white flighted. I didn't plan this; it is just the way they came out. I find this very useful when flying in the dark, they stand out on the darkest nights.

All my breeding hens are related, being mother, daughters and granddaughters, I find that most of the youngsters bred from these birds are similar in size and type and fly in the same style.



When setting up lights on your loft try and keep a few things in mind.

It is better to have more than one light; two will suffice in most cases.

Angle all lights at about 45 degrees focusing toward the center of the roof.

Tweak position and angle of each light so as to remove any shadows. Keep spare bulbs close by just in case one burns out.

Light post should be 2-3 ft. high. The higher you go the less intense the light will be. The lower you go the less area the light will cover.

Dark Theory

By Dave Black

I am always fascinated on the dark subject as to why some kits kit longer in the dark than others. After all to our rules, once a kit splits in the dark, you have only one hour left possibly to fly the kit, but you must have the kit down and trapped within this hour. I don't know if other club's rules are different by the way, but this is a main subject that gets talked about all of the time. Our (NTU) 8 competitions are often won in the dark.

My theory is that it is something you can't teach a kit not to split, as it is out of the flyer's hands once they reach dark and the birds split. There's nothing we can do to avoid this. But there are other things you can drum into the birds, but kitting is a thing you can't teach I feel, as I'm sure the birds don't realize that they are doing anything wrong. The reason they stay together in the dark I feel is for security. And the reason one pulls out is because it is weaker minded or not as physically strong as the rest.

All I have is a theory that can help this split rule. Fly all the same breed/strain, all the same sex, and don't push them well over the time you expect to be dropping them in a competition or in training. Try and drop them as a kit in training if you can.

Look for a kit in training that rarely splits, this I know is different once the birds are under more pressure and after flying longer hours in competition. Also look for breeds/strains that are renowned for longer kitting in the dark.

I've heard sayings of it's just getting that bit of luck and getting a kit that kits in competition.

This I firmly do not believe. I know it is down to experienced flyers that know what they are looking for. Management must play a big part, as it is the same names year in year out who usually are in the national placings. Also, they must have the right birds for the job.

The best kit which I have ever seen in a competition in the dark, were a kit of 5 blue cross Boden hens of Darren Kelly, which took the national record without splitting. Looking at the weather that night it was well overcast, not a sky you would think a kit of Tipplers could clearly see each other.

I had seen this kit on many occasions either in training or in competition and all of the facts that I mentioned above, this kit had going for them. That's the only solution I can think of for kitting.

I rarely get any kitting time and have to fly long split times to get placed in the nationals.

Dark Training

By Dave Black

My dark training starts as soon as I have them kitting as young birds. Once they are on one hour training in daylight hours for a week and I'm getting them to respond straight away to the droppers, this is when I start introducing the lights. I put the birds out one hour before dark and as dusk approaches I let them see the streetlights for a few minutes. By then they are normally hanging about and flying low. I then put on my spotlight and put out the droppers. By now it is only dusk and when they drop I leave them on top of the loft to chase seed with the droppers until it is pitch-black darkness. I call them in eventually through the trap where they all live together in a big cage.

I try and do this with every young bird I settle every day if I can, getting them into a good routine. This continues for about a week gradually leaving the light out later by around 5 minutes at a time.



A kit of young birds dropped in the dark. They are allowed to walk around the roof to pick a few seeds and get more comfortable under the watchful eye of the flyer. They are then quickly coaxed into the trap and placed into individual kit boxes.

In the second week the birds should be well accustomed to flying in the dark and I increase the stages by 10 and 15 minutes, depending on the sky and the weather for that particular day. Most of the time my young birds have not been boxed off individually at this stage. So this is when I do it,

making sure all the birds in the kit are fed the same measure. Some are quicker than others to reach the seed when chasing around after it, thus I keep checking their weight by holding them individually and feeding each individually the required amount in order to get them balanced.

The feed I use is depurative. The depurative that I use is called [hens depurative] a Dutch brand. This enables me to have the control I need to get them down when I require. I find with this brand of depurative the kit rarely has a problem and it's only when they start to peek coming towards a competition in the warmer summer nights that they can take a while to come down. However, all the previous dark training should put them in good stead and you should usually get them down.

Once they have had a molt the following year, I find, they can be dark trained very easy and almost the first time they drop it is to the lights. This is the stage I am at now with 6 from last year. I hope the readers understand what I mean. As I am sure we have different terminology between ourselves and sometimes it may be hard to actually explain in detail what exactly I do and what works for myself.

Training Flying Tipplers in Dark

By Kemo Basic

I do not have authority to write on the subject that is rather crucial to the success in the flying competition achievements, as I do not have much experience in this field. I rather let the dark flying experts give us their own view on this important part of Tippler flying sport. However, for the novice in our sport I could write a few lines on the subject and emphasizes that the novice should first fly his birds through the day before he decides to train his birds to fly in the dark. I have flown my birds in competition in dark only four times in my entire Tippler career. Through my observation of the dark flying training, one of the important details is that the birds, intended for training in dark flying, must be established disciplined birds,

in order to be trusted and trained as old birds .The birds that made forced mistake in the past could be considered trustworthy and be included in the old bird dark training program.

Another important part of successful dark training is to have control over your birds with measured amount of feed and having an idea as how long your birds should fly on that specific quantity and quality of feed. In the flying Tippler Sport all host of relevant facts should be always considered to be able to determine if the birds should be permitted to fly longer or should the lights be turned on and the birds dropped. Your right judgment in deciding on this issue is crucial to your success.

I feed my birds at nighttime with lights and droppers so they get used to it from beginning. Therefore they are not afraid of the shade and neither from darkness. I start training in the dark by feeding my birds on a half measure of barley once a day and being careful if this amount of feed is justified, according to the bird's condition, temperature and other relevant factors. About 10 consecutive days on this program are required to get the fliers gradually to fly into dark. Patience plays a big roll and if the birds fly only for a few minutes in dark, the very important step is achieved and the start of a gradual flying longer into dark on regular bases begins. The workouts are every other day or twice a week. The feeding with barley and oil seeds, or depurative is used - flying 4-5 hrs every other day or 7-8 hrs if flown twice a week.

Tippler man's personal preference of the length of the flying time in training varies in proportion to the quality and quantity of the training feed.

On a good day your birds if in good condition, will fly longer then you would like them to fly, and on the day with unfavorable flying weather conditions will look for droppers earlier. If the birds want to come down before dark, do not risk anything by pushing them to fly little bit longer, turn the lights on, give them the droppers and try to do better next time.

I wish you to have confidence that you can achieve results by doing proper research and then applying it to your own program, and then write me a line letting me know if I was right. Good luck.

Night Fright

by Michael J. Beat

Untrained tipplers will appear frightened or nervous with approaching nightfall. However, with consistent and repeated steps flying them into the dark by bringing them down past dusk can be ingrained into the birds. After repeated efforts they will feel comfortable with the thought of flying past the loss of light. One key is to make sure to bring them down each time they practice fly. What helps the birds to continue is the expectation that it is "only a matter of time" before the lights come on and the safety-net of the droppers appear below them. This is enough for a kit to continue flying on into the dark.

Another factor that keeps the birds tranquil is their kitting. After dark, birds flying solo have a hard time seeing other birds flying if they are far in the distance. However, they sometimes will re-kit after splitting. This is a positive side effect of their kitting instinct as many split kits will begin "looking" for the rest often finding them in the vicinity of the loft. If the droppers do not show, individuals may continue to fly solo or they may have to be dropped before they pitch somewhere ("pitching" is the act of dropping to land). Hence while solo, there is a higher risk that a bird will drop nearby the loft due to the exaggerated fear that comes from being alone. Therefore one must be watchful during this time to make sure that if a solo flying bird decides to pitch that the signal can be given before he does it. On the other hand, sometimes when the others of the split kit reappear they re-join and are once again put back into the rhythm of a flying kit. No dropping signal at this point need be given.

Repeated flying at night is the best way to help the birds overcome their fears. Once a kit has reached darkness, it is best to never allow the kit to drop in the daytime. By so doing, this expectation of only being allowed to drop after dark will become a "standard" for them. It is not necessary to fly exceptionally long periods in the

dark either. A team that flies a good 30 minutes of dense darkness (as opposed to twilight) and yet stays together as a kit, is well equipped to fly longer periods later. The important thing is to fly "some" period in the dark and to maintain control while doing so. If this control is not maintained, the birds will continue long after you've exasperatedly hit your pillow. But once a determined period of time has passed, say, 30 minutes to 45 minutes of really dark flying, the team may be dropped. If they still have some energy in them and the night is young, you may have to take a couple of hours to drop them. This would indicate that they were not brought under enough control with their feeding. Nevertheless, since the mistake was made, a dedicated flyer will keep trying to drop them until that last nervous and frightened bird makes it down to the loft-top.

At times it can be quite a daunting task to drop birds late at night when one must work the following morning. Nevertheless, a bird doesn't wear a watch and didn't realize that he flew over one hour past the dropping signal. Thus from the standpoint of the pigeon, it dropped appropriately. Hence, the best way to have control of such a bird is the repeated practice of dropping in the dark during practice sessions. Only then will the competition day bring acceptable results.



Knowing the amount of hours to fly based on the amount and quality of the food administered prior to attempting dark flying is an important key. If your birds are accustomed to flying 6 hours on the barley and wheat mix you are feeding with, then back up the release time about 5 1/2 hours before pitch blackness. However, don't then expect the birds to pitch at 6 hours time. There is the realization that the fright factor and nervousness may easily cause the birds to fly another hour or longer in the dark. However, the important thing is to get them DOWN that night. If it takes 4 more hours, then keep working the droppers every time they pass over or "show", until they do drop. Keeping to this regiment and allowing the birds feed and water after their fly is the best way to maintain a top-form kit of birds for competition day.

After repetitive exposure to night flying, a kit of tipplers will be ready for the all day competition and then some additional night flying. Only then will their nervous freight be turned into pleasurable routine flight.