

# GETTING YOUNGSTERS TO DARK QUICKLY

by Dave Black

The main reason for getting youngsters to dark quickly is to minimize the amount of attacks on the birds in falcon hit areas and by minimizing the amount of daylight, we expose our tipplers to, reduces the times the birds are attacked. Hopefully the falcon has used the earlier daylight hours for a catch and does not need to hunt right up till dark. Basically we do our training mainly in the dark. The falcon is not known to hunt at night.

Dark training young birds is normally at the time of year when the daylight is much longer so requires a lot of time and dedication at first. A lot of late nights, plenty of patience for this to succeed and about a week of constant work on our part is about all that is needed

The method for doing this starts immediately after the settling period which is only a week of having the birds in the air. After we are satisfied the birds have flown as a kit a few times together (time in the air does not matter at this stage) we begin quickly dark training.

One hour flying time will be about the right amount of time we are after, after all the birds are low in their condition and its more control we are after at this stage not flying time. Then we can start the dark training process right away.

The first week after we are happy that all of the youngsters have flown together a few times and staying close to the loft wanting to be down and are hanging around and are dropping immediately on command to the droppers and loft top only then we can attempt to show them the lights. If we are not getting this control don't even attempt to fly them to the lights. We need complete discipline through the feed at this stage which is

to be to a minimum depending on which strain we have. My own are kept low on a depurative and only fed what seed they beat the droppers to on the loft top and in and around the trap. Now if we are satisfied that we have everything under control we can start training them to the lights

The first time I take the youngsters to the lights I have already dropped the kit twice during that particular day so come the last part of the day we know we are going to drop the birds no problem. But this time we drop them just as the street lamps are coming on. By this stage the birds will see the hungry droppers chasing around the loft top with the lights on.



It is important that the droppers are always wanting to move after the corn at this stage. On dropping the tipplers we don't open the trap just yet but we leave them on the loft with the lights on lighting up the loft top and trap till complete darkness. This way the birds are learning that it is safe with the droppers but remember to only throw the grains sparingly. We do not want to fill the tipplers or the droppers as we need them ready for the next day again.

The next day we are now going to only let the tipplers out only once. We let them out 1 hour before dark. The birds fly till we show the lights. I like to leave the loft top lit for 10 minutes or so while the kit is flying before putting out the droppers this is so they can see home lit up. This will help them later in the dark training by easily recognising their home. And I have to add they respond much better this way.

Be prepared for the birds to be flying low and wanting to be down, the best part of their flying they are really hungry and are just waiting for the droppers. Don't let them land without droppers and make sure the droppers are under them at all times when dropping them. We don't want any bad habits for the birds to repeat later. Again repeat what we did the day before but dare the birds to go a bit closer to dark each time, we do this for a about 4 days in a row leaving the lights on for the birds to fly around. By leaving it later and later before showing the droppers the birds will slowly grasp the idea and lose the fear. Around about the 5th day we can leave off the lights and let them fly a bit in the dark on their own...around 15 to 20 minutes.

If we have any old birds that we have no plans for that have seen the dark before it is also a good idea to have these run down in condition and flying with the young birds. It just keeps them close to home in the dark.

After about a week of constantly showing the birds the dark we can start to feed them a bit more and let them fly in complete darkness by now. As long as we feel all is right to the weather conditions and the birds have good imprinting as to what marker lights are below them to follow they should be fine and not stray away to far.

This is now the tipplers life. No more feeding times during the day, only lights and droppers and hopefully the birds are good enough come comp day. We also hope they are left alone by predators and fly the day for us.

Happy Young bird  
Dark Training

Dave Black

