

## Notes on the Convoying of racing pigeons during 2012

By Geoff Rayment

I've written this article to give an insight through my eyes as the convoyer and to share some observations and outline the basics of what I do!

The driver (Chris) and I aim to get the birds to the race points as quickly, carefully and as safely as possible in time for me to **feed, water and rotate the birds** (within each bay), so that the **maximum number of birds get access to feed and water!**

I have found the majority of pigeons will feed and drink well once we have arrived at the race point and then settle after a couple of shuffles around with my aluminium rod (that Michael Shepherdson made up for me! - it certainly brings the percentages up for the birds that eat and drink, thanks Michael).

Now, I've tried watering the birds part way to the race point in anticipation that they may want a drink by then, but my observations show that only about 10% drink, and in doing so, this delays the arrival at the race point by approximately two hours and hence the other 90% have had to wait longer before they eat and drink. This process (feeding and watering) can take up to four hours if the unit is full. As noted above I try to give all the bird's encouragement and plenty of opportunity to eat and drink.

I have observed a far better response to feeding and drinking when bay numbers are 30 to a bay! This is not always possible we know, but maybe all bays should be used all the time. In my opinion better feeding and watering far out-ways the argument of birds travelling better and staying warmer when bays have higher numbers.

On the subject of heat, we observed that the birds don't cop the heat when we are travelling compared to being parked somewhere in the same temperature (even if you can find shade).

Our young bird derbies got me thinking!

Open races give the opportunity to youngsters to learn or copy old birds when feeding and drinking!

When we flew **Lyndhurst YBC** I noticed a **decrease** in the number of birds eating and drinking and I concluded that this was due to not having old birds on board.

**Ceduna SAD** came a week later and I was surprised to see a marked difference in that plenty of birds were getting stuck into eating and drinking. This puzzled me for a while, but on the journey home I thought about it. It was just as Don Schwarz said to me previously about the **holdovers** for both Wudinna races a few weeks earlier. Don's point was that the additional time at the Wudinna race points enabled the birds to 'learn' to eat and drink in the bays and hence contributed to the better eating and drinking for the Ceduna SAD compared to the Lyndhurst YBC.

Now a **suggestion on training pigeons for feeding and watering in hampers** for all flyers. Two days before you train the birds, hamper them up and give them their evening feed and water (on trays per the SAHPA). On day two (with the birds still in the hampers), leave water available all day (no feed in the morning). On returning home from work say 4.00pm, remove water and feed the birds in the trays, then following feeding, provide water in the same trays. Leave water all night and early am (or whenever that day) take the birds and toss them (even if it is only just down the road to the oval or whatever). This training is sure to give you better and more consistent race returns and prepare them better for when Thursday night hampering starts.

At Nundroo I watched in dismay as I released the birds - the sky was well overcast and this caused longer than normal orientation (although I understand from my own returns and others the race was good for most) for up to 50 minutes while I closed the unit up. During this time I was very concerned about falcon predation. Whatever the reason there was not one falcon strike! The only birds of prey out west appear to live off road kill and ground prey.

On racing and releasing it is my opinion that when the distance lengthens (last four races) the birds should go up at the earliest possible time to give them every opportunity to get home on the day

(whether it's north or south racing). If the short markers get their birds on dark well good luck to them - they still have to have one in the leading batch and you can't stop a bird homing through the night if the desire is to do so. Holding the birds in the morning for a couple of hours so they have the chance to drink doesn't work. All the birds are focused on '**getting out and home**' and waiting till later in the morning prolongs their time before they stop to get water in the heat of the day anyhow! Everyone gets their turn sooner or later when conditions suit.



On a **personal racing note** I enjoyed my good results from the n/w and west lines but I must say if it wasn't for the help and guidance from Allan Brown I would have been way down the list like in previous years. I believe most success comes down to **how you manage your birds** so they can do the job for you when race conditions suit. Obviously the birds must be fit and in the leading batch in the right location. Top flyers with excellent management skills can land 6 or more together - that's quality! I live near Gawler and intend to fly all lines even though I could think of many other locations that would improve my results. As membership gets smaller each year we need to support the SAHPA race program and not just fly the lines we fare better on.

I would like to acknowledge the help from my wife Lorraine who has tirelessly looked after and clocked my birds while I have been away looking after all every one else's birds as if they were my own.

Thank you to all members who have given me positive encouragement.

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