

Pigeon Tracks



American Racing Pigeon Union

2014 AU National Youth Race

Karen Clifton, Executive Director



The 2014 AU Convention and National Youth Race in Omaha are just around the corner. By the time this newsletter is posted, we will literally be about six weeks away from an exciting event.

This year, we will be thrilled to meet and visit with the young man that won the 2013 National Youth Race. That is right! Ryan Carns will be accompanied by his father and will join us at this years convention as our guest.

One of you that entered a

bird in the 2014 National Youth Race will win and will also be invited to attend next years event in Salt Lake City, Utah.

You can monitor the status of your bird by going to the 2014 AU Convention link (<http://www.2014omahaaurace.com/>) and click on the button, "Entry Status."

We wish you all the best of luck and look forward to announcing the winner!

Need this emailed? Need a paper copy? Let us know. Otherwise, find it under the junior section of the AU website.

Summer 2014

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Over A Century of Excellence!

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Youth Race Update with Carter Mayotte

By Dylan Patera, AU Youth Ambassador

The birds are doing well according to Carter, the convention chairman. 54 birds will be contending for top spot.

Some of the possible challenges for the Youth Race racecourse will be the length. Also weather in Omaha in October can be unpredictable. However, the handlers, in their usual practice, will use great care monitor-

ing weather along the race course.

Well the biggest news that I just heard today was that I just heard that Ulrich Lemmens won the national race in Belgium yesterday and he's probably going to be the named the best flier in Belgium this year. This is exciting because he will be a speaker at the convention this year.

Best of luck to all competitors and their birds!

Iowa Family Runs Bird Release Business

The Des Moines Register featured them in a recent article.

The Burlasons of Des Moines, Iowa, were in the local newspapers, The Des Moines Register, recently.

If everything goes as planned tonight, 30 white "doves" will fly from baskets on either side of the stage during the national anthem at the Yankee Doodle Pops concert at the state Capitol.

Their cue is "the land of the free" — earlier than "home of the brave" and better, for obvious reasons, than "bombs bursting in air."

Last year they swooped up the hillside, flapped a perfect lap around the Statehouse's gold dome and set their sights northwest to their roost, about six miles away in Johnston. The trip took about 15 minutes.

"I've been raising them my whole life, and they still amaze me," said flight operator Travis Burlason, who with his wife, Patsy, owns White Doves of Iowa.

The couple began the business last year and called the Des Moines Symphony to see if they might like some feathered special effects for the concert that annually draws crowds of 100,000. The symphony agreed, and a tradition was hatched.

The "doves" are actually homing pigeons, domesticated cousins of the gray birds that waddle around downtown. They travel in tight flocks and can fly hundreds of miles to return home from any direction.

Scientists still don't understand how the birds navigate, although most research suggests that iron deposits on top of their beaks help them sense Earth's magnetic field, like a built-in compass. Earthquakes have been known to scramble the birds' instincts even a week after the initial shock.

The Burlasons release their flock at special events as far as 30 miles from their home in Johnston, usually for a fee of \$200 to \$300. They hire out to events up to 50 miles away only if the birds have time for



Travis and Patsy Burlason's flock of 45 homing pigeons spends most of its time in a 10-by-6-foot coop, which has both a sun deck and a screened-in porch. The Burlasons hire the birds out through their business, White Doves of Iowa. (Photo: Michael Morain/The Register)

Iowa Family continued

a few practice flights, each successively farther away.

The couple takes attendance after each trip by inspecting the birds' plastic anklets — blue for the males, pink for the females (which tend to be better behaved). Every once in a while a bird won't return, but more often, common pigeons will tag along for the ride.

"The 'commies' just hang out for a while and then leave," Travis Burleson said.

The flock of 45 spends most of its time in a 10-by-6-foot coop, which has both a sun deck and a screened-in porch. Their shed stands on posts in the Burlesons' backyard, where the birds eat a mix of corn, peas and barley and exercise twice every day except

Sunday, when they're allowed to stay outside. Saturday is bath day.

"Once one gets in the tub, they all do," Patsy Burleson said.

Those communal instincts are good for business. Pairs stick together when they're released at weddings. Flocks circle above funerals, waiting for the late arrival the family lets go.

"It can be really meaningful," Patsy Burleson said. "I had a guy fall to his knees after he let the spirit go for his wife."

But the birds aren't always so popular. When the Burlesons took the birds to a bridal show, some visitors steered clear of their booth. Others asked if they were real.

A pair of chicks, just a few weeks old, huddled in a nest in the coop a few days ago, bald except for the fuzz and spines that will become white feathers.

Soon they'll join the rest of the flock, bursting like popcorn out of the coop and up to the sky.

"I call this my waterless fish tank. Sometimes it's fun to just come out here and watch them," Travis Burleson said. "It's peaceful."

A video is posted on line at <http://www.desmoinesregister.com/story/news/2014/07/03/pigeons-yankee-doodle-pops/12125421/>

Pigeon Terms You May Know

Drag: Term applied to where the majority of the lofts are located for a given race.

Dropper: A fancy type pigeon that is released in the fancier's yard and flies straight to the landing board to bring the Racing Homer out of the sky and onto the landing board.

Flagging: Encouraging the birds to

fly (exercise around the loft) for a certain length of time.

Flights: The 20 larger feathers in the Racing Homer's wing. The outer 10 flights are called the Primaries.

Flying to Perch: A racing system in which the Racing Homers fly only to their perch; usually used in

young-bird racing.

Fret Marks: Any horizontal mark or deformity on the feathers. Results from lack of proper nutrients to the growing feathers or stress.

Frill: Line of reversed feathers on the neck or crop.

Training

(excerpt from “The Sport and Hobby of Racing Pigeons”)

Training of young birds starts from the day they leave the nest. The first thing you need to know is how to properly hold a Racing Homer so that it will trust you. Figure 4 shows the proper method of holding a bird in the palm of either hand with both of its legs held firmly but gently between your index and middle fingers. In this position the bird will not struggle and possibly hurt itself or damage its feathers. You should be able to enter the loft at any time and to pick up any bird without frightening it.

As a general rule, when a young bird is fully feathered under its wing it is ready to be placed in the young bird loft, normally 24 to 32 days after hatching. For the first 2 to 3 days the young birds may not eat or drink. If a young bird shows signs of dehydration, such as “sleepy eyes” half closed, you should take it and gently place its bill in the water container. If after 3 days it has not eaten, a few grains tossed near it on the floor will usu-

ally start it to eating. As stated before, feeding of all birds should be at set times, usually in the morning and evening after the birds have been exercised or tossed.

The next thing young birds learn is the outside surroundings of the loft and how to enter the loft. This is usually accomplished by placing them in a “settling cage” on the landing board. A settling cage made of wire mesh is placed in such a position to keep the young birds from flying off and to allow them to see the surroundings and to trap back into the loft. After a week or two of being placed in the settling cage, the cage is removed and the birds are allowed to come out of the loft unrestricted. The birds should not be chased out of the loft or they may take immediately to the air and possibly be lost. Also one should

not let them out the first time with older and more experienced birds for the same reason. The best time to loft break birds is in the evening, approximately 1.5 to 2 hours be-



fore sunset on a sunny day when the wind is blowing less than 10 mph. Also on the morning of the day the birds are to be loft broken they should be fed one half ration so that they will be eager to return to the loft for food.

REMINDERS

ESSAY CONTEST— Deadline is September 24. The prize is a new electronic timer from Benzing.

SHOWCASE LOFT CONTEST—Voting begins mid-September. The prize is free membership for one person, for one year.

