

April 22, 2006

Not too long ago I was talking to an old-timer who said:” I am done flying those real long distance races. If somebody talks about long distance racing I am interested. I said: "What seems to be your problem”. Lousy returns and too many of my birds are ending up in Michigan! He had participated in the Nakina race and two of his birds were reported from Michigan. Of course this is not a new complaint. I have heard this many times before. It is difficult to explain to the fancier without hurting somebody's feelings.

Was this a valid complaint or are there other reasons for this fancier’s problem with long distance races.

Let us be honest many birds are sent to these races and the birds are just not able to handle these tough races. I start selecting my future long distance racers during the young bird series. I love the hot days with south winds and check which birds show up when the going gets "tough”. I have topped the Combine with birds who ended up on top of my elimination sheet at the end of the season. On the "tough" day’s check how quickly the young birds recuperate, if it takes them more than one hour, I will write this down in my year book.

I normally ship the limit to Nakina and Long Lac.(20 Birds) I am not stuck on this 20 bird limit, but since the competition ships the 20 bird limit and you fly for the average speed, you better do the same if you want to be competitive. Would I vote for a 10 bird limit with unlimited clocking? Yes, in a heartbeat. Flying a 20 bird limit in both series requires an awful lot of work and expense. Anybody willing to put that kind of effort into his hobby should be complimented. But I totally understand fanciers with busy jobs who concentrate on one series or even one part of the series.

Let us get back to long distance racing.

My returns were 17 birds home from Long Lac and 13 bird’s home from Nakina.Considering that the birds face birds of prey, high tension wires and "stupid" people with guns who will shoot at our birds, my 17 bird return from Long Lac is quite acceptable. My returns from Nakina in 2005, a station approx. 50 km. further were just average. A return of 15 or 16 birds would have been acceptable to me.

How many Yearlings were sent to these tough races? I do not know. But it is very interesting indeed to check the Combine results and find 50 % yearlings in the first 50 birds clocked!!

One of my birds has been sent six years in a row to Long Lac won six early prizes and apparently never saw Michigan! Good luck to everybody flying with your birds these supreme races.

Tom Brouwer.