

## RESULTS OF THE 2000 LONG DISTANCE NATIONAL CHAMPIONSHIP NOCKATUNGA - 14.10.2000

*by Dr. Colin Walker*

For the last three years, in early October, a Victorian State wide 700 mile race from Coongoola into Melbourne has been organised. This year, not only being the year 2000 and therefore the start of the new millennium but also a particularly sporting year for Australia with the Olympics being held in Sydney, the APFA in conjunction with Victorian Federations decided to broaden this event into one that would include fanciers in the other eastern States. To this end, the race point was shifted approximately 200 miles to the west to Nockatunga. Although still 700 miles from Melbourne, Nockatunga is approximately 600 miles from Brisbane, Adelaide and Sydney. It was envisaged that birds from the other three States would rendezvous with the Victorian birds at Nockatunga. Due to the SAHPA having other long races around this time, it was deemed inappropriate this year for these birds to compete. However, a number of flyers in both New South Wales and Queensland were keen to participate and so it was that on Friday, 13th October, birds from Victoria, New South Wales and Queensland were gathered at Nockatunga.

As usual, the Victorian birds had been collected from three Melbourne Federation headquarters and two centrally located rural basketing points in Shepparton. The 714 birds sent by 134 Victorian flyers were transported and expertly cared for this year by John Peels and his very capable wife. A contingent of 22 birds from SE New South Wales was collected at Shepparton. The basketing of Queensland birds from Brisbane and Toowoomba was organised by Peter Flack. Also, eight flyers from NE New South Wales sent 140 birds.

Nockatunga Station is owned by Kerry Packer and the station staff was extremely helpful in assisting with the race. Friday evening was a beautiful night in the Queensland channel country as the 1400 city birds rested quietly in the transport units parked in an open-sided hay storage barn on the station. The barn was ideal as it not only offered shade but full ventilation.

A quick check of the internet at 5.00am Saturday morning showed a light SW breeze through New South Wales with some patchy rain on the coast. The Victorian, together with the SE New South

Wales, birds were the first to go, being released at 6.30am. As reported in earlier years by other convoyers, John Peels was amazed at how the birds orientated in only one to two minutes and headed off south in one tight bunch. Part of the enduring fascination of pigeon racing must be the uncanny way the birds are able to do this despite being so far from their lofts. Queensland birds were released at 7.00am and the NE New South Wales birds at 7.15am; all groups left quickly, exiting Nockatunga at their respective correct points of the compass.

The SW wind offered the Queensland birds a tail wind and they were quick to use it. Birds were clocked in Toowoomba at approximately 6.00pm, with many fanciers reporting multiple bird drops. Toowoomba flyer, Les Hansson, recorded the fastest velocity, 1433. Clocking his winner at 5.35pm. Queensland race organiser, Peter Flack, as of 1st December has not forwarded confirmed results.

The NE New South Wales birds also did a good job, with two birds being clocked at

cient confidence and ability to fly solo into this area. A second bird was also clocked in this area at 3.14pm.

The SW wind pushed the Victorian birds into the eastern side of the State and clocking times reflected the slow but steady journey of the race birds south. R Hindson clocked at Kyabram at 11.38am, while birds were clocked in Shepparton from 12.41pm onwards. By 3.24pm the leaders were in Melbourne. However, before this several exceptional birds had already reached Geelong. The first bird here, and eventual Victorian winner, was clocked by E Branagh at 2.50pm flying a distance of 735 miles. The Mallee Classic loft once again put up a very good performance. Situated in the west of the State, despite the day with strong SW winds not helping these birds, three were clocked in competitive time. Of note, the third bird was a completely white albino hen. This bird had come to the notice of race handlers during basketing due to her unusual colouring yet there she was, back from 700 miles.

### TOP TEN PLACE GETTERS FROM NOCKATUNGA NATIONAL CHAMPIONSHIPS ON DAY AND QUEENSLAND SECTION

LES HANSSON	1433.6266	TOOWOOMBA
DAVID LEADERS	1422.8588	BRISBANE
MERV STERWART	1416.4640	DALBY
DAVE ELSON	1406.0337	BRISBANE
ROSS (CHIPPY) GRAHAM	1399.9157	TOOWOOMBA
SID HANSEN	1396.4737	TOOWOOMBA
STAN BENNETT	1386.3030	TOOWOOMBA
GRAHAM MCKAY	1329.6686	DALBY
PETER UTZ	1297.2690	LOCKYER
NIFTY JEFFERIES	1218.6878	WARWICK

The winning flyers distance was 911.55km (567 miles)

Gunnedah on the day at 7.38 and 8.25pm, each flying approximately 815kms. A third bird, flying 110kms further, was clocked at Armidale at 10.52pm

For the Victorian birds, however, the SW wind offered a strong shoulder wind. This coupled with the extra distance they had to fly, resulted in no day birds. Sunday dawned to a strengthening south-westerly that was becoming cold. At 10.24am H&J Peace in SE New South Wales clocked, flying a distance of 932kms to record a velocity of 946m/min - a good effort as the 22 birds from this area were released with the 700 plus Victorian birds. This bird must have broken very early and had suffi-

700 mile racing represents the ultimate test for Victorian birds and although some good birds will falter, it is certain that the birds that successfully negotiate this distance, particularly when the weather makes the going tough, are good ones. It is interesting to note that all of the leading birds clocked in Geelong were actually flying over 730 miles and that the outright State winner was flying 735 miles. This magnificent late bred light blue checker hen of Eric Branagh is a blend of Goodger, Busschaert and Hansenne blood. This type of race always brings to the attention of fanciers several exceptional birds. It is of interest that Keith Flentjar's Melbourne metropolitan winner is a 2 year old cock