

# A Handicap System

*Throwing the Cat amongst the Pigeons*  
*By Barry Trewin*

Once again this is just a concept to provoke forward thinking in a stagnate sport. For anything to move forward a first step must be taken, then another and so on! Most of the problems in our sport can be overcome, problems only need solutions, but many will not even attempt to try and develop a new idea or concept, this has not been the normal thing to do. I have now travelled and conducted many talks and discussions regarding new concepts for pigeon racing, I have listened to many people telling me their problems in their own areas, but I must say, the same problems are happening everywhere!

We do not have a National Body which can help with any problems so many people are just left to their own situations; with declining numbers in our sport this is not acceptable from my point of view.

Now let us look at a couple of things which should be obvious, but people will always make excuses as to why things need to stay the same, usually because they will not have or maintain the advantage if something new is introduced, they do not want the racing to be competitive.

- *Why do people who live in the eastern areas always have the best racing results?*
- *Why do people seek to move to these areas to race their pigeons?*
- *What and where is the drop Zone?*
- *Why is it that the people who take the control of clubs usually live in these areas?*
- *Which direction do the prevailing winds come from?*
- *Can terrain play any part in the results?*

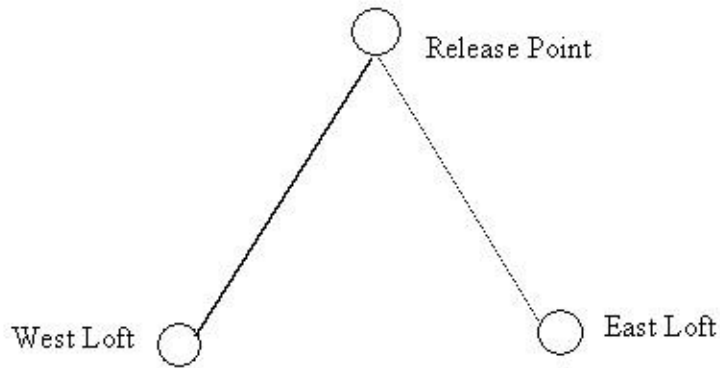
There are two types of fancier, the racer and the breeder, the first (racer) will obtain good results in racing but usually with birds not bred by himself! The second may not have good racing results in his own loft, but his birds win in many different lofts in many different locations around the country. It is very rare but on occasions you will find a fancier who is both, now there are other factors to take into account, I would not put someone into the third category if they breed many hundreds of birds, even up to a thousand, each year and achieve good results, the fact of the matter is the odds are stacked in their favour already. E.g. If a fancier breeds 130 birds per year and sends some to breeders plate sales and elsewhere and still races a small team the odds of him scoring recognition against a fancier that breeds up to 800 birds and send them everywhere is very slim. The guy breeding 800 would have to get a few birds up in the results even with average quality stock; it is just a pure numbers

game. But many people still obtain or buy birds from the guys that are flooding the market with a shot gun effect and knowing that some are going to score somewhere.

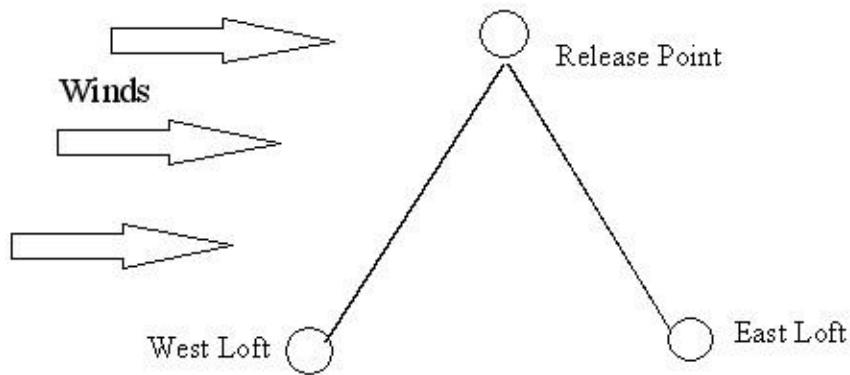
I will now show some basic maps and explain my thoughts on the line of flight of birds when racing. I will look at the scenario everyone wishes to have and then show the actual flight paths of birds just with wind interference at this stage. The reasoning behind my writings so far and the first three pictures, I hope it will help to explain my handicap system better. It is hard for people that have been stuck in their ways to understand many of my new concepts, but that is why nothing has changed in the past, because these people are not creative enough to be able to come up with new ideas that can benefit the sport.

It is only because I have been travelling around talking to many people about new concepts over the past 7 years that different people are now starting to see a light at the end of the tunnel, even if it may seem small at this stage. For so long many people have left the sport disillusioned at the poor management of organisations and lack of improvements, Yes the sport will die if no one sets about to change the way things are done.

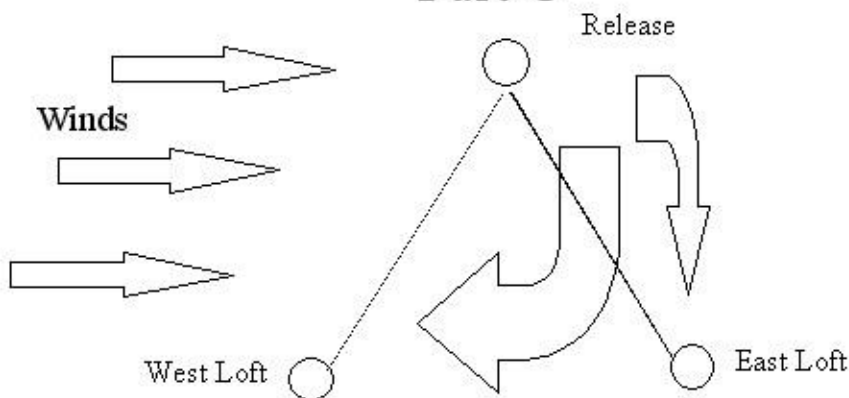
### Part A



### Part B



### Part C



The Direction birds are forced to fly due to prevailing winds

Now I will explain the examples further that each loft has exactly the same of the following:

- Quality of birds.
- Feeding
- Training
- Management
- Both lofts are equal distance from the release point

Now from the pictures you can see Part A is the ideal line of flight for any particular race. All birds fly directly to their home loft without any interference of any outside elements. In this scenario birds should arrive at their home lofts at exactly the same time.

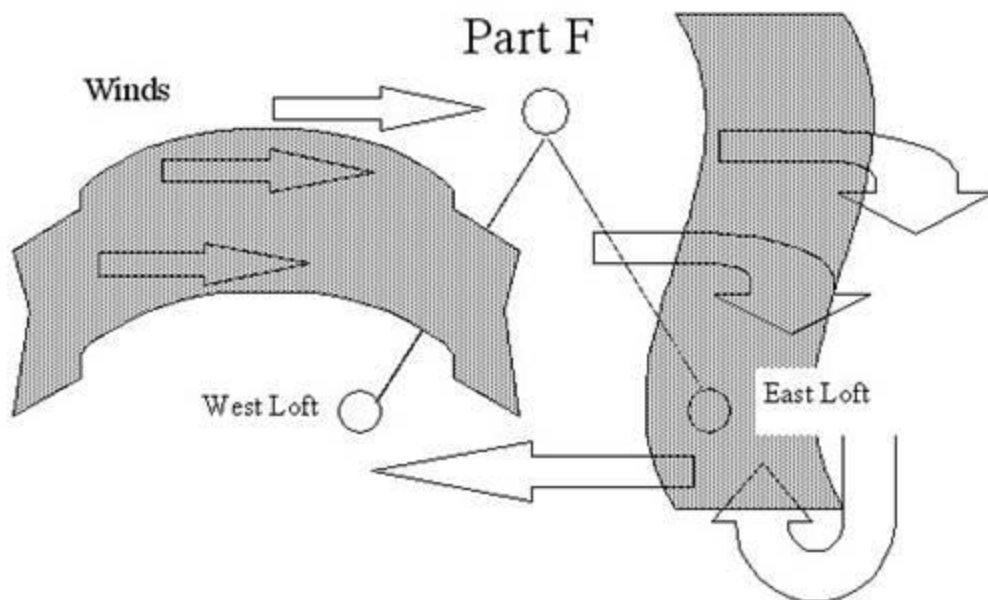
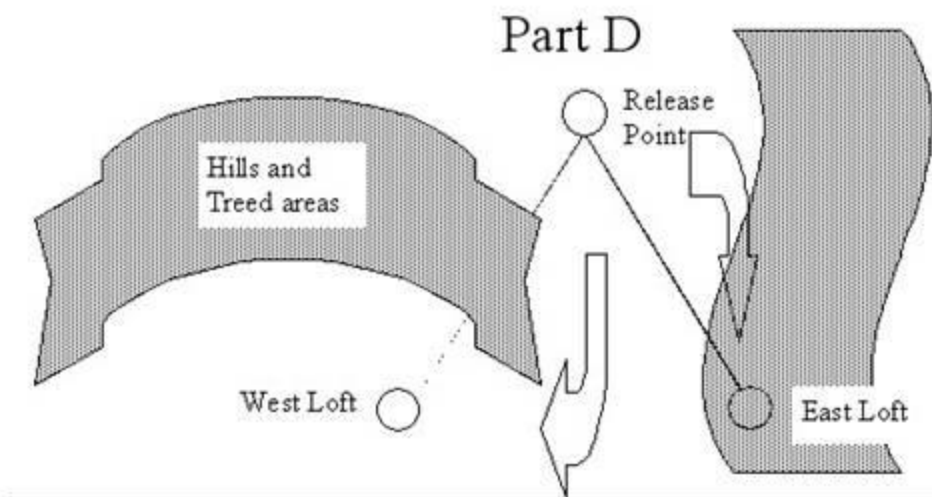
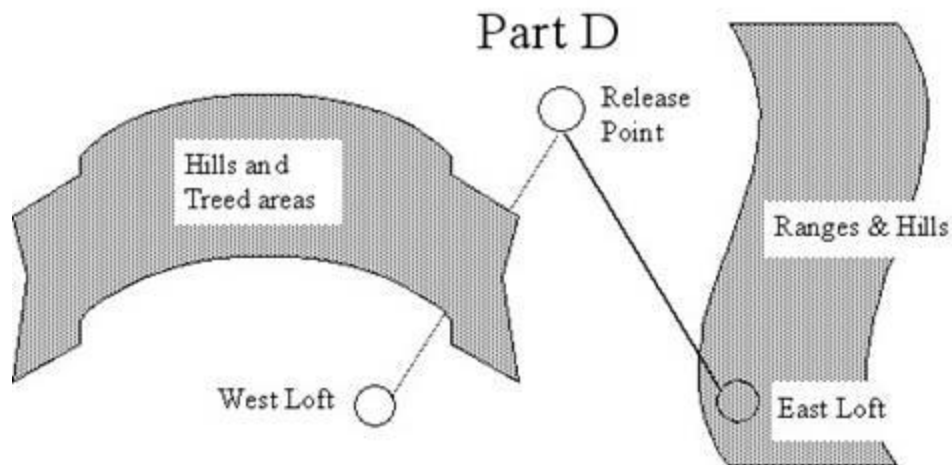
Now let's throw in the prevailing westerly winds, this already has changed the playing field dramatically in favour of the Easterly Loft. The birds will be pushed to the east and then the westerly lofts birds will actually fly a much further path than the East loft as they are pushed further into the east at the release point, thus the East loft will have birds landing at their loft well before the West loft. Now sometimes birds can break and head for their loft not far from the release point, but the east loft birds are pushed towards their loft and do not have to turn into a head wind which will also slow the birds heading towards the West Loft. In effect the East loft birds have not flown as far or as hard as the West Loft birds, but the results at the end of the day means that the East loft guys are patting themselves on the back for a good win, when in fact their birds had an easy run home. Which birds would you prefer? Most people buy birds from the East loft as they win the prizes, but are they really the better birds? NO!

Now let's throw some more variables into the equation!

We can start by putting in ranges and hills; these could also be lakes or rivers, for the example. Birds will naturally take a line of flight which is dictated by the terrain, they also fly around mountains, ranges or hills rather than flying over the top! They will look for gaps that they can get through, rather than try and expose themselves to open country where they can be spotted by falcons easily. Exceptions to this will be on days with clear skies, the birds can fly very high and fly over obstacles such as I have mentioned, but this is still rare.

So refer to Part D you can see the obstacles the birds would encounter, now as the birds cannot fly direct to the west loft due to the hills, these birds are again at a disadvantage before the race has even started, and they will still have to fly a longer race than the east loft birds. Now let's look at the equation with westerly winds Part F, the birds can be pushed onto the totally wrong side of the ranges and have to fly down and around before heading back into a head wind slowing these birds even further. Now in my area it didn't take long to work out the flight path of the birds in relation to wind direction and terrain. But still new

fanciers that were well into the west were ridiculed by so called good fanciers which lived in the drop zone. All you had to do was check the clock times for each fancier and you could work out exactly (on an average) the drop zone and the flight path of the birds. When this was discussed with people, of course their attitude was that their birds were superior. But how can this be, when they put birds into lofts in the west their birds did not perform, ah but the fanciers who live in the west are not as good as the other guys! Well that was the comments from the so called top fanciers. Now I started to study this and I could see that the new fanciers, which were in the west, would leave the sport very quickly, but my words fell on deaf ears as the east fanciers kept patting themselves on the back. It is great to win races, but when there is no one left to race against, then it is easy to win! This scenario does not deter the east fanciers as they seem to wish for this! In many of my travels I hear people talking about the same problems in the sport, but this is the problem, many people talking about the problem, but no one trying to come up with a solution! Some people deny there is a problem, these are the fanciers the sport does not need, and mostly they are old school and do not embrace change or progress unfortunately.



Now on a visit to the Wagga Wagga some years ago, I was interested in an idea that, I think the Albury Wodonga club were using (a very similar system, but slightly different). Now this is where at least people are searching for solutions to problems and not just saying “that is the way it always has been”, “we can’t change anything”. Now this got me into great discussions with John Clay, about what the Wagga Wagga Club were using and I could see merit in their thinking. I then started to look at the scenario at my area and started developing the idea to assist the guys that were disadvantaged by terrain and position. Now upon studying clocking times and talking with the guys that were continually behind each week a trend was appearing, in the times, now what I did was worked on a drop zone, basically where the birds were entering and then work a formula to take time off the guys in the West, which meant they would have their times very close to the drop zone guys, well as expected they would never allow this. This is why the sport cannot go forward!

Now another example: The Stawell Gift - Australia’s richest foot sprint race. The guys are racing off handicaps to keep the racing as exciting as possible, not to just give away to money to the fastest person, if this was the case, they would all run off scratch! This race has thought outside the square and has reaped the rewards, whereas pigeon fanciers are exactly the opposite, and only see people leave the sport disillusioned!

Now basically, what can happen is that when the birds reach the drop zone, they turn and then head towards the west lofts, now if the birds sit on a steady speed, maybe 70 – 80 km per hour, then the guys in the west have their birds cover a certain distance at that speed, so therefore using a formula a time can be deducted from the West flyers. The same system can also have time added to fanciers that have overfly, working on how much overfly (direct line with drop zone) and once again the speed of 70 – 80km per hour speed. You need to experiment with these things but it is interesting how the racing can be made more exciting and keep people interested in the sport.

Some people may call this a break point, but a break point is different uses a different formula to adjust racing, many times I have seen the break point used totally incorrectly, therefore disadvantaging fanciers and also chasing people away from the sport again. To try new things is very hard for a sport with people who are too scared to even open their minds to simple improvements to the sport, computers, GPS and release conditions monitoring, the internet and computers are wonderful tools if used correctly.

Feel free to contact me for further details and to discuss the formula that I have not published.

Yours in the Sport,

Barry Trewin

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