

# Thirty-Six Stages for the Flying Tippler Novice

by E. W. Matthews

1. When the youngsters are five weeks old, they should be removed from their parents and placed in a loft by themselves.
2. For the first two days or so, food and water will be left for them at will. This ensures that they can feed for themselves.
3. Then they should be fed by hand and the water trough withdrawn and only offered after feeding.
4. It would now be an advantage to introduce the dropper. This should be a White Cross-bred Fantail, either a hen or a youngster. This bird should remain in the loft with the young Tipplers at this stage.
5. The object is to impress on the young Tippler that the Fantail is part of home. When the youngsters are about six weeks old, they should be fed once a day only (I will deal with the food later) and encouraged to chase about after their food. The dropper will soon take the lead for they are usually greedy. Now we can remove the dropper from the youngsters' loft, and only introduce it during times of feeding.
6. So up to now the mind of the Tippler is that the Fantail is always associated with food. The Fantail is a White bird used as a decoy. Almost any White bird would do.
7. That completes stage one.
8. The youngsters should now have the opportunity of seeing the outside surroundings of the loft and to do this the loft should have an open wire netting enclosure, either at the side, or preferably, on the loft top. They should spend some time, say afternoon, outside so that when evening falls they can be called in, introducing the dropper, and fed and watered.
9. Now you will be wondering when should the birds have their liberty. Well, always remember, a good Tippler youngster is stronger on the wing than in the head. Bearing this in mind, I find that the best time to let them out is when the eye color has changed. This is an indication of better reasoning powers of the bird. They might now be eight weeks old. So, with the dropper out on the loft top, chasing about after grains of food, open the wire enclosure door and allow the young Tipplers to follow the Fantail chasing after the grain. By throwing grain first outside and then inside the pen, the young bird

will soon learn its way in and out of the loft. After a short lesson, call them in and feed and water, carrying on this procedure each evening until the young birds start to take to flight. It is a good plan to have more droppers available now and they should be kept on the move while the young Tipplers are airborne.

10. Assuming that the Tipplers have been up and down for a few evenings. The next stage is to liberate the kit, without the dropper. When the birds have been flying for 10 or 15 minutes, liberate the dropper. The young Tipplers will now see the dropper, and associating dropper with food and home they will come down. They should be then called in and fed.

11. This procedure is carried out henceforth, each time allowing the kit to fly longer before putting out the dropper. (By longer I do not mean many hours, only two or three).

12. Up to now we have been drilling the young Tippler to do what is required of him – fly until he is summoned to alight. This, of course, is simply mental drill, and the next stage is to equip for physical endurance. This I find the most fascinating part, for it depends on my judgment whether it succeeds or not.

13. Now to refer to analogy. Suppose I had a motor car whose petrol capacity would allow me to drive non-stop for 300 miles. At the commencement of the journey, the car would be at its greatest weight because of the full tank. Another point, the car would have to be in good condition, so as to be trouble-free throughout the journey. So we must have our Tippler with his tanks full and he must be thoroughly fit on the selected day when he is put to test for long-time flying. We can follow the analogy. When first he is liberated his weight may be 10 oz. and at the end of the day will have used up his fuel and would weight six to seven oz. Now suppose I wished to use the same motor car to make a journey of only 10 miles, surely I would not want the tank filled up for this short journey.

14. So I would make it with only a small amount of fuel and, of course, I would be carrying less weight. So if we want our Tippler to fly only for three to four hours we make sure his tank is not full. Now do not take this analogy too much for granted. I do not wish to convey that all we have to do is to fill up and fatten a Tippler and he will fly all day; far from it, for he has to be trained physically in stages like any other athlete. Now imagine that the Tippler is liberated, say at 4 a.m. and has flown 14 hours. He will have consumed most of his fuel and will be much lighter in weight. This is conspicuous when seen flying, for he will alter his style as the day progresses, for later in the evening he will be seen to be gliding instead of batting his wings like he did when fresh and full tank in the morning.

15. From this we can arrange to train the bird by liberating him in the late afternoon, with only enough in his “tank” to simulate the condition he would have been in if liberated in the morning with a full “tank”.

16. So to get back to our kit of youngsters that have been drilled mentally and are free from vice in so far as making mistakes such as dropping away or alighting before the dropper signal.

17. Suppose we have decided on a target day, say three weeks' time. It is our aim to possess for this date at least a kit of three-all to be in the best of condition – for, after all, mistakes are such that at least one of the kit is going to fail first and seeing that we must have a complete kit for competition flying, we cannot allow one to fall out and then see what the others do. So, to commence, it is wise to start with a kit of five, so that on the day the best three can be selected. Having selected five youngsters and to do this at this stage try to get five as near similar as possible. They can be decided on by their blood relationship and their outward appearance. Also try to decide that they bat or fly alike. For as you know, any three men taken at random and made to walk a long distance, should one of them be out of gait or step with the other two, he will surely be the first to tire. The Tipplers should be placed in a loft to themselves in which there are individual coops. These should be arranged so that the birds cannot see each other (it is not so important with young birds as it is with adults, especially hens). The birds should be fed individually by placing a feeding trough in each coop, (the size of the coop, 14" x 14", is ample) and only fed late in the evening. Drink should be withheld for two hours after feeding and then the drink should be given and should contain a purgative. I use Epsom Salt, about one cubic inch capacity to a pint of water.

17. The object of this is to enable me to start them off level, for at first I will treat them all the same. The only way to ensure a balance is to start at the bottom. The next morning the birds will look a little for themselves. But don't feed them until the evening; just clear out the coops. We use barley, complete with its skin or husk, to feed birds in training. It has the desired effect for it does not provide the birds with much energy and can be analogous to the fact that we don't fill the birds tank.

18. They keep quite well and satisfied because they can have a reasonable crop-full. This the bird thinks is good to have a full feed and it has a pleasing effect on his bowels. Thus we are assured that his digestive apparatus is not being affected adversely.

19. If you cannot obtain barley, then use something similar, something with plenty of roughage, for you will appreciate roughage does no harm to digestion, providing energy is not expected.

20. On the second evening allow the kit out. If they show no desire to fly, do not chase them up for they may be too low in condition and too keen for food. On the other hand, they may take to the air and appear quite brisk. Here is a point of observation, for in the first place, it was desired that the kit should fly rather unwillingly for about one hour and then to put out the droppers and feed. So if they were too frisky, then they are not low enough in condition and if they show no desire to fly then they are, perhaps, too low. Here is your guide for the amount of the next meal. For measurement of feed I shall use the word "crop-full". To enable you to gauge what amount of crop-full is, take

a pocket handkerchief and place an amount of grain in it and then screw it up so that the grain content is bulbous in shape. Compare this amount with a bird that has just been fed and allowed to have its full by feeling, and you should arrive at a bulk measure by either adding or removing grain from the handkerchief until it compares favorably with the feel of the bird's full crop. Now lace the amount of grain into a suitable measure and this will be your guide for quantity.

21. Now you will appreciate that we can nearly always give a quantity feed, and the quality will decide the amount of the fuel or energy providing feed, so here we have a means of control for the amount of time a Tippler can fly. With the bird trained mentally and the quality of food controlling its staying powers, all that is left is that observation of the owners to be capable of judging when his birds have had enough and when to drop them, for if we fail in this respect, then the bird is more than likely to become a "scrounger". Sure enough, if left, he will come and alight on his own, and this is because he was allowed to empty his tank. As soon as he has done this, he has broken the habit he has been trained to – that of waiting for the dropper and food.

22. You will have to experiment with the quality of food you can obtain by the result of flying, assuming that you now have the kit fed so that they should fly 3 1/2 hours. They have all been fed the same quantity and quality and we find after 2 1/2 hours one desires to alight. Then put out the droppers and get them down. Now suppose we were three in the kit and after putting out the dropper, one bird alights immediately, the second follows, and the third takes 10 to 15 minutes to get down, here we have found we have an unbalanced kit. What shall we do? We can either lift the 2 1/2-hour bird to three hours or we can starve or lessen the food of the bird that did not readily alight when the droppers were put out.

23. Handle each bird and endeavor to compare each with each and note especially the first bird and the third bird, for we know they are opposites and the second bird was probably in right condition.

24. Having decided to reduce the quantity of the feed for the third and increase the first, we should then, next evening, have three balanced birds and to get back to my analogy, all three will have the same quality of fuel in their tanks, and it should run out at three hours running.

25. Having three the same and assuming you have mastered and understood each bird's necessities by now, we can increase the quality of the feed all round by adding 1/2, wheat to the 1/4, barley to make the crop full. The birds should now be flown alternate evenings and they should fly 4 to 5 hours. Then put out the droppers. This is carried on for 10 days, or so.

26. We have now got the kit nicely teamed up and they are being trained to fly in a condition that they would normally be in if they had been topped up and had flown all

day and would be like this is the evening. During this period of training the birds should be introduced to the various seeds and grain that they will receive during latter part of training. Only give a very small sample and give on the day they have been out. The seeds will be canary, millet and rape (the kinds we give our cage birds); the grain will be maize (small) and maple peas. They can also be given small breadcrumbs. All this is part of the young bird's education.

27. We have now arrived at 6ve days off the target day. When the birds have been in after their three to four hours' fly, they should be fed 1/4, crop mixed seeds, 1/4 crop barley, 1/4 crop maple peas, 1/4 wheat. Because we have made a somewhat sudden change in their diet, we must be sure that the bird will digest it in good time. By this I mean it usually takes 13 to 14 hours for a healthy birds' crop to empty. Should there be delay in this, there is always a tendency to erupt sourness and, of course, we cannot tolerate any sickness at this stage. So, to make sure, give the birds a smaller amount of Epsom Salts in their drinking water.

28. Next day rest them, but feed the same and if they have digested the food then no salts are necessary.

29. Next day let them out with 8 hours' daylight before them, but do not allow them to fly more than 4 1/2 to 5 hours. Reason: Should they be too forward as a result of the better quality, then you will not have an accident and fail to get them at dark, for you have catered for that by allowing 8 hours of daylight. They are dropped after 4 1/2 to 5 hours because at this stage we have no desire to empty their "tanks".

30. When they are down and in their coops, feed on 1/2 maple, 1/2 seeds and water to drink.

31. Next day, 1/2, maple, 1/2 wheat, and keep shut up in their coops (water to drink with a little iron tonic helps).

32. Next day, 1/4, maple, 1/4 maize, 1/2 seeds. Give the maize first, then maples and allow them to eat as much seed as they like. This feed should be about 12 hours before they are to be liberated. Delay the drink at this last feed for about an hour. This ensures a good thirst and the birds will drink plenty. Now close them up in their coops so as to darken the place. This encourages sleep.

33. Next morning early, with at least 16 hours' daylight to spare, offer them a drink and then liberate them. Most birds will not take a drink, but don't worry on that account. They should, if all has been well and they were bred right, fly 12 to 16 hours on this treatment.

34. I hope I have conveyed some idea of the training. It is by no means the only way of feeding, for I find I never feed exactly the same each time, but the principle is the same.

35. You will, no doubt, have to experiment.

36. By the way, always have grit before the birds during training.