

They Breed Pigeons To Roll On The Ground

Did you know there's a breed of racing pigeons that roll on the ground instead of flying? We'd never heard of the rare birds until a reader told us about them.

Parlor Roller pigeons somersault backward across the ground, rolling hundreds of feet. The pigeon handler holds the bird in the palm of his hand and releases it with a little roll, like a bowler aiming at some pins.

"They are strictly a ground bird and can't fly at all," says Mark Roberts, who raises and sells Parlor Roller pigeons and other pigeon breeds in Afton, Minn. The rare breed dates back to the 1850's in Scotland and the Philadelphia area.

Rolling on the ground is what the birds do naturally, and serious pigeon owners breed to reinforce that trait. Rolling 200 to 300 ft. is considered good. The world record is 662 ft., held by a well-known California breeder.

"There's a fairly large group of roller fanciers. We enjoy the performing," Roberts says.

During local events and at National Pigeon Association shows, there's often a roller

pigeon competition. Birds are judged 60 percent on performance and 40 percent on appearance.

A Parlor Roller is a simple looking bird that weighs between 7 and 10 ounces. Its care is similar to other pigeons, though food and water must be available on the floor since they don't fly.

Because they don't fly, Parlor Roller pigeons are a good option for city dwellers. The birds can live in a rabbit hutch.

Roberts says he has raised pigeons all his life, and when he was a chemical dependency counselor, he incorporated the birds into his work.

"I developed an animal therapy program, and I brought in my Parlor Rollers. It helped the kids focus," he says.

Parlor Roller pigeons are often sold at \$1 for every foot they typically roll.

Birds that only do one or two backward somersaults are called Parlor Tumblers.

The Parlor Roller breed is different from another performing breed called Roller Pigeons developed in the 1700's in



Parlor Roller pigeons roll on the ground instead of flying. They somersault backward across the ground, rolling hundreds of feet.

Birmingham, England. They somersault in the sky, spinning backward like balls for up to 40 ft. During competitions, pigeon owners release a kit (20 birds).

"At least five birds minimum have to roll in unison to score," says Tony Chavarria, who breeds and sells Ruby Roller Pigeons in Seymour, Mo. (www.rollerpigeon.com).

For more information on all pigeon breeds

go to www.npaua.com. Roberts has videos of his ground-rolling pigeons on his website. You can find other videos on YouTube.

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"Monster" Radio Flyer Wagon

"It's a real monster and gets a lot of attention wherever I take it," says Doug Schiller of Belvidere, Ill., about his customized Radio Flyer wagon.

The wagon rides on big garden tractor tires and has articulated steering, a battery-operated horn, backup beeper, flashing strobe lights on front and back, 3 mufflers, and an antenna-mounted flag and rollbar on back. The lights, horn and backup beeper are all battery-operated.

The horn mounts on front of the wagon and automatically goes on whenever someone pulls the handle back toward the wagon. There's also a white ball shifter knob on front, as well as gas and brake pedals and a fake speedometer gauge.

"I came up with the idea because I own a business selling aftermarket Corvette parts and often go to Corvette shows. I take the wagon along to draw attention to my booth," says Schiller. "Over the years a lot of people have seen it. In fact, I've made several different wagons on request."

The wagon rides on 17-in. tall by 7-in. wide tires. "Both the front and rear wheels steer so it really turns short. When I turn right, the front wheels turn to the right and the rear wheels turn to the left. It's the same kind of steering system you find on big monster trucks at shows," says Schiller. "I built an entire chassis to keep from twisting the wagon box. At shows people sometimes

crawl under the wagon to see how the steering system works."

The wagon has 3 exhaust pipes - one on the side and two on back. Schiller made them by cutting the top off the back end of three different Corvette mufflers.

A switch on front of the wagon is used to activate the strobe lights. Another switch on back is used to operate the backup beeper, which is mounted in the rear exhaust.

"A lot of people have seen it. It gets a lot of oohs and aahs; in fact, sometimes I think it hurts my business because people spend more time looking at the wagon than looking at my products for sale."

"I came up with the idea for the horn because at shows everyone wants to pull the handle toward the back of the wagon to move it a little, and that can cause paint to chip off. Now whenever someone pulls back on the handle, the horn blows which comes as a complete surprise. It's fun to see people jump."

He uses a drycell battery designed for house security systems to operate the strobe lights, horn and backup beeper. "It's amazing how long the battery lasts - I only have to charge it about once a year," notes Schiller.

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Radio Flyer wagon rides on big garden tractor tires and has a padded vinyl seat and rollbar on back. Note side-by-side Corvette C-5 exhaust mufflers.

"Bear-Proof" Door

Ramon Nelson, 81, of Henning, Minn. makes things for fun. And, he says, "I don't buy what I can make"

One of his recent projects is a wood door with a wooden latch and hinges. He calls it his "bear-proof door" because he's fairly certain it could withstand the assault of a bear scouting for the source of sunflower seeds that fill the bird feeder hanging in

Nelson's yard.

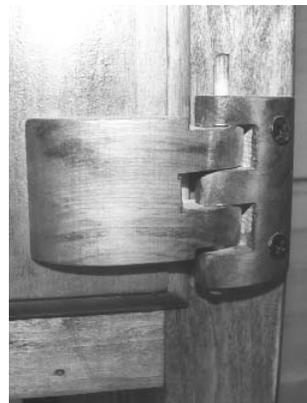
The door is made of sturdy pine with poplar hinges. The latch is ash. "I needed the latch to be strong," he says. He didn't work from a pattern or design for any of it. The hinge is on a dowel so he can lift it up and replace the hinge when it wears. He also put in a plastic washer for the hinge to ride on, giving it more endurance.



On front are fake accelerator and brake pedals, a fake speedometer gauge, and white ball shifter knob.



Underside of wagon shows articulated steering system.



Wood door has an ash wood latch and poplar hinge that rides on a dowel.

