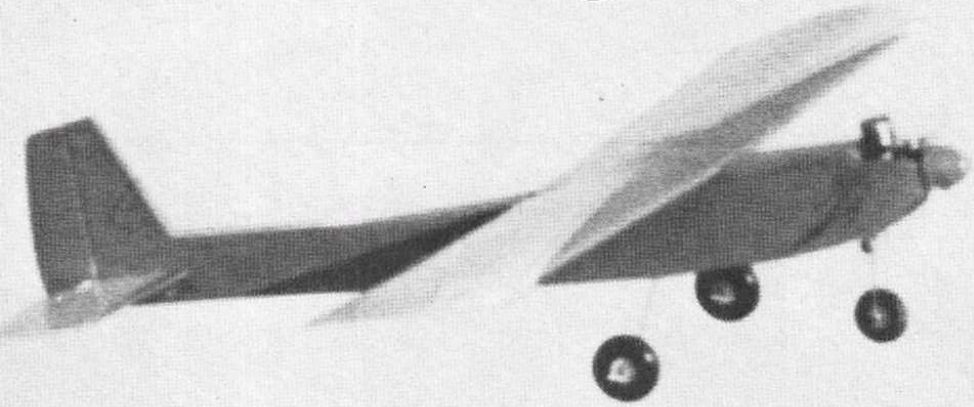
A TRADE WINDS SPECIAL REVIEW:

A Fledgling tries its Feathers



Structural simplicity, fast assembly and a will to fly mark this Sport/Trainer kit by Sterling Models.

by Don McGovern

A *"Fledgling"* is a young bird with newly developed feathers. Wings to fly upon. An apt name indeed for Sterling's Sport-Trainer.

As we approach the time in our modeling careers when we enter the realm of radio flights, we are each a fledgling ourselves I would think. We know what we must do, but lack the skill to do it fast enough. An aircraft is committed to forward motion and it waits for no man. Too fast and it is beyond us, too slow and it falls as does the stone.

The equation for a good training craft is a worthy goal. Minds differ slightly, but they seldom vary on the basics. Sterling's *"Fledgling"* design is aptly named and all a training craft should be. Tough, light, stable, forgiving, roomy, proportioned for flight. Adequate in size, lean in moments, suitable for a range of powerplants and simple in construction. And the price is right. An experienced eye can see it's potential. The experienced flyer can feel it in the maneuvers. It's designed to fly!

Uncork the box and the contents lie before you. A solid boxful of balsa, strip and tapered stock, block and die-cut sheets. Nothing you haven't seen before, but good honest value and all that you will need. A coil-spring nose gear, a formed main gear. A pair of metal engine mounts. Die-cut ply, tapered sheets, dowels, hardware, horns and all. Even the aileron horns are included. About all a fellow has to add is the powerplant, tank, wheels and system.

The *"Fledgling"* spans 56", boasts 545 squares of area and measures 42" in length overall. It is designed for engines in the .23 to .40 range and after test flying the bird with an Enya .35, that seems like a correct assessment of power possibilities.

Bob Caplan angles it for the camera. The design has enough wing lift to hang on in slow flight. Top photo: A fly-by in the gusty air. The Fledgling's trike gear is well placed for ground roll.

The Assembly

Briefly, the structure is simple. Adequate ribs and ample spars. Sheeting caps the leading and trailing edges. Die-cut plywood gussets strengthen the dihedral joint. Strip ailerons simplify that installation. The panels assemble quickly.

Die-cut pieces build into the basic stab structure. Sheet balsa caps over the inner frame. Elevators are band-sawed, joined by a dowel crossbar. Rugged and easy. The fin is of sheet, with dorsal spliced on. The movable rudder is to outline, needs only to be trimmed.

Die-cut full length siding is supplied. Plywood doublers laminate against the inner forward portions, with strip longerons cemented aft to the tail. Piece by piece falls into place. Formers are installed next, sliding into notches provided. Nothing could could be much easier. The fuselage takes on a solid feel, light, roomy and meant for business. Nose gear mount and main gear are next in line. A tapered block fairs the rear, while sheeting creates the bottom.

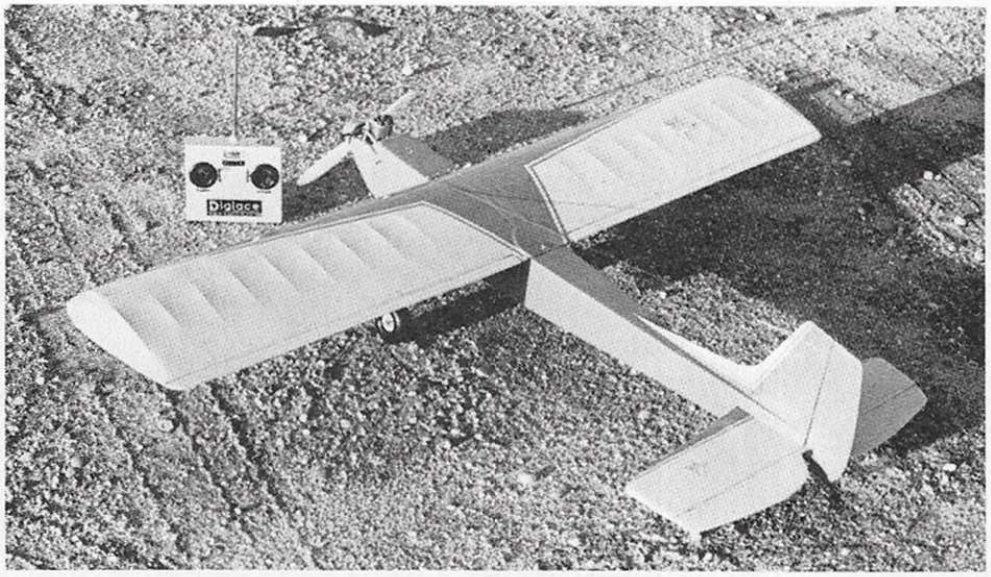
Installations

A Digiace R/C system was installed. There is enough room within the fuselage for any modern digital system. Batteries slip beneath the tank, followed by the receiver (wrapped in foam) and three servos to the rear. (A fourth for the ailerons mounts beneath the wing.) Throughout, the installation follows accepted techniques. It is an excellent Trainer in this respect too, for it gives you experience in typical installations and control arrangements.

An Enya .45 powerplant was bolted to our mounts. It is more than enough as power goes. The .23 to .40 range will satisfy all fliers. Mild with the smaller mills and ready to eat holes in the sky with a .40. Mounts may be spaced to suit your crankcase, but whatever your choice, the *"Fledgling"* will deliver.

Trimming Out

The C.G.? Ours worked out just fine. Nothing to shift, no lead in the head. Warps? None. Problems? Non existent. Build it per the plans, eyeball the panels and you're in the air. It might take a turn



The "Fledgling" flies with a sureness, it knows where it wants to be. A predictable performer. At right: Well ribbed, stressed, proportioned.

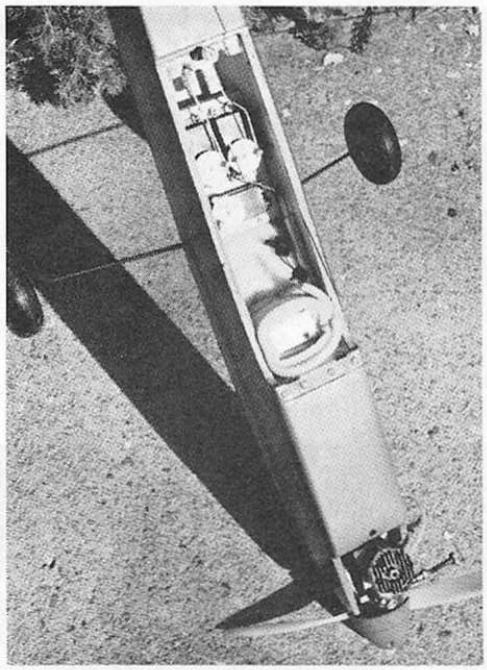
or two on the links, but ours hardly needed that.

An arrow knows where it's going. Forward, and fast! The *"Fledgling"* is not far behind. This aircraft, while simple, is light and agile. It will track out for the stars with a bigger mill, and if you're new to R/C, you'll be flailing with the sticks far behind it. That's all natural enough, but that day of learning by yourself is past. Get together with an experienced flyer. He'll test the ship and trim it out for you to give you a sporting chance. Throttled back, at 300 feet, you try the sticks. From lazy circles, to awkward rectangles, to flowing figure-eights. Gradually you get the feel at altitude and in time fly lower and in to land. It's the way to learn, without bending up the balsa.

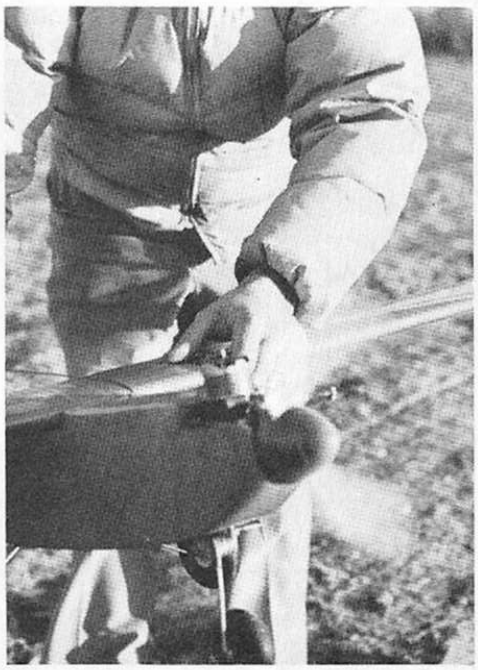
Actual flight trials should be held on a reasonable day. Half a loop into the fog is kind of what you don't need. You will do better with a reasonable field, gentle weather and a checked-out airframe and radio. Beware of the old reversed controls trick. Check response with engine off, at low rpm's and full bore. Your fuel feed should be steady, drawing with nose to the sky. Ground range must be checked.

The take-off will be almost effortless. The aircraft seems to fly off on the lifting section. Feed in a touch of rudder as needed and plan on a turn before the departing vision exits from the scene. When you're not used to a radio aircraft, you can fly too far out and disorient yourself in fast order.

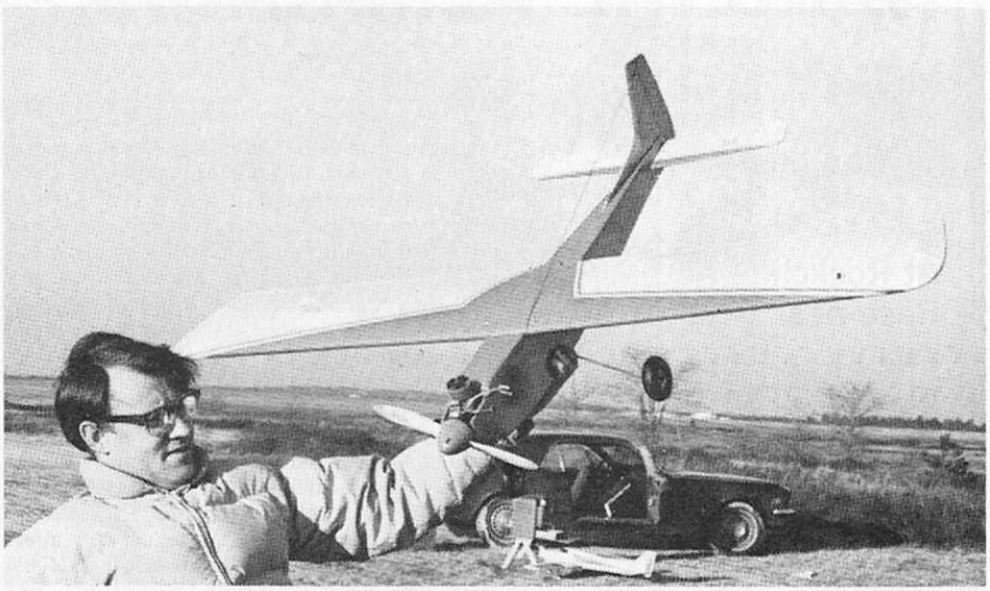
Once the aircraft is at a safe altitude, the aircraft can be throttled slightly and the controls felt out. Feed in trim adjustments until it tracks true, straight and level. It really requires some experienced advice on any new radio aircraft, so ask and you will receive. If you have a little stick-time, the *"Fledgling"* will seem docile indeed. It handles a range of speeds, from idle revs to full bore thrust. It makes a fine training craft for a future Pattern machine, and it is not so far behind a fully aerobatic competitive machine. In the hands of an experienced flyer, the *"Fledgling"* will howl through a range of maneuvers. Basically a good, honest, forgiving airplane. It builds fast, flys beautifully. It's father was an eagle . . . *D.J.M.*



You can get your pudgy little fingers in to the servo connections, the connectors and all else.



The Enya's idle is checked. Too fast and you're glued up in the sky until the fuel is consumed.



The ship is simple and basic. Tank access hatch, plus all the room you need to service the radio beneath the wing. Top Flite 10-6 prop hauls it well. Design has good stability and penetration.