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# Democrat and Chronicle

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DEMOCRAT AND CHRONICLE



ANNETTE LEIN staff photographer

Joe Somers readies a PT-40 training plane for flight at Northhampton Park in Ogden. He is a member of the Radio Control Club of Rochester, one of several area organizations devoted to flying remote-controlled model airplanes.

BY STAFF WRITER  
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**D**inosaurs no longer inhabit the Earth, but an ornithopter that resembles a flying reptile resides in the basement of David Riedel's Webster home.

Now that summer is almost here, Riedel's radio-controlled plane can be seen flapping its motor-powered wings above the Rochester Aero Modeling Society's airfield in Macedon.

And the bird won't be flying solo.

Skies above several area parks and private lands are abuzz with model airplanes. Prime flying season has begun and will continue through early fall.

Members of area model airplane clubs gather together for weekly flights, to host summer air shows and competitions. The area has at least five such clubs, with a total of several hundred members.

Tuesday evening is training night for the Radio Control Club of Rochester at Northampton Park in Sweden. RCCR instructors teach neophyte modelers how to take off from the runway (which is similar to a fairway on a golf course), maneuver in the air and land.

On a recent Tuesday, RCCR president and trainer Joe Somers stood side by side with his 82-year-old student, Al Sertl.

Somers talked Sertl through the flight, instructing him on how to move the two sticks on the radio transmitter that control the direction and speed of an RC plane. The planes' wingspans typically range from 4 to 12 feet long.

Sertl flew his plane for about 10 minutes at a time, which is typical for a model flight. Most models can fly at 50 to 60 mph, said Somers.

Although Sertl's trainer plane was flying 100 feet above ground, there was no need for him to panic if he zigged

# Just plane folks



*Hobbyists love  
to wing it —  
their model aircraft  
soar in local skies*

when he should have zagged. Somers could take control of the model at any time, thanks to a buddy box system.

The system connects two radios with a cable. The trainer holds one box and the student holds the other. If the student gets in trouble, the trainer can release a switch and take over.

Max Wright of Honeoye could have used a buddy box when his wife, Nancy, gave him an RC plane as a birthday gift four years ago.

"After crashing it a couple times, I decided to get some help," said Wright, 43, laughing.

Wright, president of the Genesee Valley Aero Modelers, based in

Honeoye, has been a modeler for about eight years. He became interested in the hobby as a child, but put it on the back burner as he became busy with school,

**PLANE, PAGE 6F**

## Taking flight

Interested in flying model airplanes? The first step, say modelers, is to find and join a radio-control model airplane club. The clubs offer flight instruction and more.

Many clubs require members to pay dues and have a license from the Academy of Model Aeronautics before taking flight from their airfields. Here are some Rochester-area clubs, and their Web sites:

**Canandaigua Hawks in Epic Flight Society:** (585) 554-4283;

[home.rochester.rr.com/jimsr](http://home.rochester.rr.com/jimsr)

**Genesee Valley Aero Modelers:**

[www.gvam.org](http://www.gvam.org)

**Radio Control Club of Rochester:**

(585) 349-7227;

[home.rochester.rr.com/rccr](http://home.rochester.rr.com/rccr)

**Rochester Aero Modeling Society:**

(585) 671-1020; [www.rcplane.com](http://www.rcplane.com)

**Western New York Free Flight Society:** (585) 392-3346;

[home.rochester.rr.com/wnyffs](http://home.rochester.rr.com/wnyffs)

## Plane

FROM PAGE 1F

work and family. He picked the hobby up again four years ago.

"I've always had a love of airplanes, all different kinds," said Wright. "I've been a fan of learning about them."

Wright's fascination with planes prompted him to look into getting a private pilot's license. After doing some research, however, he decided against it.

"That was just a little too expensive," said Wright, who has seven model planes.

"One of the things people like about this — besides the fact that it's a lot cheaper than owning and operating a full-sized plane — I can own several of these."

Local modelers often spend the winter months building a new plane to fly in the spring, so it's common for a serious modeler to own multiple models.

"It's the type of hobby where you don't have to get into a rut if you don't want to," explained modeler Larry Comstra, a member of Canandaigua Hawks In Epic Flight Society flying club.

"You can have one plane or 20 planes. You can buy, sell and swap planes."

Of course, just because it's cheaper to own and operate models than full-sized planes doesn't mean that modeling is an inexpensive hobby — especially if you plan to buy all new equipment.

For example, hobby shops and model manufacturers sell "almost-ready-to-fly" kits. These kits, called arfs by hobbyists, include balsa wood (the most commonly used building material for models), nuts and bolts and shrink-wrap film to cover the plane. Throw in a radio and an engine and you're looking at spending a minimum of \$350 to \$400.

To cut costs, however, local modelers suggest attending club meetings. There's always a chance that a member may have a used plane for sale.

Whether you buy new or used, be prepared to watch your precious "bird" get a little banged up.

"With anything flying, there is the possibility you are going to crash it, either by your own fault — which we like to call dumb thumbs — or interference, which isn't as common these days because transmitters and receivers are much better," said Riedel, president of RAMS. He has



ANNETTE LEIN staff photographer

Radio Control Club members Joe Somers, left, and Al Sertl, bring Sertl's training plane in for a landing at Northhampton Park, where Sertl was getting lessons from Somers.



Rochester Aero Modeling Society member Rick Matteson's Ergo Z230 helicopter takes flight in Macedon.



Rochester Aero Modeling Society member Dave Riedel fuels his sport aircraft at the club's flying field in Macedon.

## Upcoming events

Spectators can watch model airplanes maneuver during air shows sponsored by area modeling clubs. Here's a sampling of upcoming events:

- "CHIEFS Electric International," sponsored by the Canandaigua C.H.I.E.F.S. Radio Control Flying Club, 9 a.m. to dusk on Saturday at the group's flying field, off Sand Hill Road in Shortsville. Free admission.

- "Combat Meet," sponsored by the Radio Control Club of Rochester, 9 a.m. to 1 p.m. Saturday, Bolling Field, off Redman Road in Hamlin. Free admission.

- "The Great Grape Gathering," co-sponsored by the Western New York Free Flight Society, featuring free-flight models. 9 to 5 p.m. Friday through Sunday at Geneseo Airport, off Route 63. Free admission.

- "Model Airplane Show," sponsored by Rochester Aero Modeling Society, 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. July 27 and 28, 2529 Macedon Center Road, Macedon. Free admission.

- "Electric Meet," sponsored by Radio Control Club of Rochester, 9 a.m. to 4 p.m. Aug. 10 and 11, Bolling Field, off Redman Road in Hamlin. Free admission.

- "Empire State Free Flight Championships," sponsored by the Western New York Free Flight Society, 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. Aug. 16-18, Geneseo Airport, off Route 63. Free admission.