

Super Decathlon

We test one of the new range of electric sports scale ARTFs from Seagull EP

I have decided that it is time I took the bull by its horns and started flying more electric models. The latest ARTF types coming out of the Far East (in this case Vietnam) are not only constructed and finished better than in the dark past, but seem to fly much better too! My only hang-up is that you cannot hear them like you can with a noisy, dirty, oily I/C engine, but that's another story.

My first real contact with Seagull EP models was at Nuremburg earlier this year on the J. Perkins stand. Having heard the name I was eager to see what they had to offer – I was not disappointed by what I saw.

The latest range of Seagull EP ARTFs seem to have something about them that was different, and that is probably why I liked them; they are different in that the subject matter is different from other popular brands. An unusual selection of scale types that is apart from the more popular warbirds and aerobatic types. This new selection of scale models appealed to me, so the opportunity to review one was a bonus.

In the Box

The Decathlon comes in a well-decorated box leaving no doubt as to the contents. My first glimpse of the manufactured parts revealed some interesting points: First the covering seemed much stronger than the usual ARTF types, and apart from being all built up with good quality laser cut parts that seemed to fit really well, there was something else that made it stand out but I couldn't put my finger on it!



Colourful contents and complete with all hardware

Accompanying the model parts was a bag of hardware accessories and decals to finish off the scheme. Supplied



Recommended accessories required are obtainable as a pack from your supplier

with the review model were the optional four GWS Pico Naro servos, GWS 8-ch Rx, 50 A ESC and JP EnErG outrunner motor, all of which are easily obtainable from this distributor's retail outlets along with the model.

'laser cut parts that seemed to fit really well'

The 24-page A4 instruction manual details the accessories and tools required to complete the model, and each stage of assembly has tick boxes. The illustrations are nice and clear with good accompanying English text – that appears to have written by a modeller? A section at the end shows a portable box kit for transportation. There is also a short section on safety and pre-flight checks.



Extremely high quality laser cutting with all parts fitting really well

Assembly

The construction really is simple if you read the instruction book through first all is made quite clear, and so for this reason I shall only highlight areas I found that may be of interest.

Four extension leads will be required for the servos, and a Y-lead for ailerons if using just one channel.

The assembly of the ailerons and hinges is quite a new one to me and it is worth a comment. A pin centred in the hinge is an accurate way of blind centring and works really well. Use of cyano to adhere the hinges is strong and instant.



The clever sliding battery tray arrangement

The nicely moulded plastic wheel spats again have an unusual fitting method: The spats are held in place on the piano wire leg with a pre-shaped plastic retainer. Cyano was again used here, but plastic cement can be used. The wooden collets/spacers are glued in place using cyano; just make sure you don't get any on the wheel! The undercarriage assemblies are slotted into the pre-cut undercarriage



Inserting the aileron fibre hinges

Ion EP

cut-out and saddle clamps are screwed in place to retain the legs. Assembly is quick and everything fits well so far.

Next comes the motor installation and this took a moment to think about: While the CS3510 motor supplied is the correct size, it does have a problem with installation on the pre-assembled motor mount in that the face with the fixing screws is on the front of the motor, and we need it to the rear. The simple answer was to remove the motor body and shaft, and reverse the housing. This was done by tapping the shaft out and swapping the ends around. Fitting the front and rear parts again were quite simple as long as you take your time and align it all correctly. Make sure the shaft is in the right direction and tap it all home. Job done in around 10-minutes with ease. The motor was then screwed to its metal mount and secured to the laser cut and pre-assembled motor box which is glued into the front bulkhead slots with epoxy or medium cyano.



Gaining access to refit the lose aileron servo mounting plate



Aluminium spar is a perfect fit and note the LE locating lugs



Wing LE fitting has three mounting lugs to hold wings in place

'I had to cut the superb covering to access the doubler'

surrounding wood with cyano. Finally, I used small silicon tubes off-cuts to act as soft washers for the four 'countersunk' (why countersunk?) cowl screws.

Next was the fitting of the aileron servos. This should be quite simple but a small snag meant a medial repair! On positioning the aileron servo into one of the wing cut-outs it was noted that the hole was a bit tight. I sanded the hole (as recommended in the instructions) slightly bigger with a Perma-Grit 6 mm flat rat-file and the servo went in with ease. I then removed it to fit the grommets and bushes and servo extension lead and placed it in the hole again to find that the servo cut-out doubler plate just fell off inside the wing. This was a bit annoying, as I had to cut the superb covering to access the doubler and re-glue it. My repair was finished with sticky Diamond tape over the edges of the cut film.



The stabiliser has an unusual screw fitting enabling removal for tight packing and transportation

The final fitment of the tailplane left me a little confused: In normal practice I would cut away the covering to make the wood accessible for gluing. In this instance this is not necessary as the tailplane assembly is designed to be removed for transit or storage, a clever design that is tongued into the fuselage and screwed to secure the fin and stabiliser to the fuselage. As this is not mentioned in the instructions I automatically cut the covering away, to find out later my error when it was too late. I then realised why a piece of covering had to be cut away from the underside rear! Fortunately I hadn't glued anything, and the unit fitted perfectly – and could be removed.

The wings are NOT joined, but have a neat tube spar that fits perfectly into the spar tube built in to each wing panel. When pushed



Cooling air outlet vent at rear and note



A very neat mounting box permits the JP brushless motor to extend through the cowl



So much space available and nothing to put in it

Hand launch was so simple with all that power available



together the wing panel slots into the fuselage and is secured by two bolts at the rear. Over-tightening will crush the wood so perhaps a thin ply washer should be used here.

With the C of G determined by the battery position on the innovative sliding battery plate, the Decathlon was set to go and I was now beginning to see why it stood out!

Flying

With a gap in the unusual weather conditions I was able to enrol the assistance of Brian Cooper for the flying pictures.

Although it was sunny and the rain had ceased for a short while, there were occasional dark clouds that brought some atmosphere to the photos, as well as gusts of wind just to make things interesting. With a fully charged 3S 2100 mAh JP EnErG Pro LiPo we

'scale manoeuvres are easily achieved'

checked the functions and power – all seemed well. The wind was mainly light, but gusting up to about 15 mph when clouded over, and the grass strip was very waterlogged, being extra 'draggy' with the spats and small wheels. Initial taxiing was unsuccessful so a hand-launch was imminent. Brian took the Decathlon in his right hand and opened the throttle of the Tx in his left. The resulting power assured him that just a gentle push was all that was required – and it was. Away she climbed as the power was reduced to around three-quarters and trimming into wind only required a slight dab of right aileron and similar for down elevator.

After a trimming circuit was completed the model was put to the

Smooth in a roll



SPECIFICATION

INFORMATION

Name: Super Decathlon EP (cat. no. 5500535)

Manufacturer: Seagull EP

Distributor: J. Perkins Distribution Ltd

Price UK: £59.99

Model Type: Sports scale

Motor: Himark Outrunner C3522-990

Test Motor: JP EnErG C3510-20 1100 outrunner

Prop: 10" x 5" or 11" x 7"

Construction: ARTF: All wood construction; factory covered in

Profile: glass fibre cowl and ABS spats

ACCESSORIES

ESC: JP EnErG E-Pro SP50A-BEC-AIR brushless (4404760)

Motor: JP EnErG C3510-20 1100 rpm/V Outrunner (4445640)

Suits Battery: JP EnErG Pro LiPo 3S1P 11.1 V 2100 mAh

Prop used: Zinger wood 11" x 7"

R/C FUNCTIONS

GWS R8MSL+ 35 MHz FM single conversion PPM receiver

Four GWS Pico Naro servos

1: ESC

2: Elevator

3: Ailerons (2)

4: Rudder

MODEL DETAILS

Wingspan: 51"/1300 mm

Wing Chord: 9"/228 mm

Wing Area: 434 sq in/28 dm²

Length: 39"/1000 mm

Target Weight: 32-44 oz/900 – 1250 g

Without Battery: 30 oz/840 g

Flying Weight with Battery: 33 oz/924 g

Static Thrust: 37 oz/1036 g

TEST

Dislikes

Tailplane assembly: Instructions are clear but may be misinterpreted

Read and understand the tailplane fitment before assembly

Likes

Presentation

Quality and looks

Finish and covering

Easy battery access

Laser-cut parts are a good fit

Lightweight

Flying qualities

Stable whilst inverted



Low and slow fly-past is delightful for scale



Contact Details

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test with a steep climb first of all. This was better than expected, and the Decathlon had very quickly gained a good height for stall tests. These were non-eventful with just a slight nod to the right and total stability and control throughout. Next was inverted flight and this is where it was expected to cause some concern because of the high wing. But no, as steady as a rock and no trim change the Decathlon completed a circuit with ease. The roll rate was quick to the right and just a little slower to the left – but both were nice and axial, and very scale-like. The barrel roll was smooth and easily achieved with only a slight dive into it, then a loop from straight level flight, followed by two more consecutive loops with no tendency to roll out or fall short of power. Flicks in both directions were tried and were easily achieved – they looked good too!

This is a beautiful model to fly and scale manoeuvres are easily achieved also with the slow flying capabilities of this great little aeroplane.

Time for a landing came around after about 8-minutes as the power started to drop off, and the Super Decathlon EP settled into a steady descent over the trees and onto the strip and wheeled up

close to our feet only restrained by the wet grass surface.

Subsequent flights proved just as delightful, and it was found that she can be flown leisurely or to extremes of aerobatics just like the real thing.

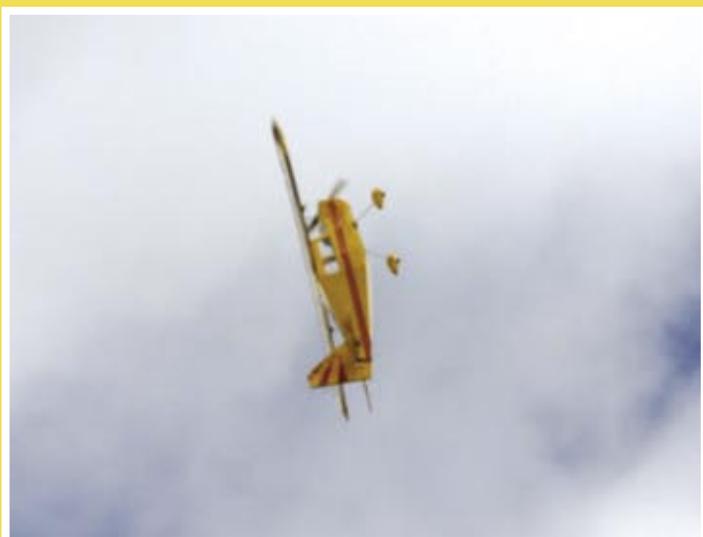
Summing Up

This is a well designed and thought out model with great flying qualities. I was impressed by the quality of parts and fit, and the hardware is quite up to the job. The covering is tough and colourful (just a pity my aileron servo doubler plate came lose in the wing) and everything is catered for in the installation process. The ability to dismantle for transportation is a bonus that only a few will probably use as it fits easily into a standard hatchback with tail unit and wings on – nice!

Finally I found what I new was there but couldn't put my finger on initially; it is smart and has a feel of quality, is fun to fly as a sports model or as scale! I liked the clever use of the sliding battery plate, and I loved the removable tail unit as well. This Seagull Decathlon review can be concluded with one word – 'innovative'!

RCMW

Plenty of power for a loop from straight and level flight



Perfect stall turn with ease

