

Fly this famous World War II fighter in your local park



AIRBORNE

There is no landing gear, so every flight will be hand launched. Give it a firm level toss to get the wings flying, or better yet, have someone launch it for you. Once in the air, the Wildcat is very easy to fly for someone with only minimal aileron experience. I have only been flying ailerons for a year and a half or so, and have had no problem flying the Wildcat smoothly around the pattern. It will easily cruise at just a little over half throttle, perfect for a low and slow pass. Follow up with a full-power near-vertical pull and a victory roll. Stalls are very easy to recover from, but make sure you have plenty of altitude when exploring the stall. Aerobatic maneuvers are easy, but also very scale like. Loops and rolls from level flight are a snap, but this is not the plane for carving up the sky with your latest 3D maneuvers.

The motor is only drawing about four amps when cruising, and flights of almost 30 minutes are common. I like to fly it at partial throttle to preserve the battery and extend the fun, and only go full for an aggressive climb or a high-speed strafing run. The plane really covers ground quickly at full throttle and I like to keep it in close.

While there is no rudder, you can get a convincing hammerhead turn to the left using torque to bring it around. The Wildcat flies very well as is, but a controllable rudder would be an easy modification if you felt the urge.

One of the nicest flight characteristics is the whisper quiet, direct drive brushless system. I usually fly at a local full-scale grass strip airport and the noise is never an issue for the people who own and live at the airport. In fact, they usually sit out on their deck to watch.

Wait for a calm day for your first flights. It can handle some wind, but does get bounced around a bit. Landings with the Wildcat are easy to perfect and now I rarely walk more than a few feet to retrieve the plane. Just chop the throttle and let it glide in nicely, keeping the fuselage and wings level. Give it a slight flare just before touchdown, and it will gently come to rest on the grass.

In 1981, my dad gave me a book for my birthday, *The Illustrated History of Fighters*. At the time, I was pretty sure that I was going to be a fighter pilot when I grew up and I spent countless hours reading about the great fighters of the past. Well, it is now 25 years later, and although I did not become a fighter pilot, I still have a strong affection for the planes I found on those pages so long ago. Before the big brown truck came with my kit, I dug that book out of the basement and brushed up on the Grumman F4F Wildcat.

Powered by the Pratt & Whitney R-1830-76 radial, the all-metal monoplane XF4F-3 was born and the Navy ordered 54 of them in

SPECS

PLANE: Grumman F4F Wildcat

MANUFACTURER: Alfa Model

DISTRIBUTOR: Hobby Lobby Inc.

TYPE: ARF park flyer

FOR: Intermediate pilots

WINGSPAN: 32.75 in.

WING AREA: 194 sq. in.

FLYING WEIGHT: 14.5 oz.

WING LOADING: 10.8 oz./sq. ft.

LENGTH: 24.5 in.

RADIO: 3 channels required; flown with a Futaba 6AEX transmitter, Hitec Electron 6 receiver, Hitec HS-55 servos

POWER SYSTEM: MP Jet AC 22/7-60D brushless motor, APC 9x6 SF prop, Jeti Advance 18 Plus brushless speed control, Thunder Power 3S 2000mAh Li-Poly battery

FULL THROTTLE POWER: 10.2 amps, 117.3 watts, 8.09 W/oz., 129.4 W/lb.

TOP RPM: 5,500

DURATION: 25+ minutes

MINIMAL FLYING AREA: Ball field

PRICE: \$119.90

COMPONENTS NEEDED TO COMPLETE:

3-channel radio, receiver, (2) micro servos, motor, speed controller, Li-Poly battery, prop

SUMMARY

The Grumman F4F Wildcat has the same ease of construction, scale detail and flight performance that has made Alfa Models a favorite with mini-warbird fans. The combination of its scale flight characteristics and the whisper quiet brushless power system will bring unlimited enjoyment to the intermediate pilot. I'm sure Alfa F4F Wildcat from Hobby Lobby will be a great addition to your hanger.

August 1939. The Navy flew the Wildcat for the duration of the Second World War, and over 7,000 were planes produced. The Wildcat was not the best performing aircraft but it was very strong and well armed. Throughout the war, it had a kill ratio of 6.9:1 against all other aircraft.

Like many of you, I love the look of scale warbirds, but don't have a lot of building time or storage space for large aircraft. Park flyer foam warbirds have become very popular because of this. They look fantastic and build quickly. I was able to put this 32-inch Wildcat together in few hours, and I often throw it in the back of my car and head for the field on short notice. The brushless power system is whisper quiet, so you can fly in a relatively small space. I have also flown it at a club field with much larger planes, and did not feel as though I was going to get run over.

Aside for some very minor enhancements, the Alfa Models' Wildcat went together seamlessly. The instructions offered plenty of detail and were very easy to follow. The folks at Hobby Lobby did a really nice job of putting together a combination of components that offer great performance and long flight times. Some people may want more power, but to be honest, it flies great with Hobby Lobby's recommended setup.

TIPS FOR SUCCESS

Assembly is a snap and should only take a few hours. I've made a few modifications since then based on the flight performance. I also added a few more finishing touches to improve its look.

The directions call for permanently gluing the servos. I first

HOBBY LOBBY

F4F

Wildcat

by Paul Dixon

PHOTOS BY WALTER SIDAS AND THAYER SYME

HOBBY LOBBY F4F WILDCAT

wrapped them in heat shrink incase I needed to remove them later. I also cleaned out the foam around the aileron hinges a little bit to allow them to move freely. I fastened the elevator pushrod guide tube to the fuselage. A dab of epoxy or hot melt glue will hold it in place and keep it from easily breaking loose in a hard landing.

The ESC, battery and receiver mount on a tray that keys into the firewall and is held in place with Velcro. I mounted a base-loaded antenna from E Cubed R/C internally to make the Wildcat look as clean as possible in the air.

Try to get someone else to launch the plane for the first flight or two. It is a shame to crash a new plane on the first launch, even if you didn't spend all winter building. I know this from first hand experience. I spun it up and gave it a nice level toss; but before I knew what happened, the torque had rolled it to the left, and it was in pieces on the ground. Thankfully, I was able to easily repair the damage, and all of the evidence is concealed inside the fuselage. The plane will also fly at much less than full throttle, so you can significantly reduce the amount of torque at launch by having the throttle set at $\frac{3}{4}$ stick.

Give the motor a little more

Right: Despite its size, the little MP Jet outrunner provides excellent power for the Wildcat. Be sure to allow for cooling airflow into and out of the cowl so you don't overheat the motor. Below: The entire cockpit area lifts off providing easy access for battery changes. The wing fillets help locate the hatch, and but can catch the edges if you are not careful when installing the cover.



right thrust to overcome the torque. I did this by placing two washers behind the left side and one on the top of the three mounting screws used to secure the motor to the firewall. This cancels most of the tendency to yaw to the left, especially on launch.

A cosmetic modification I made regards the hatch retention. The canopy hatch fits into the cowl in the front and then slides back into the fuselage with a dowel behind the canopy. Because of the in-flight aerody-



namics, the hatch can slide forward creating an ugly gap just aft of the cockpit. My remedy was to glue a rare earth magnet to the dowel and then to glue another dowel inside the fuselage with a pan head screw screwed into its end. The magnet grabs the screw, and you can fine-tune the fit by turning the screw in the dowel.

The other modifications I made were completely cosmetic. The decals that come with the kit offer a variety of schemes based on real planes from World War II. I chose to replicate the Wildcat flown by Lieutenant Edward "Butch" O'Hare, the US Navy's first flying ace and Medal of Honor recipient in World War II, and namesake for Chicago's primary airport. There were decals provided for the wheels as well, but after applying them I painted the wheels instead. I painted the pilot and made a little tray out of Depron for him to sit on before attaching it to the canopy. The last visual enhancement I made was to paint the stock grey APC prop black with yellow tips. Balance the prop after painting to make sure you don't introduce any vibrations to the plane.

The final step is to establish the correct center of gravity. The manufacturer has included some balancing dimples on the underside of the wings. My model balances right on the dimples and the flight trim is perfect.

CONCLUSION

I have had some of my most enjoyable flights ever with this Wildcat. I love to give it a toss at my local field and make what seem to be endless circuits. The plane looks fantastic in the air and hanging in my shop. In fact, it looks so good, I find it hard to get any other projects done during good flying weather. It is not a beginner's plane, but someone that has flown other aileron planes before will have no problem at all. The Hobby Lobby Wildcat is a great plane if you are looking to add a warbird to your park flyer fleet. 🌟

Links

E Cubed R/C, www.azarr.com, (937) 849-0418

Hitec RCD USA, Inc., www.hitecrcd.com, (858) 748-6948

Hobby Lobby International, Inc., www.hobby-lobby.com, (615) 373-1444

For more information, please see our source guide on pg. 209.

