

TOP 20 WARBIRDS

The best military picks for your RC fighter squadron

BY THE MODEL AIRPLANE NEWS CREW PHOTOS BY JOHN REID & PETER HALL

There's an old saying that suggests that there are only two types of airplanes: fighters and targets! Well, if you are a warbird lover and have a soft spot for classic military aircraft, that statement rings true and also seems to apply in the RC world, as well. From primary and advanced trainers to cargo planes and fighters, warbirds come in all shapes and sizes and nationalities. These top 20 editor picks are chosen from past flight reports and reviews. To make it into our list, the planes were considered for their scale looks, flight performance, ease of assembly, quality, and overall value. Although not recommended for beginner pilots, all the warbirds are fairly easy and uncomplicated to assemble. If you have a little bit of Walter Mitty in your heart, this collection of aerial warriors is for you.

VQ Models P-39 Airacobra 46

Electric Intermediate Pilot

With its rugged, jig-built wood structure, the VQ Models P-39 has a lightweight airframe, and it comes covered in a nicely printed vinyl material. We're impressed that the P-39 now features functional flaps and the printed-on "weathering." Easy to power by either a glow engine or an electric motor, it offers lots of options. Even though it comes with fixed gear, we like that optional tricycle retracts are also available.

What We Like

- Prehinged flaps and control surfaces
- Optional retracts
- Ideal for G-46 power system
- Excellent flight performance

Specifications

Model: P-39 Airacobra
Manufacturer: VQ Models (vqmodel.com)
Distributor: Hobby People (hobbypeople.net)
Type: ARF warbird
Wingspan: 62.2 in.
Wing area: 575 sq. in.
Weight: 105.8 oz.
Wing loading: 26.49 oz./sq. ft.
Power req'd: .40 2-stroke, .50-.65 4-stroke, or 46-size brushless motor
Radio req'd: 6-channel
Price: \$159.99

Hangar 9 F4U Corsair

Gas Intermediate Pilot

When it comes to warbirds, the Corsair is in a class by itself. We really like this 65-inch-span warbird designed for the newer 20cc gas engines. The Hangar 9 Corsair has a nicely illustrated manual, and we are impressed with how well all its subassemblies are built and covered. All the control surfaces have slots for the included CA hinges, and the holes for the pin-type hinges for the flaps come pre-cut. For flight performance, we could not ask for more, and we love how effective the flaps are on landings.

Specifications

Model: F4U-1A Corsair 20cc ARF
Manufacturer: Hangar 9 (hangar-9.com)
Distributor: Horizon Hobby (horizonhobby.com)
Type: WW II warbird ARF
Wingspan: 65 in.
Wing area: 802.4 sq. in.
Weight: 11 lb. 15 oz.
Wing loading: 34.25 oz./sq. ft.
Power req'd: 20cc gas, 1.25 4-stroke, or Power 60 470Kv electric motor
Radio req'd: 5+channel
Price: \$389.99



What We Like

- Painted flat-finish UltraCote covering
- Scale three-panel flaps
- Easy-access top fuselage hatch
- Painted propeller hub



Phoenix Model Dauntless

Electric Intermediate Pilot

We seldom see the classic Douglas SBD Dauntless dive-bomber in RC form, and we took notice when Phoenix Model offered its version. We like that it is designed to give the builder a choice of using either electric- or glow-powered systems. We are impressed with the included sturdy, sprung, mechanical retracts that come preinstalled. This 6-channel warbird is intended for the intermediate pilot but doesn't require a great deal of building skills.

Specifications

Model: SBD Dauntless
Manufacturer: Phoenix Model (phoenixmodel.com)
Distributor: Tower Hobbies (towerhobbies.com)
Type: Scale dive-bomber
Wingspan: 56.7 in.
Wing area: 651 sq. in.
Weight: 7 lb. 2 oz.
Wing loading: 28.9 oz./sq. ft.
Power req'd: .46-.55 glow or electric
Radio req'd: 6-channel
Price: \$209.97

What We Like

- Covering and paint are expertly applied
- Rugged, sprung landing gear can take abuse
- Cool scale pilot and cockpit detail

What We Like

- Excellent scale detail
- Exceptional flight performance
- Highly prefabricated



E-flite/Horizon Hobby FJ-2 Fury

Jet Intermediate Pilot

For an electric ducted fan jet, we think that this model is complete right out of the box. We like that all the surfaces have molded hinges, which means no gluing or assembly of the control surfaces. Even the servos, control horns, and pushrods come preinstalled and ready for flight. We are impressed with the nicely molded ABS plastic accent pieces, which provide the final touches. These include servo covers, intake ring, tank mounts, access hatches, and other miscellaneous pieces. And when it comes to flying, we think that the included AS3X system makes this small jet feel like one of the big boys.

Specifications

Model: FJ-2 Fury 15 DF BNF Basic

Manufacturer: E-flite (e-flite.com)

Distributor: Horizon Hobby (horizonhobby.com)

Type: Scale electric jet

Wingspan: 6.75 in.

Wing area: 304 sq. in.

Weight: 3 lb. 4 oz.

Wing loading: 24.5 oz./sq. ft.

Motor incl'd: Brushless 3700Kv motor and 70mm ducted fan

Radio req'd: 4-channel

Price: \$299.99

Freewing/Motion RC A-6 Intruder EDF Jet

Jet Intermediate Pilot

Perhaps one of the most impressive electric jets that we've seen, this A-6 Intruder is made of durable EPO foam and adorned with scale VA 85 USS *Forrestal* waterslide decals. We took notice of the many scale details the A-6E has. We think that the quality and workmanship are outstanding, and everything from the landing gear to the scale pilot busts are perfect for a jet of this size. Recommended for intermediate pilots, the A-6 does not require a lot of assembly experience; just add a battery and radio to complete.

Specifications

Model: A-6 Intruder

Manufacturer: Freewing

Distributor: Motion RC (motionrc.com)

Type: Electric jet

Wingspan: 46 in.

Wing area: 484 sq. in.

Weight: 5 lb. 4 oz.

Wing loading: 24.9 oz./sq. ft.

Power incl'd: Brushless outrunner w/ 80mm fan unit

Distributor: Motion RC (motionrc.com)

Type: Electric jet

Wingspan: 46 in.

Wing area: 484 sq. in.

Weight: 5 lb. 4 oz.

Radio req'd: 6-channel

Price: \$299.00



What We Like

- Ultra-scale detail
- Excellent flight performance
- Made out of durable foam

What We Like

- Fast assembly time
- Top-notch quality
- Excellent flight performance



BVM 1/6-scale F-16 Falcon Turbine

Jet Advanced Pilot

Who hasn't dreamed of flying a turbine-powered RC jet? We are amazed that this new F-16 comes built to order and comes in a number of standard-finish schemes as well as in custom schemes. The model features all high-voltage, metal-gear brushless servos and high-voltage digital air valves, and all the components come installed and prewired. The airframe comes with dual fuel tanks (located over the center of gravity) as well as dual smoke tanks. You need to add your own engine, fuel pump, filter, UAT/CAT, and manual shutoff valve.

Specifications

Model: 1/6-scale F-16 Falcon Aircraft

Manufacturer: Premier

Distributor: BVM Jets (bvmjets.com)

Type: Scale jet

Wingspan: 65.5 in. (with missile rails)

Wing area: 1,312.5 sq. in. (projected)

Weight: 31 lb. (dry with turbine and smoke system)

Wing loading: 54.42 oz./sq. ft.

Engine req'd: Turbine 140N Class (31-32 lb. thrust)

Radio req'd: 5-channel (rudder, throttle, elevator, aileron, retracts); no flaps

Price: \$7,749.99 (plus shipping)

FMS/Diamond Hobby Kawasaki Ki-61

Electric Intermediate Pilot

We like airplanes that are out of the ordinary, and the new Kawasaki Ki-61 "Tony" is just that. We think that the Ki-61 is an excellent design, coming with all the servos and electronics installed. We appreciate that the rudder and elevator control rods also come installed in the fuselage already connected to the servos. Also impressive is that the servo leads coming from the main wing are cleaned up in a connection block that sits perfectly in its provided slot. And when it comes to flight performance, we are not disappointed.

Specifications

Model: Kawasaki Ki-61

Manufacturer: FMS (fmsmodel.com)

Distributor: Diamond Hobby (diamondhobby.com)

Type: Foam warbird

Wingspan: 39.2 in.

Wing area: 235 sq. in.

Weight: 41 oz.

Wing loading: 25.1 oz./sq. ft.

Motor incl'd: Brushless 3648Kv 770

Radio req'd: 6-channel (ailerons, rudder, throttle, elevator, flaps, retracts)

Price: \$159.99



What We Like

- Compact speedy warbird
- Minimal build time
- Comes with flaps and retracts

What We Like

- Excellent parts fit and quality
- Outstanding MonoKote and painted scale trim
- Pilot-friendly flight characteristics
- Very easy and fast assembly



Great Planes P-6E Hawk

Electric Intermediate Pilot

The period between the wars produced some of the most beautiful aircraft, and the P-6E from Great Planes is a prime example. We love its overall looks and style and the expertly applied MonoKote and painted trim parts. Constructed of laser-cut balsa and ply parts, the Hawk comes with all its main components ready to assemble. You can power it with either electric or glow power, and when it comes to the flying field, we are impressed with its performance. If you like biplanes and warbirds, this is a two-for-one deal!

Specifications

Model: Curtiss P-6E Hawk

Manufacturer: Great Planes (greatplanes.com)

Type: Scale 1930s' biplane

Wingspan: 43.5 in.

Wing area: 352 sq. in.

Weight: 3 lb. 8 oz.

Wing loading: 22.91 oz./sq. ft.

Power req'd: 42-50-800 outrunner brushless

Radio req'd: 4-channel

Price: \$250.00

Great Planes P-51 Sport

Glow Intermediate Pilot

What's not to like about an almost-ready-to-fly plane that comes partially built with all the pieces and hardware to get it ready to fly? We think that its balsa-and-ply construction with factory-applied MonoKote covering and fiberglass cowl make this a very quick build. After test flying, we think that it is ideal for intermediate fliers. It performs as if it's on rails.

Specifications

Model: P-51 Mustang Sport Fighter

Manufacturer: Great Planes (greatplanes.com)

Distributor: Hobbico (hobbico.com)

Type: WW II sport flier

Wingspan: 52 in.

Wing area: 550 sq. in.

Weight: 90 oz.

Wing loading: 23.56 oz./sq. ft.

Motor req'd: 46-.55 2-stroke, .70 4-stroke, or electric RimFire 32

Radio req'd: 4-channel

Price: \$139.99



What We Like

- Smooth and precise sport flier
- Ready for glow or electric power
- Great fit and finish with a nice scale look

What We Like

- Great scale looks
- SAFE Technology and three flight modes
- Evolution 8cc gasoline engine, factory installed



Hangar 9 P-51 Mustang Sport 8cc

Gas Intermediate Pilot

Ideal for low-time pilots, this Mustang/trainer/sport flier is bind-and-fly (BNF), and all of its equipment comes installed and ready to bind to your DSM2/DSMX-compatible transmitter. We like how easily and quickly this sport plane goes together. Made out of built-up balsa and plywood and covered with UltraCote, we love how this gas trainer performs.

Specifications

Model: P-51 Mustang Sport 8cc BNF Gas Trainer

Manufacturer: Hangar 9 (hangar-9.com)

Distributor: Horizon Hobby (horizonhobby.com)

Type: Gas trainer/sport warbird

Wingspan: 54.7 in.

Wing area: 574 sq. in.

Weight: 6 lb. 6 oz.

Wing loading: 25.6 oz./sq. ft.

Power incl'd: Evolution 8cc gasoline engine (installed)

Radio req'd: 6-channel w/ Spektrum DSM2/DSMX

Price: \$399.00

Top Flite P-47 Razorback

Gas Advanced Pilot

Everyone pays attention when a giant-scale warbird fires up on the flightline, and this giant-scale Jug is no exception. We are impressed with the fit and finish of all the major parts and subassemblies, and we are pleased with the quality of the factory-applied covering. All the control surfaces come with hinge point-style hinges, and we are equally impressed how the Robart retracts and the DLE 61cc gas engine bring this classic warbird to life.

Specifications

Model: P-47 Razorback

Manufacturer: Top Flite (top-flite.com)

Distributor: Hobbico (hobbico.com)

Type: ARF WW II warbird

Wingspan: 85 in.

Wing area: 1,329 sq. in.

Weight: 21 lb. 6 oz.

Wing loading: 37.06 oz./sq. ft.

Power req'd: 50-61cc gas or RimFire Power 65cc 160Kv electric motor

Radio req'd: 6+channel

Price: \$749.99



What We Like

- Excellent fit and finish
- Quick assembly time
- Big fuselage hatch
- Robart electric retracts available



What We Like

- Excellent looks
- Quick assembly
- Pre-installed flaps, retracts, drop tanks, lighting
- 4- and 5-blade prop setups provided

Avios/HobbyKing Hawker Sea Fury

Electric Intermediate Pilot

Molded from EPO foam, the Sea Fury has clean, defined panel lines molded into the airframe, giving it a nice scale appearance. We like the clear plastic canopy and pilot bust, which come installed on the magnetically attached battery hatch. The servos and electronics come installed, and the plane can be assembled quickly. We love the flight performance of the Sea Fury and are impressed with its included flaps, retracts, drop tanks, and lighting system.

Specifications

Model: Hawker Sea Fury

Manufacturer: Avios

Distributor: HobbyKing (hobbyking.com)

Type: ARF WW II warbird

Wingspan: 47.2 in.

Wing area: 424 sq. in.

Weight: 74 oz.

Wing loading: 25.13 oz./sq. ft.

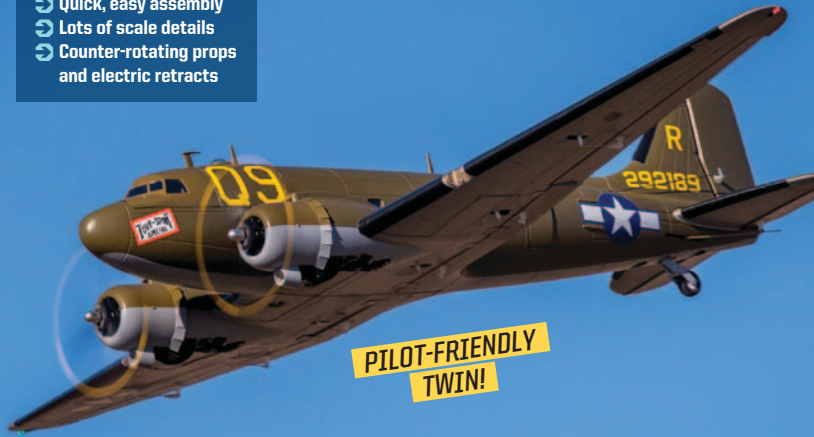
Motor incl'd: 3648-600Kv brushless

Radio req'd: 7-channel

Price: \$159.00

What We Like

- Quick, easy assembly
- Lots of scale details
- Counter-rotating props and electric retracts



HobbyKing C-47 Skytrain

Electric **Intermediate Pilot**

Who doesn't like twin-engine warbirds? Constructed out of molded EPD foam, the C-47 Skytrain from HobbyKing comes nicely painted in a matte-finish olive drab and gray color scheme. We are pleased that there are a choice of markings. Control surfaces are hinged, and all eight servos are factory installed. The two motors are installed inside the nicely detailed cowls on the nacelles, just in front of the installed, forward-retracting electric landing gear. We are impressed with the included counter-rotating, 3-blade propellers, which cancel out torque-induced turns.

Specifications

Model: C-47 Skytrain Plug-and-Fly
Manufacturer: HobbyKing (hobbyking.com)
Type: Sport-scale twin
Wingspan: 63 in.
Wing area: 760 sq. in.
Weight: 77 oz.
Wing loading: 14.7 oz./sq. ft.
Motor incl'd: Two 960Kv brushless outrunners
Radio req'd: 6-channel (aileron, rudder, elevator, throttle, retracts, flaps)
Price: \$219.00

Phoenix Model Spitfire Mk2

Glow **Intermediate Pilot**

When it comes to an easy build, we have to say that this Spitfire from Phoenix Model does not have a single part that doesn't fit perfectly or darn near it. Coming with landing gear, wheels, fuel tank, pushrods, hardware, and a decent instruction manual, we think that the Spitfire is a sweet machine. It looks great, is extremely maneuverable, and flies light, and we love how easy it is to land. The electric retractable gear work flawlessly, and the flaps are very effective.

Specifications

Model: Spitfire Mk2
Manufacturer: Phoenix Model (phoenixmodel.com)
Distributor: Tower Hobbies (towerhobbies.com)
Type: ARF sport scale WW II fighter
Wingspan: 55 in.
Wing area: 565 sq. in.
Weight: 7 lb.
Wing loading: 28.18 oz./sq. ft.
Power req'd: 46-55 2-stroke, 52 4-stroke, or 1000-1400W, 480Kv brushless outrunner
Radio req'd: 6-channel (rudder, aileron, elevator, throttle, retracts, flaps)
Price: \$159.99

What We Like

- Quick build
- Excellent quality
- Greased landings every time

E-flite UMX PT-17 Stearman

Electric **Intermediate Pilot**

Sometimes you just want to go out and fly without having to spend time assembling your model. This easy-to-fly 4-channel biplane comes with the AS3X stabilization system, so when you do fly it, it feels like a bigger airplane. We're impressed with it weighing just 1.7 oz. and still offering excellent performance, agility, and stability. With a couple of extra battery packs, we enjoy flying this mini Stearman a lot.

Specifications

Model: UMX PT-17 BNF
Manufacturer: E-flite (eflitter.com)
Distributor: Horizon Hobby (horizonhobby.com)
Type: Park flier
Wingspan: 15.3 in.
Wing area: 67.5 sq. in.
Weight: 1.7 oz.
Wing loading: 3.63 oz./sq. ft.
Motor incl'd: Ultra micro, brushed
Radio req'd: 4-channel DSMX/DSM2 compatible
Price: \$99.99

What We Like

- AS3X technology
- Beautiful scale looks and awesome detail
- 100 percent ready to fly right out of the box



Hobby People P-47 Thunderbolt EP RTF

Electric Intermediate Pilot

If you are looking for a Jug to add to your warbird hangar, then we think the Hobby People RTF P-47 Thunderbolt EP with retracts is a sweet deal. Made out of EPO foam, it is simple and fast to assemble, and it has a potent power system. All the servos are installed, and if you want some added performance options, flaps are available separately. With good flight performance, we think that the Thunderbolt is rugged enough for most low-time pilots. And if you do have a hard landing, the P-47 is easily repaired and replacement parts are readily available.

Specifications

Model: P-47 Thunderbolt
Manufacturer: Hobby People (hobbypeople.net)
Distributor: Global Hobby (globalhobby.com)
Type: WW II foam warbird
Wingspan: 41 in.
Wing area: 288 sq. in.
Weight: 36 oz.
Wing loading: 18 oz./sq. ft.
Motor req'd: 3536-size outrunner
Radio req'd: 5+-channel
Price: \$174.99 (RTF)



What We Like

- Well detailed
- Power system gives great performance
- Retracts are included and installed

E-flite UMX P-47 Thunderbolt

Electric Intermediate Pilot

We always have fun with small molded foam fighters, but the new UMX P-47 ultra-micro warbird from E-flite is one of our favorites. It flies with the feel of a larger warbird but without the higher wing loading. With its patented AS3X stabilization system, the P-47 offers 4-channel control with factory-installed Ultra micro linear servos. We're impressed with effectiveness of the control surfaces and how graceful it performs the aerobatics typical of a WW II fighter.

Specifications

Model: UMX P-47 BL BNF Basic
Manufacturer: E-flite (e-flite.com)
Distributor: Horizon Hobby (horizonhobby.com)
Type: Ultra-micro warbird
Wingspan: 19.0 in.
Wing area: 69 sq. in.
Weight (ready-to-fly): 3.35 oz.
Wing loading: 6.99 oz./sq. ft.
Motor incl'd: 180BL brushless outrunner
Radio req'd: 4-channel
Price: \$129.99



What We Like

- Gorgeous replica of iconic fighter
- Ready to fly out of the box
- Respectable flight times from the 200mAh battery

AMA AD

AMA AD



What We Like

- Excellent scale fidelity
- Shock-absorbing, rotating, retractable metal landing gear
- Retractable tailwheel
- All components factory installed

FMS/Diamond Hobby P-40B Warhawk

Electric **Intermediate Pilot**

While this is actually the second version of the P-40B that FMS has released, it is a completely new model with many new features. We like this model as it includes shock-absorbing, 90-degree-rotating metal main landing gear; a retractable tailwheel; split flaps; and quality ball-link clevises on all control surfaces. It is a good value, with installed 17g metal-gearred servos, a 70-amp speed control (with 5A BEC), and an installed 4258-650Kv brushless motor and navigation lights. It will bring the Flying Tiger out of any RC pilot!

Specifications

Model: P-40B Warhawk
Manufacturer: FMS (fmsmodel.com)
Distributor: Diamond Hobby (diamondhobby.com)
Type: Scale warbird
Wingspan: 55.1 in.
Wing area: 522.3 sq. in.
Weight: 5 lb. 5 oz.
Wing loading: 23.43 oz./sq. ft.
Radio req'd: 6-channel (minimum)
Price: \$209.99



What We Like

- Exceptional scale looks and details
- Set up for 3- or 4-cell LiPo battery
- Functional bomb drop

Duraflly P-40N Warhawk

Electric **Intermediate Pilot**

The most difficult part of the Curtiss P-40 was deciding which set of aircraft markings to apply. You have a choice of U.S. Army Air Forces, British Royal Air Force, Soviet Air Force, Netherlands East Indies Air Force, and the Royal Australian Air Force markings. We are impressed with the overall quality of this Warhawk and its reinforced EPO hinged control surfaces. We get a real bang out of the functional bomb drop!

Specifications

Model: Curtiss P-40N Warhawk 1100mm (PNF)
Manufacturer: Duraflly (duraflly.com)
Distributor: HobbyKing (hobbyking.com)
Type: Scale warbird
Wingspan: 43.3 in.
Wing area: 325 sq. in.
Weight: 3 lb. 3 oz.
Wing loading: 14.13 oz./sq. in.
Radio req'd: 6-channel min. (7 w/ bomb drop)
Price: \$159.03



What We Like

- AS3X stabilization
- Dual servo flaps, installed and functional
- Retractable electric landing gear, installed

E-flite T-28 Trojan BNF Basic

Electric **Intermediate Pilot**

One of our all-time favorite military trainer aircraft, the T-28 is hard to beat. It goes together quickly, and everything comes installed, only needing to be connected to the receiver once the wing is attached. We are impressed that the DSMX receiver is also included. We think that the AS3X stabilization system is a real plus, and with its operational flaps and retracts, we really love the way that this Trojan gets around the traffic pattern.

Specifications

Model: T-28B Trojan 1.2m BNF
Manufacturer: E-flite (e-flite.com)
Distributor: Horizon Hobby (horizonhobby.com)
Type: Sport scale park flier
Wingspan: 48.2 in.
Wing area: 386 sq. in.
Weight: 55 oz.
Wing loading: 20.89 oz./sq. ft.
Motor incl'd: BL15 brushless outrunner
Radio req'd: 6-channel
Price: \$279.99 ±