

Big Bird update 06/20/2015

I think I mentioned that I helped the Sheriff look for a drowning victim last week using Big Bird. Due to the fact that I had the camera pointed down at the water, I could not see forward very well, and on the second flight a distant tree reached out over the water and grabbed Big Bird which, not wanting to fall into the lake below it, held tightly to the branches.

7 Deputies and 4 boats plus the Sheriff up the tree with a saw was needed to recover Big Bird. Evidently the GPS antenna does not like sudden stops, and test flights after this incident were interesting to say the least.

The collision seemed to have produced a loose connection in the antenna, and after 3 to 5 min the Bird started bounding around wildly out of control. The two subsequent tests, both ending in trees, have run me out of extra blades (\$60 per set), but helped figure out what was wrong.

The feeling of helplessness watching Big Bird gyrating out of control is hard to describe....like "OH NOOO!"

There is a good side to this story tho. As with every flight before these I gain more experience and knowledge. Consultation with a drone expert in Florida about this incident came up with a solution (new antenna \$655) and a way to handle such an event should one occur in the future.

The user manual refers to this function in the flight manual, but describes it as an alternate flight mode. The manual is a translation from another language, & they use unexplained acronyms, & they assume normal flight, and there is no mention of system failures. After you have one, (a system failure) and better understand this complex setup, you discover that there is a way to disconnect the Satellite input from Big Bird's guidance computer while in the air. This should return control (without normal GPS function) and allow a safe landing. (Thanks for mentioning this guys!)

I have ordered a new antenna, Hopefully that and the extra blades will arrive next week in time to be of service to the movie guys who are coming in to do some local interviews Frac Sand problems. This "Hobby" is expensive! Thanks to those of you who are helping me cover operating costs.

Hank