

FOWL AND FURIOUS

Amstrad CPC 464 / 6128 — 64K, disc

A slingshot, a hill of timber, and a great many smug pigs.

Loading

Insert the disc and type:

```
RUN"FOWLS
```

The REVIVE8BIT splash appears. Press **SPACE** to go on, or wait ten seconds and it goes on by itself. The game then loads in two pieces and starts.

The game writes to the disc — see **The high score** below — so do not leave the write-protect tab open unless you want to keep your score to yourself.

Why the birds are furious

They had a tree. A very good tree — a broad oak on the ridge, six nests in it, and a dawn chorus that had taken four seasons to get right.

The pigs had a field. Pigs cannot climb and pigs cannot fly, and what a pig in a field mostly has is a view of the field. This was felt, at some length, over the fence.

The birds are heavy sleepers. They have to be: you cannot rehearse a dawn chorus at dawn without going to bed in the afternoon, and by nine in the evening the whole ridge is out cold. So nobody woke up. Not when the sawing started, not when the oak came down in the small hours, and not when three hundred metres of the finest nesting timber on the ridge went over the fence one plank at a time.

They woke up on the ground.

The pigs had been busy. Fifty structures, from a shed to a proper walled citadel, every last one of them built out of somebody else's tree — and a pig sitting in each one with the smug, settled look of an animal that has finally got a view. One of them waved.

The birds held a meeting. The findings were: (a) that this was not on, and (b) that a bird carrying a full winter's grudge cannot actually get much above the fence under its own power, which was awkward, and was not mentioned again. What they had was the last fork of the oak, still standing where the trunk used to be, and the elastic out of the choir conductor's braces.

You are not knocking those forts down. You are taking the tree back, one plank at a time, and it is going to land on somebody.

(The pigs tell it differently. They say the tree was dead, the birds were loud, and nobody in the history of the field has ever asked a pig what it would like. If you press UP at the menu you can hear their side of it, at which point the slingshot is theirs and the birds are the ones sitting in the buildings looking pleased.)

The idea

Nine pigs have built forts out of timber and are sitting inside them looking pleased. You have a slingshot and a queue of birds. Knock the forts down on top of the pigs.

You do not have to hit a pig. You have to make the fort hit the pig. A shot that brings a roof down on three of them beats a shot that hits one of them squarely, and the score is worked out on exactly that basis.

There are fifty forts. They start as a hut with one pig in it and end as a stone-footed citadel with a rope walk across the top, a charge of dynamite in the ground floor and a king on the roof.

The menu

Key	What it does
SPACE	Start playing
UP	Swap sides — throw pigs at birds instead
DOWN	Difficulty: EASY, MEDIUM, HARD

HI SCORE at the top of the menu is read off the disc when the machine is switched on, and written back when you return here.

Swapping sides changes nothing about the forts or the physics. The thing in the pouch becomes a pig and the things in the fort become birds, and the status strip changes its labels to match. It is the same game seen from the other end of the argument.

Playing

Key	What it does
SPACE (hold)	Draw the sling back. Let go to launch.
UP / DOWN	Raise and lower the angle
LEFT / RIGHT	Look along the world without shooting
ESC twice	Back to the menu
R	Rebuild this fort
N	Skip to the next fort

R and **N** are there for people building levels. They are honest about it: **N** does not score anything and **R** does not cost you a go.

Aiming

The dotted line out of the pouch is the direction the bird will leave in — five dots, about twenty pixels of it. It is a direction, not a prediction: gravity takes over the moment the bird is in the air.

The **pull** is the power. Hold SPACE and the bird is hauled further back along the reverse of the launch direction; that is the whole gauge, and it takes about two fifths of a second to wind up to full.

The camera follows the bird, and when the bird hits something it centres on the impact so that

you can see what you did.

The status strip

LV01	BD3	PG2	SC000450
------	-----	-----	----------

LV	which fort, 01 to 50
BD	birds still in the queue (PG if you swapped sides)
PG	pigs still alive (BD if you swapped sides)
SC	score

At the end of a fort the strip is replaced by a banner: **FORT DOWN!** or **OUT OF BIRDS** , with the go you are on, and **SPACE** to carry on.

Scoring

The score is how hard the pigs were hit. Every blow that lands on a pig adds its own force to the score — a plank falling on one, a bird catching one on the way past, a charge going off next to one. A shot that catches three pigs beats a shot that flattens one.

Plus 100 for every bird you did not need. Clear a fort with two birds still in the queue and that is 200 on top.

Nothing at all is scored for damage to the fort. The fort is the means, not the end — paying for it would reward knocking a wall down and walking away from the pig behind it.

The score carries across forts and resets when you go back to the menu.

Difficulty, and running out

A fort allows you a fixed number of **goes** . Use all your birds without clearing it and that is one go gone; you get the fort back, rebuilt.

Goes per fort	
EASY	5
MEDIUM	3
HARD	2

Run out of goes and it is **GAME OVER** . **SPACE** takes you back to the menu, where your score is compared with the high score and written to the disc if it beat it.

Clearing a fort gives you a fresh set of goes on the next one.

The high score

It lives on the disc, in a sector reserved by a file called SCORES.BIN . The game does not use AMSDOS to get at it — the firmware is paged out while the game runs — it drives the disc controller itself, and it only believes a save after reading the sector back and comparing it.

It is written **at the menu and nowhere else** . Spinning the drive up stops the machine for about a second, which nobody notices at a menu and everybody notices mid-shot. So: if you want your score kept, go back to the menu (ESC twice, or lose) before you switch off.

Your difficulty setting is kept in the same sector.

What a fort is made of

Sixteen pieces, all timber except where the table says otherwise. The number is how much punishment the piece takes before it is dislodged.

Piece	Takes	Notes
Plank, flat	30	floors and lintels
Plank, upright	30	the standard post — and it TOPPLES
Offcut	45	small, solid, load-bearing
Brick	40	the one piece that fills its cell
Rafter	25	roofs, in two directions
Arch	35	open underneath — a pig fits
Pillar	28	the slenderest upright, and it topples
Shelf	20	one plank deep, snaps easily
Crate	18	hollow: the weak point of any fort
Rope, strung	8	cut it and everything on it comes down
Rope, hanging	8	things hang from it
Pulley	22	
Dynamite	10	goes off — see below
Glass	6	the most fragile thing in the game
Stone	90	the least

Pigs take 34. A helmet doubles that and a crown trebles it.

How things fall

The five rules that decide every collapse. They are worth knowing, because a fort is a puzzle about them.

1. A beam is judged at its ends. A plank spanning a gap is held if both ends are supported, TIPS over the end it still has if one goes, and falls flat if neither does. This is why knocking out one post of a doorway brings the lintel down at an angle instead of dropping it straight — and why the thing under that angle gets hit.

2. Uprights topple, everything else slides. Shove a post and it goes over. Shove an offcut

and it just moves along. The upright is what you want to hit.

3. A single piece is also held by being wedged. A block with nothing under it will still stand if there is something solid on both sides. Take one of those away and it drops.

4. Rope carries tension and nothing else. A strung rope needs both ends tied; cut it anywhere and the whole thing comes down at once, because a rope has nothing to pivot on. Anything directly under a rope is HANGING from it and is held by nothing else — so cutting the rope drops the load in the same instant. Look for the stone hanging over a pig.

5. Dynamite removes what is near it. A charge that takes a hit throws everything within two cells away from itself and kills any pig in that square outright. A second charge inside the blast goes off too. A spent charge is just a crate afterwards; it will not go off twice.

The birds

Six of them: red, yellow, blue, black, white and green. They differ in plumage and in nothing else — there are no special abilities in this game. A fort gives you between three and six of them, and which ones is decided by how far into the fifty you are.

The forts

Fifty of them. The number of structures, how tall the tallest is, and whether there is dynamite, glass, stone or rope in it all grow with the fort number. The eight shapes — hut, bridge, pyramid, tower, gatehouse, keep, manor, citadel — rotate for variety, but the citadel only turns up once you are most of the way through.

The forts stand in three places: an outbuilding on the left, the main fort in the middle, and an annexe on the right. Late forts have all three, and they are meant to lean on each other. Bringing the outbuilding down onto the main fort is usually cheaper than hitting the main fort twice.

Every level is a plain text file on the development disc, and the level compiler will read back anything you draw. That is a story for another document.

Credits

REVIVE8BIT — 2026 — VASPER

Written for the Amstrad CPC in Z80 assembly. Mode 0, 160×200, sixteen colours, hardware ring scrolling, and not one byte to spare.