

The Rainier Paragliding Club Newsletter

Serving the Paragliding Community of Western Washington

www.rainierparaglidingclub.org

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The Thermal Column

A New Launch for 2Bear

by Bruce Burris

Mike, Wayne, and I met at the motel in Brinnon at 10:00 AM on Friday, the 22nd and proceeded up to the 2Bear launch site. After a couple of hours of light brush clearing, it was decided we just might be able to launch from the new launch, which is about 100 feet higher than the established 2Bear launch. For those of you who have been to 2Bear, the new launch is up the steep little road that is on the west side of the current launch.



Mike was the first to trudge back up the steep incline with glider and harness. When this little fat fellow started up, I knew I would have to stop a few times before making it to the top. Meanwhile, Wayne was dragging his feet while waiting for son Wade and friend Cody to show up. When Wayne finally made it up to the new launch, we heard Wade and Cody pull up down below.

Mike was the first to go off and a beautiful launch it was. I think he might have taken two steps, then it was up, up, and away. I think the only time he was lower than launch was when he finally got cold and headed for the LZ. Just after Mike took off, I asked Wayne what the name should be for the new launch. He mentioned that proper paragliding etiquette in some parts of the world dictate that the first to launch from a new site gets the honor of naming it. OK, Mike... we're waiting for the name. What will it be?

I set up to go next, and being the newbie, I fumbled around and managed to knock my reserve out of its pouch. I had to replace it in the container and re-secure the pins for the handle. As I futzed around, Wade got ready and kited from a position below me, into a position above me and off to my right. He made it look very easy. Someday, I hope to be half as good. His launch was

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On the RFC Web Site: Calendar & Membership Form

superb as well, and he was off.

I finally got things together, but had a little difficulty with a little wind shift and perhaps a little indecision. After setting up again, I launched without difficulty. So far in my short career of paragliding, this was my best flight as far as duration was concerned, 1 hour and 32 minutes. Not bad considering that with 53 previous flights, I only had 12 hours and 54 minutes. And even with the new launch altitude figured at 2950', I stayed above launch until I wanted to land as well. According to my vario, I made it up to 4708'. Wayne had mentioned the inversion layer was forecasted to be around 4500' so that was pretty much right on.

Wayne and Cody launched as well and everyone had a good flight and could stay up as long as desired. I enjoyed watching Wade do a SAT or two, as well as a couple of helicopter maneuvers, and some spirals.

Wayne did some mild acro as well. If he did anything more aggressive, I missed it.



I guess yours truly was the last to get cold, as I was the last to land. I had only flown 2Bear one time before, and that was when we were landing in the old LZ a little further east. I guess you could say this was a completely new site for me, as I launched from a different launch and landed in a different LZ. I did drape my wing over a fence after landing, but no harm was done to wing or man.

Since my vehicle was the only one at the LZ, we used it to drive back up to launch. All five of us piled in as the two young guys were going to fly down again and Mike and Wayne would drive the other two vehicles back down. When we got to the top, everyone except me (I'd already done it twice!) trudged back up to the new launch. I walked to the west side of the normal 2Bear launch and could see Mike up at the new launch. He yelled down that his camera was in Wayne's car, so I got it out and was able to get some shots, hopefully good ones. I didn't get to shoot Wade's launch, but I did get three or four shots of Cody. I think I got a couple of good shots of Wade with Mt. Rainier in the background.

We then headed down with Mike leading in Wade's van, Wayne in his rig, and me following in mine. Upon arrival at the LZ, Wade and Cody were waiting for us.

New launch site.

New LZ (for me, anyway)

7 flights.

Lots of buoyant air.

A great day with lots of blue sky!

The P4'ness of 2Bear

by Mike McIntyre



From time to time we've discussed the rating of sites for ability, and have never reached a consensus about whether or not it's a good idea. Some sites are rated at a high level to control the numbers of pilots using it. Others remain unrated as most all of ours are, yet almost any site can be easy under the right conditions, but deadly under others. I think it helps and educates us as pilots to discuss the various aspects of our sites. This article discusses some of the advanced aspects of 2bear as I see them, and to invites your comments and opinions.

As a bit of background, we've been flying 2bear consistently for only two and a half seasons, which lasts (due to snow) from roughly July till October. Usually we only make one flight in a day because of the long turnaround time, and I would guesstimate that we've had a total of 200 flights there, divided among maybe 25 pilots. Since it's so close to where I live, I go up on the majority of trips to the top, and am partly responsible for it's development.

So why do I think it rates some aspects of an advanced site? The first thing to remember about 2bear is that it sits right in the middle of a regional convergence zone caused by the Olympic Mountains. Additionally, it is located on one end of a comparatively small ridge in the middle of a valley running east/west, which sets up a "mini" convergence zone within the bigger one, sometimes leading to intermittent "over-the-back" launch conditions. Actually, these convergence zones move north or south, go away, or vary in intensity all the time, making things potentially complicated in the air, at launch, and in the LZ. We also frequently come across shear layers at various altitudes, where winds are blowing at vastly different speeds, and sometimes in different directions. On one flight, I encountered strong headwinds at altitude, making very little progress over the ground and didn't think I would make the LZ, but went through a shear layer at around 800' and then shot forward like a rocket to an eventual good landing. I was lucky. The other pilots did not fly that day, and if I had known before hand about that shear layer, I wouldn't have flown either. On another day, Steve M. compared much of his flight to a washing machine on rinse cycle, but then encountered air by the falls that was so smooth that he boated around for half an hour, waiting for us to arrive at the LZ to pick him up. It can be a little misleading to talk about wind direction at 2bear without including elevations, and you should be prepared for the general forecast to be completely wrong. By-the-way, NOAA, MM5, and other sites often disagree as to what they think it's going to be like there.

The next thing to be wary of is the launch itself. It's a flat landing with a steep lip in front, a lot like Bremer, so you need to be able to inflate through the rotor, walk or run to the edge, and then make your launch decision. As if that's not technical enough, we often encounter "lee-side thermals", where the south face collects the heat and releases it for good cycles (or not) which sometimes in varying degrees can dominate the over-the-back convergence breeze. This lee side thermal idea was really apparent about a month ago, when lift was abundant above the ridge, but if you sunk below the ridge and to the south of it, you got big time sink and heavy handed (but somehow manageable with enough altitude) turbulence.....this despite that we had all launched into nice southerly cycles. Sometimes the flag will be indicating right in your face, but will be just wind, or the thermal might be releasing in front of launch a couple of hundred yards. You need to be able to recognize the difference in these conditions and launch in the right cycle as well as fly away from or next to the hill, depending on said cycle, or perhaps find yourself sailing into very sinking and/or turbulent conditions close to the ground.

The other thing to watch out for here is the LZ and valley winds. These have perhaps been the most

consistent out of everything I've mentioned, mostly blowing up valley. However, as is common with valleys like this, there often seems to be a venturi effect so the surface valley wind is strong and sometimes turbulent. We have often had some problem penetrating on final, and several pilots have had to take last minute evasive action to avoid the fence or vegetable garden. On one occasion, this valley venturi may have contributed to an injury accident further down the valley. More rarely, however, if there is a strong westerly regional wind, then down valley winds can occur. You just have to be site aware and watch for it on the day.

To sum up, 2bear is by comparison a new site, with relatively few flights upon which to form our opinions. The topography and convergence location of it make it a more complex (and exciting) proposition for launching and flying, and the LZ takes some focused site knowledge to make it safe. Our experience so far shows that flying conditions here can be very turbulent, sometimes more turbulent than even the most experienced among us are comfortable with. Fly it by all means, but take advantage of an experienced pilot with local knowledge, who by his example will be more likely to know when or even if launching is a good idea.

A VERY COOL PROGRAM

by Steve Messman

Recently, I went on a very cool trip to the Wallowa Mountains in northeast Oregon. It is a trip I take with several friends every year, but this was the best. I still haven't made it to the top of Joseph Peak, but I was just about level with it, and top or not, I did manage to get an 18 mile flight out of it. Not a bad deal. But no, this is not a flight report. This is, instead, a report of the work I did AFTER the flight.



One of the folks I was with happened to be an engineer, and therefore interested in such things as computer programs and GPS tracks. He downloaded the tracks of my flight, gave them to me on my "thumb drive" and showed me how to put them into a map program like MapSource by Garmin. The question then became, "How can I put my GPS track onto Google Earth?" That was the beginning of my search, and that search took me to a web site named 'www.hybridgeotools.com'. You might want to go there if you are interested in reliving your favorite flights, because you certainly can, every single circle in even the smallest of thermals.



First of all, I assume you have Google Earth and know how to use it. Then, if you go to 'www.hybridgeotools.com', look for Active GPX Route Player and click on the "download" button for the free version. The download and installation is standard and easy. What you get for your troubles is a very cool tool to visualize and even play your flight just like it was a movie. The Active GPX Route Player is in fact a player. It moves the icon that represents you along your path. Depending on how you have configured your view of Google Earth, you can be floating past those mountain

peaks every rainy day of the year.

Here is how it works.

1. Go to 'www.hybridgertools.com'
2. Click the download button for the free version
3. Accept the terms and do the standard installation.
4. Once the program is installed and running, you have a couple of options.
 - a) You can use your own mapping software to download your desired track to your desktop (I saved mine as a .gpx file.) Drag and drop that file into the GPX player.
 - b) You can use the GPX Player to download directly from your Garmin GPS.
5. Go to the View menu, and select Google Earth as the viewer (That's your only option.)
6. Adjust the view of Google Earth to the viewing magnification and angle that you want.
7. Push the play button on the GPX player and watch the magic. A little icon that represents you will be traveling in real (scaled) time along your own GPS track. If that track is on top of mountains, or next to rock peaks, that is exactly what you will see. And, you will be moving along that track, just like you were flying that route again. It is awesome!!

You have a lot of options now—again. By using the icons at the bottom of the GPX player, you can:

1. Change the angle and range when tracking.
2. Change the color of tracks.
3. You can anchor your tracks to the ground or use the absolute altitude setting (recommended.)
4. You can anchor your traveling icon to the ground or use the absolute altitude setting (recommended.)
5. You can add someone else's track to your play list, change the color of his/her tracks, and run that one (up to 50) at the same time—so you can relive your victory or your defeat.
6. You can change the curtain opacity. (The top and the bottom of your absolute altitude settings are connected by a "curtain.")
7. You can change the icon that travels the track during play.
8. And, who knows what else.

While you are traveling, you can see the scaled speed and distance. You can see the actual speed and distance. And, you can see the total distance traveled. For a free tool, it's very cool.

I have included some pictures of my tracks. You can see how the altitude changes during flight. You can see the path I took along the mountain ridge. You can see the turns in a thermal. And you can see the turns I took at landing to determine wind direction.

Enjoy.



The Can-Am Fly-in

by Jim Baldo



I've been checking the forecast for more than a week. This has only increased my anxiety of visiting a new site. Plus, visiting during a fly-in adds another layer of discomfort. Flying with unfamiliar pilots can be challenging. Placing one's trust in another pilot's hands can leave one's stomach feeling queasy. Yet, I'm also feeling giddy. Flying a site with 3600 vertical all but guarantees a good flight. Flying a site with 3600 vertical is bound to be jaw dropping gorgeous.

Black Mountain is situated in northern Washington, north of Maple Falls, east of Sumas, and just south of the Canadian border. Standing on launch looking north, one can see the Fraser Valley – a valley which itself is surrounded by spectacular flying sites for our northern neighbors. Gazing south, Mt. Baker looms large in the distance. Below us to the west is Silver lake. For the most part it is surrounded by trees but on it's southern shore there is a large field, a field which is the location for group camping and the headquarters for this weekend's activities. This field also doubles as the primary LZ. It's large. Paragliders and hang gliders can easily share it.

The first thing one notices at launch is that it's carpeted – a rarity for fly sites that I visit. The second is its size. It's basically the width of the gravel road. A piece of carpet holds back the vegetation on the uphill side and provides a place to layout one's wing. A second piece holds back the vegetation on the downhill side and provides a runway - a very steep runway - for launch. Having cycles coming up the face helps with one's confidence and should provide an easy inflation and an uneventful launch. Waiting too long to launch and having the clouds block out the sun ending those cycles thus allowing the light base wind to cycle about 110 degrees cross is not so encouraging.

But some sun does return and with it some very light cycles allowing most to do a forward launch and explore for 15 minutes or so as they gently sled to the LZ far below. Those arriving later this day will be greeted with slightly better conditions at launch but not quite good enough to soar.

The Can-Am fly-in includes a competition but a very low key one. The three events in which pilots compete are the egg hunt, flight duration, and spot landing. The egg hunt consists of finding a marker in an unidentified field to the north and then describing that marker to the field judge when one lands. The duration contest is to stay aloft as close to a one hour duration as possible without going over the hour. The spot landing contest is self explanatory. These "challenges" add an extra fun dimension to the fly-in.



Saturday's conditions although light, allowed pilots one to scratch for an hour or more. If one were lucky, it was even possible to spend some time above launch albeit briefly. As far as flying north to locate that maker, I did not witness anyone headed in that direction. The conditions being what they were, would undoubtedly lead you to an early landing landing or a landing away from the LZ.

Sunday ended up being a no fly day for all but a couple of pilots as high clouds moved in and inhibited the thermal cycles at launch.

Black Mountain has the potential to be a premier flying site if the conditions are favorable and one that

you should add to your “to visit” list. The Can-Am fly-in was very well organized, provided the main course for a pot luck type dinner on Saturday evening, and a free pancake breakfast on both Saturday and Sunday. With an entry fee of \$35, which included two night's of camping, it can't be beat.



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The annual club meeting will be held in November. At that time, voting for club officers will take place. It's through member participation with new and fresh ideas that this club continues to thrive. Please contribute to the club's success by volunteering for an officer position. Address your inquiries to any club officer.

2008 Club Officers

President	Mike McIntyre
Vice President	Steve Messman
Secretary	Jim Harmon
Treasurer	Kathy Smith
Director (Google List)	David Griswold
Director (Safety)	Doug Etter
Newsletter	Jim Baldo

Please contribute your stories and photos to the newsletter. Without your contributions, this newsletter can not exist.

The submission deadline for the next newsletter is September 25th.

The editor would like to thank all that have submitted stories, photos, and articles. It's you who help drive the success of the club.