

# The Rainier Paragliding Club Newsletter

Serving the Paragliding Community of Western Washington

[www.rainierparaglidingclub.org](http://www.rainierparaglidingclub.org)

May 2008

## The Thermal Column

### Scenes of Cape Look out

photos by Gail Baldo



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# Cape Lookout Campout

by Jim Baldo

photos by Gail Baldo

The “on the fly” Cape Lookout (CLO) camp out provided a few good flying days and as always, good company. It was held out of desperation as the Ft. Ebey camp out has only yielded a one hour flying window for the last three years (except if you came a day early). But come to think of it, CLO also provided opportunities only for those that arrived early.



Kim & Kathy were the first to arrive staking out a campsite and preparing for the fun. Soon after, Steve Messman and Jim & Gail arrived. After selecting campsites we all headed to launch, about a 5 minute drive. We would be joined later by Wayne & Barb. Although the cycles at launch were light, it appeared marginally soarable so being a good host, I went first. If you've ever been to CLO, then you know that most of the soaring is accomplished outside the view of launch to the south (left). When a pilot launches and turns left, he quickly disappears from sight while observers await for his return. I returned just at launch level not exciting anyone but at least demonstrating that it was possible to soar.

Slowly pilots prepared and slowly the conditions improved. I was soon joined by others and the airspace became crowded. Ridge rules provided some structure to the chaos and allowed pilots to continue holding on to launch altitude. But soon, with each pass, altitude was gained and room on the ridge expanded. Pilots that had not yet launched began to show more excitement. Before long, I was totally lost to the earthbound pilots and spectators as I headed south, jumped the “gap” - a ravine that separates the shoreline from the actual Cape, which juts out into the ocean - and gained even more altitude against the higher land mass.



Jumping the gap is slightly more exciting than it sounds. There are no LZ's on the cape. If you must land, you'll do so in a tree or if you're lucky, a patch of salal that is easily six feet deep. Additionally, to regain the beach as an LZ you need to travel

into the wind which makes monitoring the wind's speed and direction critical. One usually does not cross the gap until their altitude is sufficient to effect a safe return. Crossing lower is possible but carries more risk and greater excitement. Steve, and others, eventually followed me across. Steve informed me later that it was one of his scariest moments in paragliding. Oh, did I mention that when you first cross you head directly toward cliffs thus leaving no place to land except the ocean? “YEEHA!”

Soon, we were all soaring the cape, crossing the gap at our leisure, enjoying the wonderful ocean and shore views, and creating memories and stories to be shared around the evening campfire.



We awoke Friday morning to soarable conditions better than the day before. The wind was slightly less therefore making the soaring at the cape more stress free. Personally, I find the journey to the end of the cape extremely stressful and a trip I'm now reluctant to make. The cape extends out about one mile into the ocean and loses some height the farther out you travel. The trip out is easy enough but it seems the trip back takes forever. Usually, your return



speed is less, and the view of the LZ so far in the distance is unnerving. You anxiously await the singing of your vario announcing your return to greater altitudes thus securing the beach once again as your LZ. On this day, Kim would make this journey twice. He would also travel north shading my campsite with his wing long after I landed for lunch. Days at CLO don't get much better than this. Friday afternoon saw the wind

speed diminish and left only sledders for those that launched. As the distance between the horizon and sun got smaller, so did the beach leaving behind only memories of another great day, and as it would turn out, the last fly day of the weekend as clouds moved in and mist kissed the shore.



## THE PRACTICAL VALUE OF INSTRUMENTS/EQUIPMENT

by Mike McIntyre

This is an article about the actual events of Saturday, May 24th at 2bear. It is not meant to be a complete, authoritative list of all the things we might need as pilots, but only the items we did have and used, and a couple we didn't have and maybe should have.

As a short background, it was a thermic and big day at 2bear, with complicated conditions, thus opening up a number of perceived possibilities for individual pilots from which to choose. There were 7 pilots there. Six of us were a group (seven including Jim's son Ben), and another local that we all know, who independently came to fly. In the course of the afternoon, one of our pilots landed far away from our usual designated LZ on an isolated gravel bar in the middle of the river and sustained an injury making it necessary to call in a rescue team for his extraction.

The first items we were really glad to have were our radios. I had previously landed nearby, but across a branch of the river. I didn't see him land (nor did anyone else) because of the isolated location, but I walked far enough up river to see him wave at me. I had inadvertently left my radio back at my landing site. I returned to retrieve it and was then informed of his injury and other status (not in the water etc.), and we were then able to plan a course of action. I was also able to let a couple of pilots still in the air know what we were doing, so that they didn't have to wade deep rivers, slash through the jungle, and put themselves at any risk, to get to the accident site.



Now, even though we had our radios (as we make a point of whenever we fly) and were in contact, there were a couple of things that later came to light that might have made them more useful. About half of us only had 2 meter radios, a couple of pilots that had both, and the rest of us, including Jim's son, had only FRS radios. The pilot that came by himself had no radio at all.

Because we were on two different radio bands, not everybody was informed as to what was happening until all were on the ground. In the end, and because of a multitude of reasons, including heavy static or interference on the 2 meters, the FRS radios were the ones that on this day did most of the work. I also, through ignorance and convenience, had inadvertently chosen to designate an FRS channel that

would only function on the low power setting. This, while making us completely legal, limited the range of the FRS radios to the extent that it later interfered with my buddies attempts to meet up with me after the pilot's extraction. (I had to go back for the gliders, after all). I have since read my radio manual a little more carefully, and can now choose a channel where maximum power is available, though using them that way would make us technically illegal without having an FCC license.

Another thing about radios is that it would have been a good idea to know how to use your buddies radio as well as your own. The loaners I passed out were easy to use but were in the locked mode so without instruction, users couldn't change anything like the power setting or channel. I also had occasion to use Chris's radio, but didn't know how to even turn it on. Eventually, I stumbled on the right sequence and it came in useful to find one of mine that I had lost in the woods while breaking trail for the extraction team.

To sum up, radios are really important, and their usefulness and reliability improves greatly to the extent that you know how to use them, that you have them with you when you need 'em, and that the greater number of pilots on the same channel, the better.

The second piece of equipment is something that Chris and I often carry, but on this occasion neither of us had in our harness, and that is a cell phone. Other pilots might have had one in their harness, but ours were back in the truck. I therefore hiked down river a little ways and had the good luck to meet some campers, who then called 911. They remained in contact throughout this caper, helping to coordinate efforts and specify our location to the rescue team. Without the use of a cell phone the injured pilot might have had a much longer wait or more serious complications. The reasons/excuses for not carrying a cell phone are many, like it not working in the mountains, not wanting to lose it or smash it up, and not being able to use while flying, but this is one pilot who from this day forward will carry it all the time, with a fully charged battery.

There are a couple of other items of equipment, a vario and a GPS which figured into the equation with much less importance. It would have been nice to have some water also.

I'll save a more detailed discussion of these items, and a more detailed flight report, for the second part of this article.

To quote a famous and accomplished local pilot....."Fly high, fly safe".

## 2008 Club Officers

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The submission deadline for the next newsletter is June 26th.

Please Share your Stories  
and PHOTOS!

COMING UP:  
**Bremer Campout: June 20 - 22**