

The Thermal Column



Newsletter of The Rainier Paragliding Club



Serving the Paragliding Community of Western Washington, USA

March 2007

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WWW.RainierParaglidingClub.org

if I would like to go to CLO (Cape Lookout) on the Oregon coast with him, I jumped at the chance. I had flown the site a couple of times but had never ventured very far out on the cape.



We met at the Jantzen

Beach shopping center and car pooled it from there. I had to work in the morning so we did not get away very early. Jim said that noon to 1 pm would be a good time to get there. The drive was nice and the traffic was fairly light.

We stopped for a break at the Tillamook Forest Center, nice place to take a break. We continued through Tillamook and out to Anderson's Viewpoint. After getting out of

I Feel Good

By Kim Smith



It has not been the best winter for paragliding here in the Pacific Northwest. Short days, long periods of rain, low clouds and high gas prices. Is it worth the cost of gas to drive 3 to 4 hours for a short flight? It is if you have had zero airtime in the past several weeks. I too have been suffering from a lack of airtime this winter and am anxious for good weather. So when JimmyB asked



the car, eating a sandwich, putting on warmer clothing and talking with Jacques, we started to set up. I launched after Rob and

Jim into the smooth lift that was so abundant. With just a pass or two we were high enough to jump the gap and head

down the cape. I watched as Jim worked his way out to the end of the cape and thought that it looked so easy that I

would give it a try. It was a little scary since I was getting lower as I approached the end of the cape, but I continued on. I had watched Jim get lower and now he was ever so slowly working his way back toward launch. I did not realize until later that he was on speed bar part of the way back. I made it



to the end of the cape and decided that I should go back to the safety of the exposed beach. There is not anyplace to land out there except the ocean, trees or 10' deep salal. I did manage to snap a few pictures while I was on my way back toward launch. This is such a beautiful site to fly

when it is soarable. A couple of other pilots joined us in the air and we had a great time soaring with the eagles and playing in the smooth air. After about 3hrs in the air I tried to get low and top land but there was just too much lift. I would do wingovers and spiral down below launch and be back over before I could get in. The touch down on the beach was very soft in

the smooth air. After folding and loading into the car we headed for home with big grins from ear to ear. At the end of the day I had flown for over 3 hrs but I had been in the car for about 9 hrs. It was certainly worth the time and the drive. I am looking forward to my next trip down to Cape Lookout.

Always check with the local pilots for an orientation if you plan on flying the site.

The View From My Window



By Jim Baldo

I don't need to remind anyone what a poor month February has been for flying in the Pacific Northwest. There were opportunities, but they were sparse and widespread. If my life story were to be told by looking through my logbook, February 2007 did not exist.

And still I sat gazing out my window and perusing all my favorite weather sites hoping to find that golden opportunity to propel myself skyward. My personal favorite is the sounding reports (MM5) generated by the University of Washington. The CPC club has an excellent link to that report based on a Google map. Clicking on a balloon generates a tailored report for your site of interest. But to my dismay, clicking the balloon was now doing nothing but leaving me with frustration. No reports were generated, and no additional web navigation was taking place. The reply I received from one of the CPC site webmasters informed me that the links were still intact and everything was working fine. "Rats! Computer problems on my end!"

And so, with no flying opportunities in sight, I decided to embark on a different adventure. One not of flight, but in the pursuit of easing the difficulties gathering data from the MM5 site. It may be a more difficult task than troubleshooting my browser issues, but from all the indications (and predictions), my time this month would not be spent touring the skies of the

Northwest.

WhereToFly' is the result of that work. It's a program with the goal of pulling the MM5 reports, the NOAA reports, and a Radar view, all into one central location and reduce the effort of gathering all the pertinent weather information used to make your flying site decisions.. In addition, it tries to eliminate some of the mystique of the lapse rate report by providing an approximate altitude conversion for the listed pressures which for me, up until now, has been a yellow 'sticky' note that has spent it's time surfing the top of my cluttered desk. The program also contains my simple description for the use of the lapse rate chart along with a description of Kim Smith's tailored usage of the NOAA reports.

Ambitious? Maybe. But first with the help of Kim Smith, and then the recruitment of Steve Messman, I was able to twist, turn, tweak, and finally tame the program to its current state. Along the way, I must admit, were some sleepless nights, some hair pulling episodes, and some desperate begging to my computer to reveal the error of my ways.

And there you have it. 'WhereToFly' is finally complete (or is it? How many times have I said that?) and available to all who are interested in reducing some of the effort of gathering their weather information for paragliding.

And just in time! The month of February and now the month of March is drawing to an end, the temperatures are warming, and it's time again to seek refuge somewhere in the sky's above the Pacific Northwest.

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(NOTE: more information and the program can be found by following the link on the RPC website to Jim Baldo's website. Many thanks to Kim Smith and Steve Messman for their contributions and patience during the development of this pro refuge gram.)

This is a progressive poem contrived by those individuals that yearn for a fly-able day.

**Here I sit
Disenchanted by this mornings sky
Wondering deeply from this weekends
report
if I'll ever get to fly
(Chris)**

**Maybe not, for sure today
will see nothing but clouds and rain.
But soon, you see, the sun will come
and soaring will ease my pain.
(Steve)**

**And then Kim chimed in
with a message adding doubt and confu-
sion
causing a diversion from our flightless
pain
or was that just his illusion?
(Jim)**

**So was it illusion, or maybe confusion
that had us jump to the tune?
Is that the sun I see in that prediction?
No. Wait! That's not till JUNE!!
(Steve)**

A Toddler?

By Kim Smith



Recently during a club meeting we were talking about flying conditions and pilot experience. I called one other pilot a toddler when referring to his paragliding experience. That pilot asked me to explain what I meant after the meeting. I felt a little bad about using the word toddler and have reflected on it for the past several days.

On February 21, 1994, I stood hooked into a paraglider on the north launch of Tiger Mountain. I had flown a small bunny hill, but this was my first high flight. Now, after 13 years of paragliding, I am reflecting on what has brought me to this point in my sport. By the time that I received my Class I rating (equivalent to a P-2) I had logged about 25 hrs of airtime, and within 6 months I had passed my Class II rating with over a hundred flights. I felt that I had mastered my wing and could judge the conditions for flying. I must say that I knew everything I needed to know about whether or not to fly. I flew when others would not, I took chances, I took big collapses, I had many close calls and I gloried in the stories that I could share. Well, over the next 12 years I have gained many more experiences that have helped round me out. I now realize just how little I knew back then. Maybe it is just part of the path that most pilots trod during their flying career. I must say that I fly a little more conservatively these days. I now can recognize bad conditions more often than not, but I still get surprised by Mother Nature once in a while.

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How well do you know your Clouds

Match left column to right column - answers are on the back page

1	Orographic Stratus	A	Usually has a ragged appearance along its upper surface but can have a well defined and flattish base. Usually occurs between 2000' and 6,500'.
2	Stratus	B	Cloud that forms in the low pressure area on the lee side of a mountain if sufficient moisture is present.
3	Stratocumulus	C	Stratus that give rise to precipitation.
4	Fog Stratus	D	This type of cloud forms when a relatively large area of moist air rises gently in a stable atmosphere to a level where condensation will occur.. May cover hundreds of miles.
5	Banner or Cap cloud	E	These clouds are formed when moist air carried on prevailing winds is lifted by an elevated landform, such as a mountain
6	Mammatus Formation	F	It develops at ground level and rises as it is warmed by the sun.
7	Nimbostratus	G	Pendulous globules of cloud that hang from the underside of the anvil of a cumulonimbus.

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Once while I was at a local site waiting for good conditions another pilot showed up and asked why I was not flying. I just said that I was waiting for it to get good. He set up and was getting ready to launch when I walked up to him and said; "it is going to be a short rough ride" and explained why. He did not believe me and launched for a short rodeo ride to the LZ. He soon hiked back up and asked me to explain to him again how I knew it was going to be that rough. Now I had him, he would listen, and I

shared with him what I had learned through many flights on many different days at the site.

Yes, at one time I was a toddler. Then I honed my launching and flying skills and gained many hours of flying experience. I realized no matter how much knowledge and experience I gain it is only a small drop in the bucket of paragliding. I must admit that after all these years I think I am still a toddler. I suppose that it may take a few years for this younger pilot to understand there is so much to learn in this sport.

Application to join the Rainier Paragliding Club

Name: _____ Date: _____

Address: _____

City: _____ State: _____ Zip: _____

Home phone: _____ Cell phone: _____

E-mail: _____

USHPA #: _____ Rating: _____ Exp. Date: _____

Emergency Contact: _____ Phone: _____

Annual dues are from July 1st to June 30th of each year.

\$24 for Individual membership

\$36 for Family membership living at the same address.

Send completed application and payment (payable to Rainier Paragliding Club) to:

Kathy Smith

P.O. Box 13

Cinebar, WA 98533

Quiz answers

1=E, 2=D, 3=A, 4=F, 5=B, 6=G, 7=C

**Penned during the dreary month of
February By Chris King**

**Hey diddle diddle
The cat and the fiddle
This pilot is yearning for the moon
I'm about to die
Not being able to fly
I can hardly wait until June!!!**

Calendar 2007

Apr. 17	Club Meeting
Apr. 20-22	"Spring Fling" campout
May 5	Tiger XC Comp
May 5 & 6	Chelan Beach'N
June 22-24	Bremer Campout
June 17 - 23	Rat Race at Woodrat
June 24 -30	Paragliding Nationals at Lakeview, Oregon
June 30 - July 4	Umpteenth Annual Fes- tival of Free Flight at Lakeview, Oregon
Sept 14-16	Northern Lite Campout
Oct 19-21	Saddle Soar Campout