

*Newsletter of the Skyline Soaring Club for April, 2024*

# SKYLINES

## KELLETT'S LAW ILLUSTRATED

The story about flying weather often being better in the valley than what you see looking out the window east of the Blue Ridge is clearly illustrated by Chris Zaboji's photo in the masthead!!! That's Front Royal on the left side, and the blue ridge under the edge of the cloud.



## NEW ENGLISH LANGUAGE SOARING MAGAZINE

Frauke Elber

The German Soaring magazine SEGELFLIEGEN is now available in the English language under the name SOARING INTERNATIONAL. The above QR code leads you to a free sample edition. This magazine has been around for more than 25 years and I have gotten it from its first edition on.



To subscribe go to

<https://soaring-international.com/download-online-edition/>



## 2023 GLIDER ACCIDENT ANALYSIS

Allison Diaz

Editor's Note: This is the presentation that was supposed to have been given at the 2024 Safety Meeting.

2023 saw a decrease in overall glider accidents, with a total of 11 ( vs 25 accidents in 2022).

Of those 11, one was an instructional flight (Gregory, MI). There was one fatal accident (Wellington, CO), which is still under investigation.

| Event Date | City         | State | Type          | Probable Cause   |
|------------|--------------|-------|---------------|--|
| 2023-10-28 | Elmira       | NY    | SGS 2-33A     | Off-airport landing and impact with soft terrain.                  |
| 2023-09-07 | Giddings     | TX    | Silent 2 Elec | Tail boom structural failure (Preliminary)                         |
| 2023-08-31 | Wellington   | CO    | ASH 26E       | Impact with terrain, unk circumstances (Preliminary)               |
| 2023-07-22 | Wallis       | TX    | Silent 2 Elec | Tail boom structural failure (Preliminary)                         |
| 2023-07-05 | North Plains | OR    | AC-5M         | Wing separation (Preliminary)                                      |
| 2023-06-26 | Williams     | CA    | ASH 26E       | Landed short of runway in sink                                     |
| 2023-06-21 | Gregory      | MI    | LET L-23      | Land out (Preliminary)   |
| 2023-06-03 | Minden       | NV    | LET L-23      | Impact with airport sign following PTT (Preliminary)               |
| 2023-04-15 | Wake Forest  | NC    | SGS 1-26E     | Stall/LOC  |
| 2023-04-02 | Marana       | AZ    | Discus 2B     | Hard, bounced landing in a dust devil.                             |
| 2023-01-20 | Benton       | TN    | PIK 20D       | The pilot's decision to turn toward a mountain ridge in a thermal. |

I'd like to discuss a couple of these accidents in more detail. The first was a PIK 20D that impacted terrain during a ridge flight in Tennessee. The pilot stated that he had been soaring the ridge for about 45 minutes when he came upon two large birds thermalling. As he entered their thermal, the vario indicated an 8-kt climb, and the pilot turned in the same direction that the birds were circling – toward the ridge.

In the turn, the glider entered sink and subsequently descended into the trees. The pilot stated that he thought the glider was higher and/or further away from the ridge than it actually was, or that perhaps the sink he encountered was greater than he anticipated.

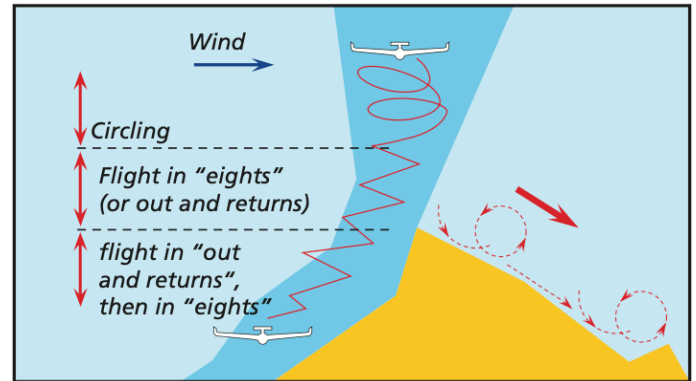


Source: NTSB

The pilot in this accident was not inexperienced; an ATP with several type ratings and over 26,000 hours, 1,500 of which was in gliders. He acknowledged the mistake he made in following the birds in their turn toward the ridge.

There are a lot of reasons that we always make turns away from the ridge when ridge soaring. The

most obvious reason is that wind blowing perpendicular to the ridge is also trying to push the glider toward the terrain. It is very difficult to estimate visually how much room we need to make a 360-degree turn, and to estimate how great the effect of turning downwind will be on the radius of the turn. For that reason, it is recommended that all turns be figure-8's in front of the ridge until well above ridge height.



Source: French Federation of Soaring

Another reason not to turn toward the ridge is that the visual of terrain filling your entire field of view means the loss of the horizon, our largest reference for pitch attitude and coordination. Although I am not an experienced ridge soaring pilot, I can tell you based on a few flights with Piet in QQ that ridge lift can be rowdy, and abrupt changes in wind speed/direction can and will happen. A loss of speed and coordination in close proximity to terrain is a recipe for disaster, which is why it is imperative to maintain an escape route toward lower terrain as well as an appropriate speed to mitigate the effects of gusts.

The second accident I'd like to highlight occurred in Williams, California, in June. The pilot was returning from a 4-hour cross-country and had configured the glider for a normal landing when he experienced significant sink in the traffic pattern. He



Source: NTSB

reported that, about halfway through the base leg, he felt low, and turned directly toward the runway and closed the spoilers, maintaining his approach speed of 60 kts and his selected flap setting (which he stated was a high-lift setting). The glider was still low after turning final, but the pilot felt that once in ground effect, he would easily be able to glide the remaining distance to the runway. Unfortunately, ground effect was negated by continued sink, and the glider contacted a rice paddy just short of the runway threshold, resulting in substantial damage to the forward fuselage/cockpit area.

This accident also involved a highly experienced pilot: another ATP with multiple type ratings and 1,800 hours in gliders – that’s a lot of landings. So how does an accident like this happen?

First, I think it’s appropriate to discuss what the pilot did well – he kept flying the glider. Many accidents have happened and will continue to happen in which the pilot succumbed to the instinctual response to pull up and increase pitch attitude upon observing that the glider was getting low on glide path. This, of course, only compounds the problem, and if continued uncorrected, can result in a stall. Whether that stall is survivable will depend on the glider’s altitude – 10 ft above the ground? You’re probably going to land pretty hard; but 100 ft above the ground, your chance of arriving vertically instead of horizontally significantly increases. More general aviation pilots die as the result of a loss of control in flight than any other single factor. No matter what, keep flying the airplane (glider).

Without conducting a performance analysis of the factors involved in this accident, including the severity of the sink the pilot experienced, it’s difficult to say exactly what may have prevented the accident, but the pilot had a few suggestions in the NTSB Accident Report Form:

*“Be appropriately wary of the possibility of unusual sink.  
Fly a higher approach path with additional speed, if appropriate.*

*Fly pattern to an aim point somewhat down the runway, not to the absolute threshold.”*

Keep in mind that the standard traffic pattern is just a tool that we use to set up for a safe landing, and the nominal pattern is only a starting point. In any situation, fly the pattern you need to fly in order to make it to the runway safely. If the situation warrants, it may mean making adjustments to your “normal” speed, altitude, spoiler setting, aim point, or some combination of these components.

Remember that accidents can happen to anyone at any time, regardless of experience level. Experienced pilots in particular may be susceptible to cognitive biases that are easy to fall into when you’ve done a certain task hundreds, or even thousands, of times. This can manifest as decreased vigilance, taking unnecessary chances, failure to use checklists, etc. It is up to us to mitigate our own biases before they become the kind of error that can lead to an accident.

Let’s have a safe 2024 season!



### SHOW YOUR COLORS!

Recently Jim Perlmutter and Keith Hilton arranged to make a supply of nice patches of the Skyline Soaring club, suitable to sew onto any garment. You can purchase one at the Duty Officer’s desk.



Also, thanks to Phil Jordan, who made the arrangement with Lands End, you can also purchase any garment in the Lands’ End catalog with a small club logo directly embroidered on it. There are two ways to order:



The old fashioned way. Select the items from online or a catalog and call 1-800-587-1541 and give them the logo number—0152832.

Or go to [Custom Work Uniforms & Promotional Products | Lands' End Business](#)

Register, create a password, name, address and credit card number. If one registers then you can select the items you wish and through the prescribed steps, apply the logo 0152832.

### **SMALL WORLD**

Jim Perlmutter

In early February while visiting family in Colorado, I read an all SSC Members email regarding the passing of a former club member along with the obituary. I've been a member of SSC for almost ten years and had never heard the name, Glenn Baumgartner mentioned around the field. Glenn, a 1966 VMI graduate was a career Army Officer and had a second career with SAIC.



Somewhere along the line he had become a glider and power pilot, owned both type aircraft, and apparently had been quite a radio and gadget guy according to some of our current old time members who knew him back then.

For me, the name immediately rang a strong bell in my mind. I had known him some fifty years ago (1967-68) in Vietnam. He was the Executive Officer (XO) and Acting Commander of the 120 man Infantry Company that I was assigned as a Medic with the First Infantry Division (The Big Red One). He was an excellent officer and leader, and was well respected by members of Charlie Company. Had I known that he lived less than ten miles from my house, I for sure would have made contact. One of those chance meetings, missed.

### **MARK YOUR CALENDARS**

Stephanie Zilora

- April 22-27, 2024: 2024 SSA Region 5 North Contest, Perry, SC
- May 3-5, 2024: Merlin Cross-Country Soaring Camp, Richmond, VA
- May 13-19, 2024: 2024 Region 2 Contest, Reedsville, PA
- June 2-8, 2024: 2024 SSA Region 5 South Contest, Cordele, GA
- June 23-28, 2024: SSC Week of Training, Petersburg, WV
- July 22-26, 2024: 46th Women Soaring Pilots Association (WSPA) Seminar, Sunflower Aerodrome, Hutchinson, KS
- August 4-10, 2024: 2024 SSA Region 3 Contest, Elmira, NY
- August 19-23, 2024: Organisation Scientifique et Technique Internationale du Vol à Voile (OSTIV) Congress, Uvalde, TX
- September 16-21, 2024: 2024 Region 4 South, New Castle, VA
- October 24-26, 2024: SSA Convention, Knoxville, TN



### **WEBINARS**

Ralph Vawter

### **Black Forest Soaring Society**

The Black Forest Soaring Society, which is located in Elbert Colorado, has been presenting a series of nine webinars of interest to soaring pilots. In January they started with An Introductory to Cross Country. One of the items they talked about was some planning software called GlidePlan. The tips and ideas were well presented and can really fire you up to want to venture out in a glider. Session two was about Air Data Systems and presented information about Airspeed, Altimeter and Variometers. This was some good nuts and bolts

stuff about the gauges we stare at and rely on, telling how they work and how they work together. Session 3 was about portable gliding computers – XCSOar, SeeYouMobile, ClearNav, Oudies, etc. Again, great stuff, a little too technical at times, but good insight and information. Session four was about Speed to Fly. Session Five was about the Physiological Considerations for Soaring Pilots. They touched on some of the same info that we heard in our Annual Safety Meeting. Session 6 was about Collision Avoidance Technology – FLARM, Transponders; what they can and cannot do. These sessions have all been presented live and attendees were eligible for WINGS credit. The webinars can now be found on YouTube; search for Black Forest Society.

On April 5, the next session (Seven) will be about Model Based Weather Forecasting. They will be using SkySight as a tool for this webinar. Here is the link to sign up for that webinar:

[https://us06web.zoom.us/webinar/register/WN\\_sES33j7vSq6sbm-ZNDdVag#/registration](https://us06web.zoom.us/webinar/register/WN_sES33j7vSq6sbm-ZNDdVag#/registration)

Session 8 will be presented on April 19. The topic will be Flight Tracking. They will cover Satellite based (SPOT, InReach), Smart Phone based, FLARM based, and Transponder based (ADSB-Out). The link to sign up for that webinar is:

[https://us06web.zoom.us/webinar/register/WN\\_32HAtwMiTzOXX8zawrCP9A#/registration](https://us06web.zoom.us/webinar/register/WN_32HAtwMiTzOXX8zawrCP9A#/registration)

Finally the ninth session will cover Online Soaring Contest (OLC) and WeGlide. Their description says “It’s all for fun but if it isn’t on the OLC, it didn’t happen”. Sign up for that webinar at:

[https://us06web.zoom.us/webinar/register/WN\\_b5E6gZGSR4eb5Pf4EPbFZw#/registration](https://us06web.zoom.us/webinar/register/WN_b5E6gZGSR4eb5Pf4EPbFZw#/registration)

Please note that the live portion of these webinars is presented on Friday evenings at 7 pm, Mountain Time. Yes, that means that it will happen here at 9 on a Friday evening for about two hours.

SSA Webinars

The SSA is presenting two webinars about using WeGlide. As you may know, members of the SSA

can get a free account with WeGlide. If you think it is just a site to store your IGC files, think again. There are tools to help you plan flights, connections to friends, badges to motivate you to soar more, tools to analyze your flights, and more. The two webinars will have been presented live by the time this is noted in the club newsletter. You can go to YouTube to see the first webinar. Search for “SSA WeGlide Introduction”. This video is only about one hour and it will give you some motivation to open up an account and start logging your flights.

The second webinar will probably be posted shortly after it’s presentation date of the 28<sup>th</sup> onto YouTube. Don’t have a gliding computer? Get a copy of the SeeYou Navigator onto your smartphone. See you at the airport!

### KEEPING THE BLUE SIDE UP?

Try gliding like Skyliner Mia Anderson!! She was 2nd place in the Primary Division of the Estrella Classic Glider aerobatic competition



at Arizona Soaring in Maricopa, AZ last week.



Day 1 ..2nd place  
Primary known  
Day 2 ...1st place  
Primary Free 1  
Day 3... 3rd place  
Primary Free  
2nd place overall



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