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WaterFlying

MAR/APR 2024

GREENVILLE'S 50th YEAR

A Widgeon is Blessed |
Seaplanes in Chile |



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FEATURES

A Seaplane Fly-In Like No Other

By Jakob McKenney

Outside of Alaska's Lake Hood and a few other spots in Alaska, you won't find a higher concentration of seaplanes in one place than on Moosehead Lake in Greenville, Maine, on the weekend after Labor Day. The International Seaplane Fly-In is to the seaplane community what Sun 'n Fun and EAA's AirVenture are to the Experimental aircraft community. But while these events have grown to become large aviation industry trade shows, Greenville has retained, and become renowned for, its laid-back intimacy and down-home hospitality.

A Storm is Coming

By Burke Mees

Choosing a name for an airplane requires some discernment and in this case there were specific criteria. For example, the name should connect the airplane to the place, and it should be in the local language. While looking through the Aleut Dictionary the author came across the phrase "Slam Agakux," which means "A Storm is Coming." Done. That was it. No question about it.

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COVER: Cover: No matter if you are on floats or wheels, this is the Greenville Seaplane Fly-In you don't want to miss. Photo of downtown Greenville and the cove on Moosehead Lake by Steve McCaughey.

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LIKE NO OTHER



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BLESSING A WIDGEON

Feeling good these days, for lots of good reasons. First, the flying season is well underway. Here in Florida we are fortunate to enjoy water flying year-round, but having the first big event of the year, Sun 'n Fun, signals that spring has arrived and our northern friends can now go out and get wet, too.

We are feeling good that more and more members are brushing up on procedures by watching the SPA/Seaplane Foundation video "Safe Amphibious Gear Operations" (go to <https://seaplanepilotsassociation.org/online-training/>). Doing so will make you more aware of the need for specific, consistent



procedures to prevent gear-down water landings, and watching the video and taking the quiz can get you FAA Wings credit as well.

We feel good that we can bring you the 2024 Seaplane Training Directory, which you received with this issue. We invite you to check it out, show it to your pilot friends who are always saying they'd like to get a seaplane rating, and use it yourself to find a location to do some advanced training or get that multi-sea rating you've been dreaming about. Don't own a seaplane? Use the Training Directory listings to find a school where you can do your FAR 61.58 Flight Review in a seaplane and reignite the passion you felt when you earned your rating.

Feeling good about the contents of this issue of *Water Flying*, too. As you'll read in "SPA in Action," we are

updating SPA's software library to better manage the membership processes and volunteers, as well as the Water Landing Directory app. And we welcome Bob Ziegler as the new director of SPA's all-important Field Director Network. Field Directors are our eyes and ears regionally and locally, and they are our ambassadors spreading the goodwill of SPA and seaplane flying to the seaplane community, the non-flying public, and regulatory agencies.

The "Water Flyers" story on Austral Fjords in this issue shows that seaplanes can and do provide unparalleled access to remote areas, in this case the lakes and fjords of southern Chile. A two-day land trip to a far-away village on an isolated lake can take but two hours in an Austral Fjords seaplane.

The two features in the issue are feel-good special. First, Burke Mees tells a fascinating tale about the naming and blessing of his Grumman Widgeon in a ceremony that takes place in an Aleutian Islands village on a Bering Sea tidal pool that has about 20 residents and has existed for 10,000 years. And in the telling he manages to reflect on some important life lessons that apply to all pilots—in fact, to everyone. We think it is one of Burke's best-ever stories.

The second feature is a look at the 49-year history of the Greenville International Seaplane Fly-In. The word "iconic" hardly describes what this event means to the people of tiny Greenville, Maine, the people who come to enjoy the spectacle, and the many seaplane pilots and owners who return year after year. This year marks the 50th anniversary of the fly-in, and it promises to be one to remember. Plan your trip to Greenville now.

Finally, I'm feeling good because it's a gorgeous day and I'm about to go out and do some water flying in my Super Cub. Yep, feelin' good. Real good.

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SPA SUPPORTS BACKCOUNTRY PROTECTION ACT

SPA has joined AOPA, EAA, the Recreational Aviation Foundation and numerous other aviation organizations in supporting the federal Backcountry Aviation Protection Act being championed by North Carolina Senator Ted Budd.

The bill addresses regulatory issues that can affect pilots using backcountry airstrips and remote waterways. The proposed bill requires the FAA to add exceptions for inspection passes, as well as common training maneuvers including go-arounds, practice approaches, and instrument approaches to the list of maneuvers exempted from the minimum altitude regulation (14 C.F.R. § 91.119). The bill would allow pilots to conduct these necessary maneuvers as part of their training

and safety checks to perform prior to landing on remote strips and waterways. The bill also clarifies that the FAA has the responsibility to prove that none of the six exceptions apply to a given case.

The bill was prompted by a recent NTSB ruling in an FAA enforcement action that contained language that could effectively prohibit inspection passes.

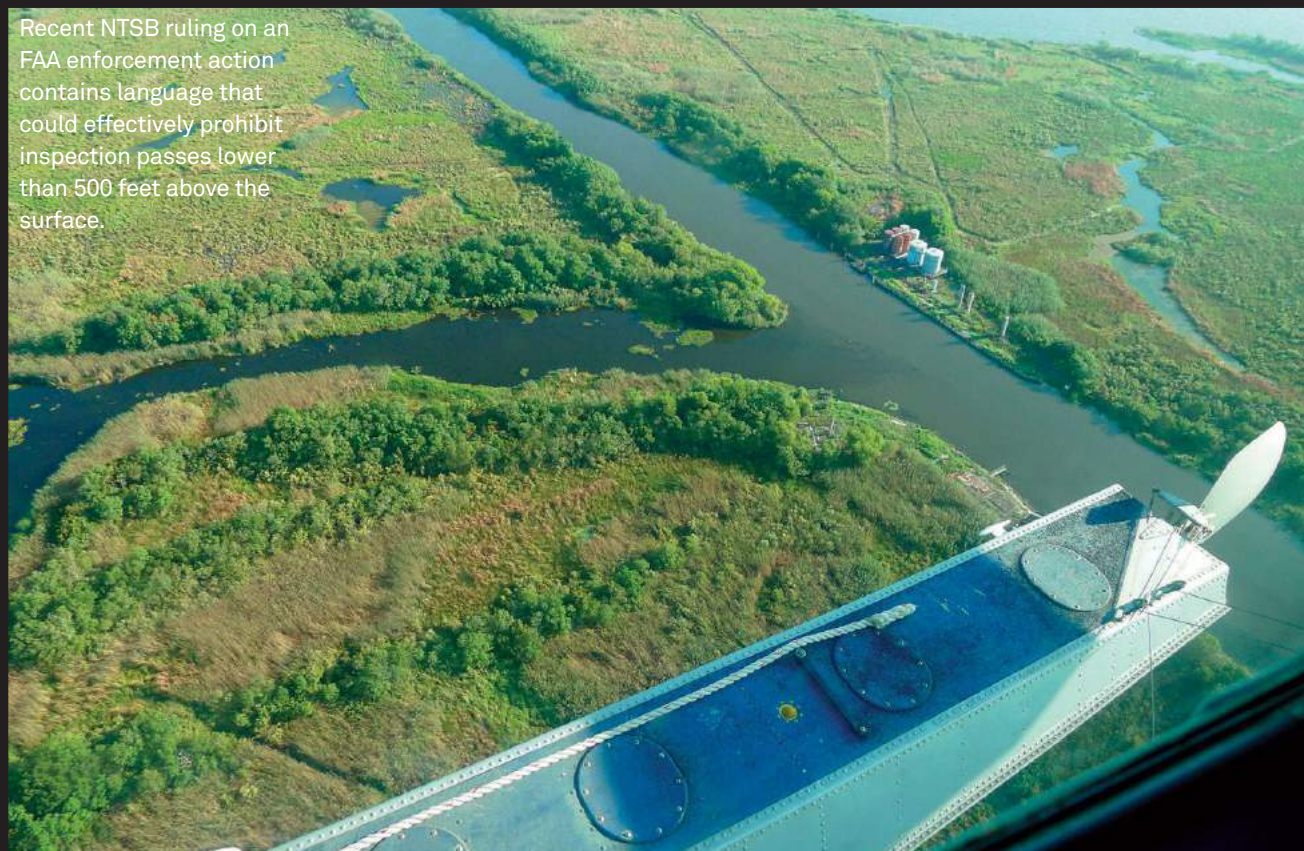
As explained in the FAA's "Off Airport Ops Guide," it is recommended to do at least three inspection passes over an off-airport landing area to determine if it is safe to land. FAA recommends one pass low enough to "roll one tire for a few feet to get a feel for the landing surface" which obviously must be done lower than 500 feet above the ground. However, the FAA's minimum altitude regulation provides for only a few specific exceptions for takeoffs and landings.

Even though an inspection pass is a necessary maneuver to determine if a landing is safe, the FAA's position is that

an inspection pass is not allowed unless a pilot can prove that he or she could have safely landed in a given area. In other words, the FAA requires a pilot to prove a landing area is safe before the pilot is allowed to inspect the area. The ruling could drastically affect operations for any pilot who conducts off-airport landings.

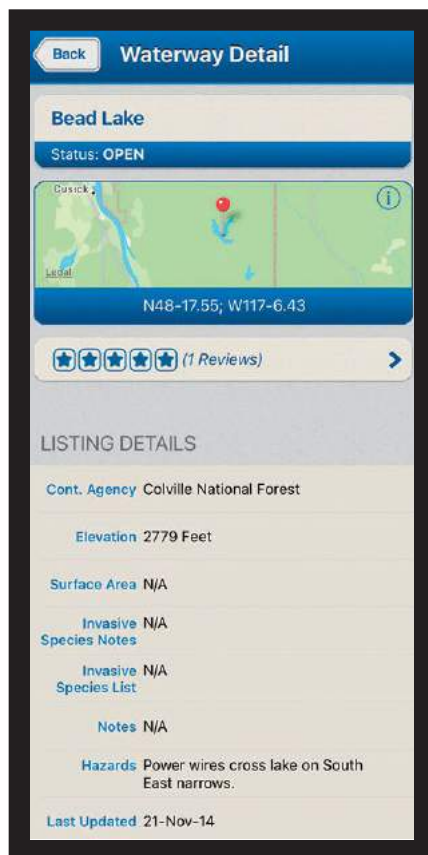
Senator Budd filed an amicus brief addressing several legal issues with the NTSB's ruling. But some of these issues can only be fixed through legislation. "This is a classic case of government overreach," the senator said. "The FAA overstepped in an enforcement action, refuses to admit that it went too far, and has not corrected its interpretation or clarified what the rules are. This could have a negative effect on the safety of off-airport operations and on required training exercises. Much like other recent FAA enforcement action overreaches, it is up to Congress to fix this situation, and that's what the Backcountry Aviation Protection Act intends to do."

Recent NTSB ruling on an FAA enforcement action contains language that could effectively prohibit inspection passes lower than 500 feet above the surface.



UPDATE COMING TO WATER LANDING DIRECTORY

SPA's Water Landing Directory app is now back online after experiencing a lengthy outage in March. Our app team, led by Lindall Baker, has been working on a long-term update to the app that will include a web-based mapping system using Google Earth as its platform. This will allow members to actively flight plan and view seaplane bases, waterways and flight training facilities using Google Earth. Lindall has spent hundreds of hours enhancing the accuracy of the Water Landing Directory data, eliminating problems that occurred in the translation of lat/lon coordinates. He also is adding elevations to waterways where the system lacked this information and is importing the U.S. Geological Survey listing of waterways infected with Aquatic Invasive



Species, which is the most comprehensive catalog of this data.

SEAPLANE WOMEN SCHOLARSHIPS

Two people have been awarded a 2024 Women Making a Splash Scholarship to train for a seaplane rating. Leah Murphy, a professional helicopter pilot, says she is "thrilled to combine her two passions of aviation and aquatics by joining the seaplane community." She will train for her rating at Southern Seaplane in Belle Chasse, Louisiana, which donated the rating to the SPA-administered scholarship program.

Once she has the seaplane rating, Leah, who is an FAA Safety Team representative, plans to hold seminars specifically focused on seaplanes to provide educational resources for aspiring and active seaplane pilots. "These events can serve as a pivotal step towards increasing the number of women seaplane



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Leah Murphy (top) and Stacy Pritts (below) are Women Making a Splash scholarship recipients.



pilots,” she says. “By providing targeted education and resources through these seminars, women interested in pursuing a career or hobby in seaplane piloting can gain the knowledge and support of an aviation activity that they might not otherwise be exposed to.” Leah fully embraces the vision of the Seaplane Pilots Association, dedicated to promoting safe seaplane operations, and is eager to contribute to its mission.

Stacy Pritts, a first-year student at Metropolitan State University of Denver in the Professional Flight Officer program, also has been awarded a Women Making a Splash seaplane scholarship. She will train at Alaska Floats & Skis, which donated the course. Stacy recently retired from the Air Force after 22 years of service and celebrated by spending a year exploring the U.S. with her husband and their Shiba Inu in a 20-foot Airstream. Before being stationed in Colorado, she was assigned to a base

in Anchorage where she earned her Private pilot's certificate soon after her husband became a helicopter pilot.

An avid outdoors enthusiast, Stacy plans to advocate for seaplane operations in Colorado by organizing a virtual 5K fundraiser run. The event will promote and support female floatplane pilots as well as the Seaplane Pilots Association. Funds raised from the run will help fund future seaplane scholarships, safety and education seminars, and efforts to fight Colorado legislation, as it is the only state with a ban on seaplane access to state and federally owned waterways. Stacy said she believes that events such as virtual races, in which anyone can participate from anywhere, will inspire and help increase the women's seaplane community. Get your running shoes ready! ■

'24 SPA AIRVENTURE CORN ROAST

Last year was the first year that we sold out of tickets for the SPA Corn Roast at AirVenture. This was a great testament to the popularity of the event, and it did cause some disenchantment among members who had planned on buying tickets at our booth onsite at AirVenture.

This year we've been sending members reminder emails about the need to purchase 2024 Corn Roast tickets in advance, and to date more than 75 percent of available tickets have been sold. If you are planning to attend the SPA Corn Roast and have not yet purchased your tickets, please call the office at 863-701-7979 or email CSR@seaplanes.org. We do have a firm limit of 700 tickets available to members. ■

NEW ADMINISTRATIVE SOFTWARE BOOSTS COMMUNICATIONS

Thanks to a generous donation from our newest board member, Cliff Maine, the Seaplane Foundation has purchased new volunteer management software. This will allow staff to schedule volunteer times and projects, conduct training programs and provide awards based on volunteer training and service benchmarks. Most importantly it will allow our team to better support the efforts of our Field Directors by providing greater levels of communication.

Bob Ziegler has been appointed the new national coordinator for the Field Director Network. Since Mark Wrasse's

Reserved your tickets for SPA's 2024 AirVenture Corn Roast? Better hurry—they're going fast.



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departure from this position there has been a need to re-establish more regular communication and coordination of these vital volunteers. Our new volunteer software combined with Bob's abundance of passion and enthusiasm to provide leadership and support of field directors make for an exciting opportunity for our organization.

SPA's member management system, Avectra, will no longer be supported by the provider, which is forcing a change to a new system and what we will believe will be a better user experience for SPA members. The new system is Novi, and the goal is to go live with it before AirVenture. SPA's Slade Rosamond has been aggressively working on the 13-week transition process.

NEW SPA BOARD MEMBER

Cliff Maine is the newest member of the Seaplane Pilots Association Board of Directors. As the prior chair of Chicago's Barnes & Thornburg aviation law group, Cliff (retired of counsel)



advised on aviation-related transactions; emergency preparation and response; insurance and risk analysis; litigation; and regulatory supervision. As a pilot, Cliff's lifetime passion for aviation was manifested in everything he did, and he spoke the language of the pilots, mechanics, airlines, entrepreneurs, and business professionals in this specialized industry. Cliff currently serves on the



Cliff Maine

SEAWINGERS

The Seaplane Pilots Association encourages all seaplane pilots to participate in the Seawings program. Participants will receive a special lapel pin recognizing Basic, Advanced, or Masters-level completion.

For detailed information about the Wings program, see https://www.faasafety.gov/documents/WINGS_Manual.pdf. To earn Wings credits, including Seawings, you must have an account at www.faasafety.gov. Be sure that your Wings profile shows you have a seaplane rating.

SPA congratulates the following for their focus on seaplane safety and proficiency as demonstrated by their participation in the Seawings program.

Rebecca Cozad Basic	Bradley Butler Advanced
Jackson Donovan Basic	Robert Claybrook Advanced
Michael Harding Basic	Christopher McKissick Advanced
Mitchell Kehler Basic	Paul Valenstein Master
Joshua Lambert Basic	Rolf Dammrau Master
Joseph Longley Basic	Landen Smith Basic, Advanced
Spencer Morgan Basic	Marvin Williams Basic, Advanced
Russell Williams Basic	Konrad Klein Basic, Advanced, Master

board of the West Michigan Aviation Academy, a high school, dedicated to aviation and stem education. He soloed on his 16th birthday, earned his Private certificate at 17 and now flies a Lindy Award-winning Lake Amphibian.

FLORIDA'S LAKE X CLOSED TO SEAPLANES

Please be aware that Lake X in central Florida is closed to seaplanes even though there is a private seaplane base on the lake. Lake X is privately managed and has long been used to test marine motors. The lake has been the site of numerous world speed and endurance records for boats.

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ICON intends to sell the company.

ICON FILES FOR BANKRUPTCY

ICON Aircraft, manufacturer of the ICON A5 amphibious sport plane, has filed for Chapter 11 bankruptcy protection and intends to pursue a sale of its business under Section 363 of the Bankruptcy Code. The company said it will continue to support A5 customers and operations during the Chapter 11 process.

"The purpose of the Chapter 11 filing is to resolve the Company's financial challenges and position the A5 for success for years to come," said Jerry Meyer, CEO of ICON Aircraft. "We understand that this situation creates a hardship for everyone involved. However, without taking these steps, there is not a viable path forward for the business to do what we do best – build incredible airplanes and support our aircraft owners."

The bankruptcy filing listed ICON as having between 200-299 creditors, assets between \$100 million to \$500 million, and liabilities between \$100 million and \$500 million. The largest unsecured, non-insider creditor is East West Bank in El Monte, California, which has an unsecured claim of \$65 million, according to the filing.

"We believe this process will enable the business to address its current challenges and emerge with new ownership - stronger than ever - and continue building amazing planes with a focus on innovation, safety, and incredible flying experiences," Meyer added.

ICON has produced more than 200 A5s, and last December was awarded Primary Aircraft certification by the FAA, which will enable the company to deliver aircraft to a number of foreign countries that do not recognize LSA certification. In February 2024 ICON announced a 60-pound increase in the A5's max gross weight and a new useful

load of 490 pounds. Existing A5s can get the gross weight increase by retrofitting a new, lighter E-Props four-blade composite prop.

For more information about ICON's Chapter 11 case, including claims information, visit <https://cases.streppo.com/iconaircraft> or call 866-993-1870; international callers should use 949-892-1896. Inquiries can also be sent directly to TeamIconAircraft@streppo.com. For more information about the sale process, interested parties should contact Neil Gupta of SSG Capital Advisors at ngupta@ssgca.com.

AIRCAM FLYOUT TO MAINE

AirCam manufacturer Lockwood Aviation does an admirable job making sure that owners enjoy their unique aircraft by organizing periodic group flyouts to interesting places and events all over the country. The latest? An upcoming trip to Maine's Moosehead Lake and the Greenville International Fly-In.

The AirCam group will convene September 3-8 at The Birches Resort on the western shore of Moosehead Lake near Rockwood, Maine. The Birches has a seaplane ramp and sheltered marina for float-equipped AirCams, as well as 91-octane fuel. Wheeled AirCams can land at the nearby Birches grass strip or at Greenville Municipal Airport (3B1).

Weather permitting, during the week the group will go on day trips to various scenic places in the area including Bar Harbor. Also, AirCam educational seminars will be held during the week. The group will go to the Greenville Fly-In on Friday and Saturday, September 6-7.

An AirCam technician will be on site during the week to handle minor repairs and oil changes. Lockwood can assist owners who want their AirCam ferried to the event.

For more information about the AirCam September trip to Moosehead Lake and to register, contact Rafaella at 863-655-4242 or rafaella@lockwood.aero. The website for the Greenville Fly-In is www.seaplaneflyin.org.



AirCams will convene at The Birches on Maine's Moosehead Lake this September.



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Michael Smith is undertaking a historic flight in his SeaBear.

COUNTERCLOCKWISE AROUND AUSTRALIA

Michael Smith, who flew his Progressive Aerodyne Searey around the world in 2015-2016, is planning another ambitious seaplane flight. This time it will be a counterclockwise journey around Australia to commemorate the 100th anniversary of the first circumnavigation of the continent by airplane in 1924. The original flight was conducted by the new Royal Australian Airforce, flying a Fairey Mk III D seaplane. In April and May 2024 Michael Smith will retrace the historic journey in his SeaBear L72, a twin-engine flying boat that he calls "Southern Sun." The towns and dates of the 1924 flight will be followed as closely as possible to see at how aviation and the towns visited have changed

over the last 100 years. At the same time another group of seaplanes and their pilots, led by David Geers in his Searey "Phoenix" will commemorate the 1924 flight with a clockwise circumnavigation of Australia. For more information about the trip see <https://www.southern-sun.voyage/faaf>.

HARTZELL WARRANTY

Hartzell's Propeller Service Center in Piqua, Ohio, is doubling the warranty period for its work to two years or 2,000 flight hours, whichever occurs first. The service center also offers exchange propellers to operators to keep maintenance downtime to a minimum, and the inventory of props available for exchange has been increased to cover

a wider range of aircraft including the Cessna 208B Caravan and Viking Twin Otter. To schedule a service appointment or inquire about turning in used exchange cores, customers can call 937-778-4201 or complete a contact form at <https://hartzellprop.com/contact/>.

Also, Hartzell Engine Tech has rebranded and launched POWERUP Aircraft Ignition Systems, which it acquired last year. POWERUP products include FAA/PMA approved aircraft magnetos; ignition harnesses; and Slick, Bendix and Continental replacements parts and magneto repair kits. It is now the largest Hartzell Engine Tech operation, which includes Janitrol Aero, Fuelcraft, Plane-Power, Sky-Tec, and AeroForce Turbocharger Systems. ■

AJ CARUSO DIES

Well-known Maine pilot Allyn Caruso died unexpectedly March 7 at his home in Naples, Florida. The Caruso name has long been synonymous with aviation in Maine. The family owns and operates the MAC Air Group, now known as MAC Jets, at the Portland Jetport. Al, or AJ as he was known to his many friends and colleagues, ran the company his father established in 1959 with his wife Allyson and son Travis.

Al's father, Joesph Caruso, and his brother Thomas started Bar Harbor Airways after WWII, operating a float-plane scenic and charter service out of Southwest Harbor. They later moved the base of operations to the Hancock County-Bar Harbor Airport where the company literally took off. At just 19 Al became an airline captain for the company.

Lisa Reese, writing for the Maine Aviation Association, said that "Al was the quintessential Maine pilot. He would be flying dignitaries or rock stars in the company's Hawker Jet one day and could be found in his Super Cub on the ice or at a grass field fly-in the next. He flew the rich and famous all over the world, but he was and will always be just one of us—a pilot who you meet and are always happy to see at any one of the many Maine fly-ins and, of course, at Sun 'n Fun. ■



Allyn Caruso



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YELLOW PERIL CONT.

I don't know but I suspect others are at least a little concerned that you've gone "woke" with the "apology" request from reader Simon Hayes re: the "Yellow Peril" article in the Nov/Dec issue of *Water Flying*. Please tell us you haven't gone "woke." In my opinion his is a ridiculous request and no apology is needed—whatsoever. Enough is enough. Please keep the "woke" politics out of your magazine or cancel my subscription and refund my money. Are we to be criticized or even "cancelled" for colors now? Should we be offended by yellow school busses, yellow fire engines, yellow trainers, yellow housing, yellow clothing? Nobody is owed an apology, especially for something as common sense as a highly visible yellow trainer for aviation students. Keep your overly sensitive politics out of aviation.

Enough!!

Randall Pollock

With regards to the "Yellow Peril" letter to you by Simon Hayes, other than using the title ("Apology") I am glad to see someone not completely roll over and capitulate to ignorance and ridiculous demands (of "retracting and apologizing"), from someone that clearly didn't even read the article (which as you noted in your published response, explained the plane's nickname history). I suspect that is someone who lives their life finding ways to be offended by things that aren't even about them. As Marcus Aurelius said, "reject your sense of injury and the injury itself disappears."

Positive rate, gear up!

Gabriel Silverstein

I appreciated the article on the N3N as my dad flew it in training and was a Hellcat pilot on the Hancock in 1945. I have flown one too. Call me stupid, but the term "yellow peril" was never meant as anything but a reference to the color of the airplane and the inexperienced nature of its pilot. The letter from Simon Hayes made me mad.

Your answer was excellent except for one point. Do NOT apologize to these people! It only encourages them. They will never be satisfied. Stand by your principles and point out the facts as you did. Thank you for your excellent magazine. I had the pleasure to get flight instruction in the Goose with Burke Mees the summer before last and he is an outstanding contributor to your magazine and an excellent instructor.

Dan Harrah

Isn't it ironic that in the same issue in which you responded to a reader who objected to an airplane's colloquial nickname—which was explained in the previous article on the airplane—and offered another meaning to find objection, there appears an article on another airplane with the slogan "Wet Beaver, Happy Beaver?" Does anyone want to make something out of that?

John Betsill

The Seaplane Pilots Association and the Seaplane Foundation are pleased to announce the new Seaplane Safety Program and the first product of the program, Safe Amphibious Gear Operations. A video and a detailed discussion on the topic can be viewed on the:

SPA WEBSITE: SEAPLANEPILOTSASSOCIATION.ORG/ONLINE-TRAINING

THE SEAPLANE FOUNDATION WEBSITE: SEAPLANEFOUNDATION.ORG

This ambitious initiative was made possible by the generous contributions of several seaplane companies, and individuals dedicated to advancing seaplane safety. SPA and the Seaplane Foundation thank them for their support.

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AUSTRAL FJORDS PIONEERS SEAPLANE OPS IN CHILE

Despite a 4,000-mile-long Pacific coastline and many freshwater lakes and fjords, especially in the southern Patagonia region, Chile has but one commercial seaplane operation.

There would be none if it were not for Rodrigo Noriega and his business partner, Francisco Rodriguez. The two founded Austral Fjords in 2021 with a Soloy turbine-powered Cessna T207A on straight PK4000 floats that they imported from Kamloops, British Columbia, and later added a Cessna TU206G on Wipaïre 3450 amphibious floats that Rodrigo had purchased a couple of years before.

Rodrigo and pilot Mario Madrid use the seaplanes for flight tours of the wild Patagonia region, for charters, to service the salmon farming industry in the area, to fly customers to remote fishing lodges in Andes fjords, and to connect otherwise inaccessible lake settlements with civilization. Before Austral Fjords some settlements could be reached only by foot or horseback, and in some cases the journey could take days. In the seaplane the same trip takes about two hours.

Rodrigo was a pilot for renowned conservationists and Patagonia land philanthropists Douglas and Kris Tompkins. Austral Fjord's turbine-powered 207A

is an ex-Tompkins Foundation aircraft. After logging thousands of hours flying around a landscape that in many ways resembles the U.S. Pacific Northwest and Alaska, he teamed up with his friend, Francisco, who did not understand how it was possible that seaplane operations did not exist in Chile with its abundance of water. They saw an opportunity to provide commercial seaplane services, especially to Chile's salmon farming industry, the second largest in the world, which had to rely on boats to move people around, in some cases traveling more than a day each way. They began the slow process of working



Villages on the shores of beautiful and remote Chilean lakes are more accessible thanks to Austral seaplanes.

with government aviation authorities and the Chilean military, which controls the coastline, to develop formal procedures that would allow them to operate on the country's waters.

Literally, they were starting from ground zero. In his research Francisco found little useful historical information about seaplanes in Chile. The country's air force and navy had operated seaplanes beginning in 1919, and he found some photos and information about past individuals who had owned seaplanes including a Terry J. Kohler, who had a Grumman Turbo Goose in Puelo Valley, but he could find nothing about formal operational procedures, much less infrastructure. For example, there were no docks that could accommodate a straight-float seaplane.

Francisco traveled to Seattle to look at seaplanes to launch the company, and he also met with Kenmore Air Harbor's Rob Richey and John Gowey, who reviewed aircraft options and advised him on operations and best practices. "I was impressed and very grateful for the opportunity and kindness of both of them," Francisco says, "and I hope one day to be able to receive them in Chile to thank them for the inspiration and advice."

With the information Francisco and Rodrigo had gathered, they worked their way through the arduous approval process with the Chilean airworthiness authority and the military, and now can land on any suitable body of water in the country. The company is based on Llanquihue lake about 620 miles south of Santiago and only a few miles east of the Pacific coast. In the spring and summer they fly 30 to 35 hours a month, depending on activity in the salmon industry, one of their primary customers.

They can fly during the winter but are at the mercy of spotty meteorological information. Some salmon fisheries have weather stations and now send reports to Austral Fjords. They also own a company that positions fuel for their own seaplanes in remote areas, and hope to provide the same service in the future for other seaplanes enthusiasts.

Francisco continues to work with the country's aviation authorities and the military on procedural and operational issues. "They always ask for new recommendations, because we are the only

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seaplane operators,” Francisco says.

He and Rodrigo have plans to expand Austral Fjords. They are in the process of certifying the 207 for air ambulance work, and look to add a larger turbine seaplane, probably a Cessna 208 Caravan EX, to their fleet. And, in the next two years they hope to begin offering seaplane training. Thanks to the groundwork they have laid in developing government- and military-approved operational procedures, the success they are achieving as a commercial operator, and the prospect of training a new generation of seaplane pilots, Austral Fjords likely is the leading edge of what could be a burgeoning Chilean seaplane community.

For more information see www.australfjords.com. ■



Pilots Rodrigo Noriega and Mario Madrid with the 206



There was no seaplane infrastructure in Chile before Austral Fjords.



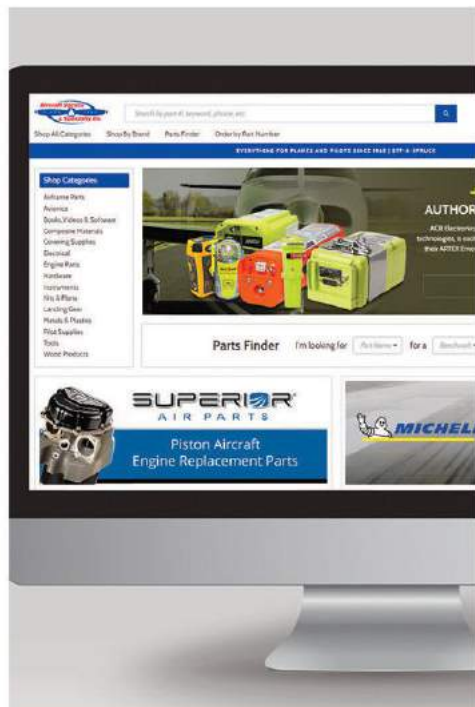
Austral Fjords Soloy turbine-powered Cessna 207 on PK4000 straight floats





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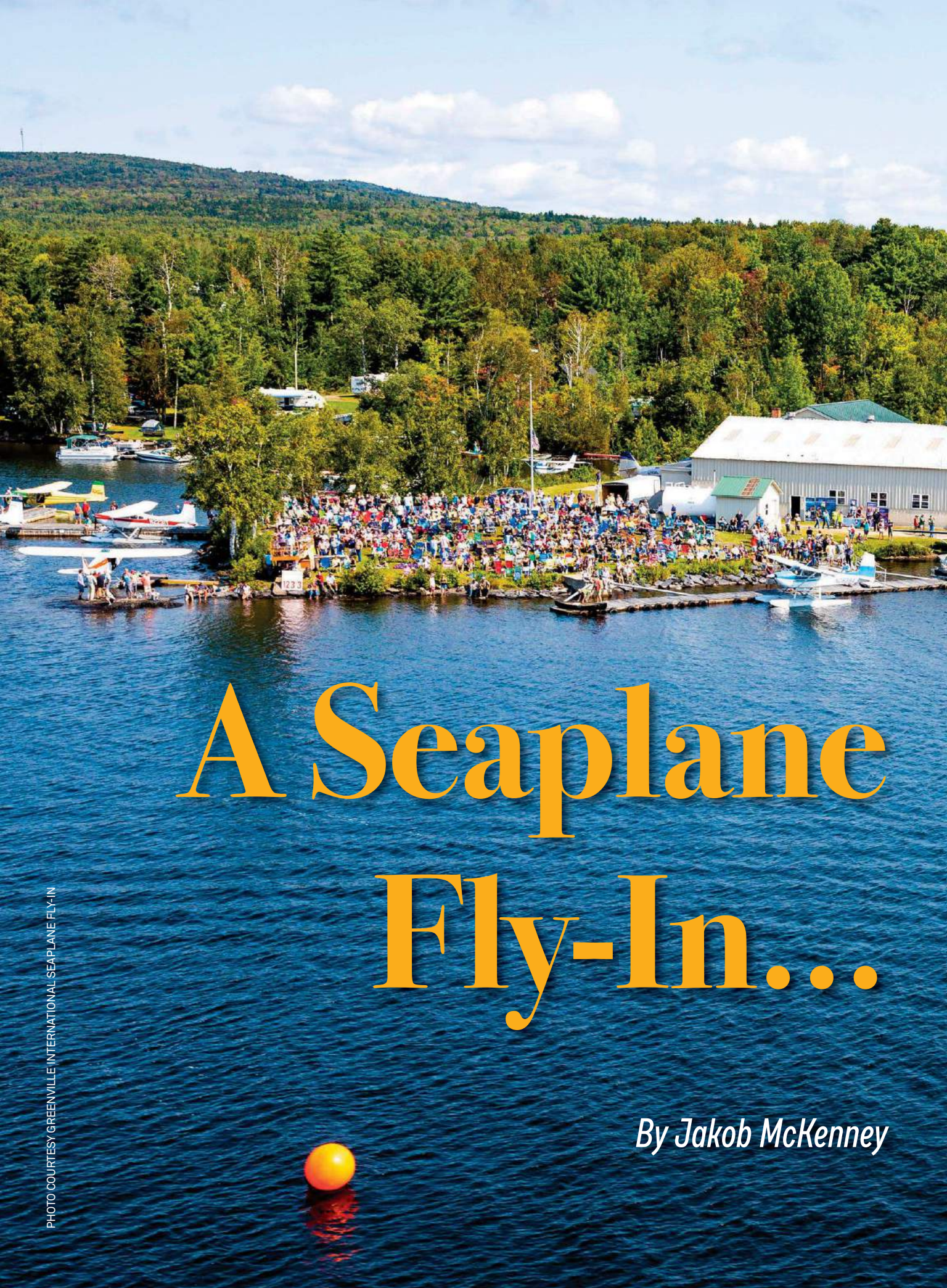
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A Seaplane Fly-In...

By Jakob McKenney



Like No Other

Few things in the wonderful world of water flying feel more like coming home than flying over Indian Hill and first glimpsing Moosehead Lake, nestled between the Longfellow Mountains in west-central Maine. Whether it's for the first time or the fiftieth, it is a sight words can hardly describe. Hunters, hikers, anglers and every kind of outdoor

folk have for centuries treasured the region's largely undeveloped beauty and elegance. So it comes as no surprise that this area of Maine has one of the most prodigious histories of seaplane flying in the lower 48.

Seaplanes have been a fixture at Moosehead Lake—Maine's largest and also the largest mountain lake east of the Mississippi as well as the largest lake in the country that is contained entirely in one state—since the late 1930s. From the 1940s on the lives and livelihoods of the locals in the charmingly quaint outpost town of Greenville have depended on the use of the seaplane. Back in those days the roads reaching the area were sparse and dirt, the moose outnumbered the people and most of the sporting camps and fishing ponds in the region could only be reached via bush plane. Many a dauntless aviator made a liv-

ing hauling everything from loads of plywood strapped to the spreader bars between the floats, lumber strapped atop each float, boats, canoes, metal roofing, machinery parts and everything else that could be safely stowed on or aboard the plane. Bush flying was a dawn-to-dusk, seven-days-a-week ordeal during the summer months.

With all these outstanding pilots in one region, lifelong friendships and friendly rivalries were forged. It was from this life and lifestyle that perhaps the greatest gathering of seaplanes in the world had its inception. Outside of Alaska's Lake Hood and a few other spots in Alaska, you won't find a higher concentration of seaplanes in one place than on Moosehead Lake on the weekend after Labor Day each year. The International Seaplane Fly-In is to the seaplane community what Sun

'n Fun and EAA's AirVenture are to the Experimental aircraft community. But while these events have grown to become large aviation industry trade shows, Greenville has retained, and become renowned for, its laid-back intimacy and down-home hospitality. It's one of the few places left where you can quietly hear waves slapping the sides of pontoons in concert with the calling of loons interspersed with the unmistakable jackhammer noise of seaplane propeller tips hitting the speed of sound.

HUMBLE BEGINNINGS

It's hard to imagine that the founders of the event, all great contributors to the region and exceptional bush pilots

Crowds gather to watch pilots and seaplanes arrive and compete in the contests.

COURTESY GREENVILLE INTERNATIONAL SEAPLANE FLY-IN



The Bush Pilots Canoe Race was first run at the 1979 fly-in.

STEVE MCCAUGHEY



of their era, could have envisioned that their idea would live into its 50th year and become one of the longest-running events in all general aviation. The idea for the Greenville Fly-In began to form in 1972 when the brand-new Seaplane Pilots Association held one of its first gatherings of members on Long Lake in New York's Adirondack Mountains. Two of the attendees were Greenville's Duane Lander and Chip Taylor, who took the idea of a seaplane gathering back to their circle of seaplane friends.

During the winter of 1973 SPA's Dave Quam, Robert Murray and Jay Frey flew to Greenville in Jay's Cessna 206 to meet with leading members of Maine's seaplane community including Telford Allen Jr., a local bush pilot and leader in Greenville's business and civic life who would go on to found Telford Aviation; Dick Folsom, an extraordinary aviator and founder of Folsom's Flying Service; legendary Maine bush pilot Charlie Coe; and Duane and Charles (Chip) Taylor, who ran Squaw Mountain and had been taught to fly by Charlie. They agreed to organize a fly-in the following fall to celebrate the end of the flying season and help bring tourism to the isolated region.

The first Greenville fly-In was supposed to take place the first weekend after Labor Day, but a forecast of bad weather led to rescheduling it to early October, when some 30 aircraft and

their owners converged at the Inland Fisheries and Wildlife hangar in the east cove. Plans were soon in place to hold the event on an annual basis, and the 1975 Fly-In, the first to be held on its current after-Labor-Day weekend, saw 49 registered seaplanes and water bombing, slalom, cross-country, and spot-landing contests. With DeVore/P.K Floats and Aerofab, maker of the Lake Amphibian, both Maine-based, it wasn't hard to get a good contingent of the newest factory demonstrators on display for the weekend.

As the years went by the Fly-In grew. The 1978 event was the first to have all four U.S. float manufacturers at that time represented. The 1979 Fly-In saw the addition of the famed Bush Pilots Canoe Race, a feature wholly unique to Greenville, while 1983 boasted close to 400 registered SPA members and 200 airplanes present including the Smithsonian's Albatross. So crowded were the Folsom's and Maine Fish and Game ramps that most amphibians had to go to the nearby airport. Year after year more and more pilots and enthusiasts flocked to Greenville. In 2000 Greenville entered the new century with a record attendance of more than 5,000 people, more than 150 seaplanes, and around 400 landplanes—quite impressive for a town that has no traffic lights for most of the year.



TIED TO THE TREES

One of the many pilots who made the annual pilgrimage was Augusta, Maine's Gary Norris, who in 2002 flew the Cessna 180 that he and wife had restored into the east cove over downtown Greenville. In those days space was more limited and straight-float aircraft had to be tied to the abundant birch trees that adorned the shoreline around the seaplane base. Gary became an integral member of the International Seaplane Fly-In as a volunteer and competition participant, and he now flies a pristine Cessna A185F on Maine-made P.K 3000s. He joined the Fly-In's Board of Directors and, with fellow Maine seaplane pilots Jim Dunn, Steve Wood and Steve Kaplan, built nine new sea-

plane docks. These docks are available to registrants who purchase a complete package on the Fly-In's website.

Meanwhile, Ellsworth, Maine-based Cessna 180 owner Jeff Hardy, who has attended the event for more than a decade, provided a fuel tank for straight-float aircraft use at the State of Maine Forestry dock across the cove. In 2021 Gary assumed the role of President of the Board, and since taking the helm his focus has been on establishing a group of dedicated, hardworking and passionate volunteers to manage the hundreds of tasks required to make for a successful and growing event. Attendance in 2021 and 2022 was the best in more than a decade.

TIME-HONORED TRADITIONS

Historically, Thursday has been arrival day for the Greenville Fly-In, although the adventurous come earlier to explore what Moosehead Lake has to offer and do some fun flying to the many area lakes and ponds, enjoy the outdoors, and poke



The Fly-In is essentially an annual holiday for Maine's flying Dunn family.

around Greenville's shops and restaurants. The approach path to the Stobie Seaplane Base (52B) is unique in that it passes directly over downtown. All day virtually anything that can fly and float will pass gently over the rooftops of main street businesses and the heads of onlookers, with all eyes upturned to watch a parade ranging from Cubs to Caravans, Huskys to Helios and the occasional Lake Amphibian or SeaBee make the approach to the lake.

It seems as if everyone in town loves seaplanes. Thursday night features a dinner and social at the Lakeside Loft on Moosehead. It's a new event space overlooking the east cove developed by local businessman and aviator Telford Allen III and Dick Brown.

Friday traditionally is the fun-flying day of the week when pilots participate in a poker run to seven lakes across the state. It's organized by longtime Wiscasset, Maine, float pilot and SPA



The lake, the town, the crowd, the competitions—everything is special about the Greenville International Seaplane Fly-In.

STEVE MCCAUGHEY

COURTESY GREENVILLE INTERNATIONAL SEAPLANE FLY-IN

Canoe Race

At about 10:00 a.m. on Fly-In Saturday, following opening ceremonies and a veterans tribute, the unique Bush Pilot's Canoe Race gets underway. Competing aircraft are tied to the dock with pilot and canoe paddler at the ready close by. At the announcer's signal the paddler must leave the dock in the canoe prior to engine start. The seaplane follows a depicted route marked by orange buoys in the cove to a floating dock in the middle while the canoeist takes a direct route. Once they rendezvous and the canoe is tied to the float, the pilot then step-taxi around the marker buoy and returns to the starting dock where the prop must be stopped before pilot and passenger exit the aircraft and untie the canoe. Time stops once the canoe is on the dock.

The sound of a Cessna 180 or 185 in a downwind step-turn with the prop snarling and the waves breaking over the floats is something truly impressive to experience.

In Fly-In tradition the previous year's winner gets to go first in the race. That honor frequently has gone to Tommy Dunn in his cherry-red 1953 Cessna 180, N291DC. He is a fierce competitor and member of the famous—or infamous—Flying Dunns, who call Ellsworth, Maine's Beech Hill Pond home and have dominated the flying competitions at Greenville for many years.

Tommy has been around airplanes his entire life and flies at any chance he gets. He says it's become easier than driving a car. He and sons Dustin and Danny, also pilots, compete together yearly and seldom make a disappointing run. His parents, George and Donna Dunn, have had a seaplane in the front yard of their

home since before the Fly-In got started. George, who celebrated his 90th birthday last year, is a veteran of the USAF having worked engine buildup on the Convair B-36 Peacemaker, the largest bomber ever built. He has made it to every single Fly-In except for one since 1975 and received the Wright Brothers Master Pilot Award in 2014. He passed his knowledge and skills to his children and now four out of the six Dunns—Tommy, Jimmy, Billy and Patricia, as well as cousins Brian and Miles and countless nephews and grandchildren—are pilots. The Fly-In is essentially an annual holiday for the Dunn family.

Gary Norris has also competed in the Bush Pilot Canoe Race many times with both his wife Maureen as well as Brian and Jimmy Dunn paddling for him. Gary emphasizes the importance of communication during the contest, especially if the paddler is a fellow pilot. "As soon as you get in [the airplane] you gotta get that seat down as quick as possible to control the center of gravity," he advises. Signing up for the contest can be done at the table directly behind the announcer's stand scissor lift, and new participants are always encouraged.

Typically there are two classes in the Canoe Race: Class I for experienced pilot and paddler duos, and Class II for beginners and newcomers. The heat of competition lasts until about noontime, when there is a break for around an hour to allow time to visit the vendors and exhibitors in the Fish and Game Hangar. At about this time Telford makes several low passes in the cove aboard his Bell 206 LongRanger with photographers on board to capture the crowd at Stobie Hangar to promote next year's Fly-In.

Chairman Steve Williams. Another experience that has grown into something truly special in recent years is the Friday lunchtime fly-out to nearby Lobster Lake. Just 60 miles to the northeast, Lobster Lake is known for its shallow bays, clear water, and long sandy shorelines. Pilots attending the Fly-In would often gather for informal cookouts on the lake's largest beach in Ogden Cove. In 2020, when the Fly-In could not be held due to the pandemic, many annual attendees who had made their weekend available after Labor Day decided to fly out to Lobster Lake for a get-together. Twenty-two planes made the trek and the tradition caught on.

The 2022 Fly-In was blessed by some of the finest weather ever, and word spread about the beach meetup on Lobster Lake. Aviators and their families and friends from far and wide descended onto the isolated lake and soon 41 seaplanes were wrapped around

the shoreline, bobbing and shifting in the sparkling waters. Photos of the scene evoked images of Alaska's Lake Hood. It was said that as many as 60 aircraft had tied up on the shore throughout the day.

STEAK AND LOBSTER

For the 2024 Fly-In the Board of Directors and Committee members plan to open Stobie Seaplane Base to the public on Friday to visitors interested in checking out exhibitors, and one flying competition may be held to get things started. Everyone will be sure to gather Friday evening for the steak and lobster cookout at Telford's hangar, a tradition that began at the first Fly-In in 1974 when Telford Allen Jr. would fly his Cessna 206 to pick up fresh lobsters from downeast. The banquet, which

includes an open bar for ticketholders, is sponsored by Wipaire Inc.

The International Seaplane Fly-In has become an important event for the company. "I don't think I have ever been to an event that attracts so many passionate seaplane pilots to one area," says Wipaire's Dan Gutz, Product Sales Director for Large Floats. "The Moosehead region is a beautiful area to host this event and it has become one of our favorite shows of the year." Amy Gesch, Wipaire's Piston Aircraft Sales Director, calls the Fly-In "legendary in the seaplane world for good reason. We come to the event as fellow seaplane pilots and enthusiasts, and it's refreshing to spend some time among folks who share the same love for water flying that we do. If you've never been, I can say that you definitely should add it to your seaplane bucket list. Be sure to leave yourself some extra time to explore the beautiful Moosehead Lake area, too."

Saturday is the big day for events. People line the shores and the streets to witness unparalleled skills on the water. Some attendees have been coming for as many as four generations. New to the event in the past couple of years is the Seaplane Parade, which has caught on spectacularly as a way to kick off the day's festivities and introduce attendees to many of the pilots and planes they've seen compete over the years. A dozen or so select aircraft proceed in a racetrack pattern at idle taxi for two circles around the east cove while a brief bio about the pilots and details about their aircraft are concisely conveyed.

Bill Dunn came up with the idea for the parade, and Jim Dunn has implemented it. Jim leads the parade in a stunning 1967 Cessna 150G (150/150) on EDO 1650s. It's one of the finest examples of the type you'll find anywhere, having been featured on a 1967 Cessna Aircraft poster and believed to be one of the first Cessna 150 factory float conversions. Jimmy says his earliest memories are of riding in the baggage compartment of his father's 65-hp, wooden-prop 1941 Taylorcraft watching his big brother, Tommy, learn to fly from the right seat.

Another new activity that has added to the Fly-In in recent years happens

around midday. "We have a thing called Meet the Pilot," says Fly-In President Gary Norris. "We let kids come down to the dock and meet some pilots. Each pilot gives a free ride to someone with a winning ticket. What we're trying to do is get young people in and support aviation and support people who want to start to get involved." Four pilots commandeer the Forestry Service dock and answer questions about seaplane flying and themselves. Each has a bucket with 15 tickets to raffle, with the winner getting the seaplane ride.

FIRST TO GET AIRBORNE

Competitions get underway in the afternoon with the takeoff contest. This popular event sees aircraft separated into classes based upon weight and horsepower, with two aircraft competing side-by-side. In true bush flying spirit the first to clear the water and get airborne is the victor.

Precision and safety of water operations are achieved thanks to veteran

airboss Paul Burke and his skilled temporary tower crew. In the 50-year history of the International Seaplane Fly-In there has never been a serious incident. It's a testament to the communication and cooperation of pilots, volunteers, tower crew, and the valiant efforts of the Civil Air Patrol Cadets who serve as the ramp crew all weekend long, diligently launching and recovering aircraft under the direction of Jessica Woodcock and Jaysen Strange. Longtime Fly-In Director Keith Strange keeps the competitions running in a smooth manner. Together they have made the event the well-run machine it is today.

During the competitions, amphibians that are not involved in upcoming contests are not allowed in or out of the ramp at Stobie. Time between contests allows for arrivals and departures at the ramp, which helps reduce the traffic load for airbosses so they can concentrate on aircraft separation. The takeoff contests with the friendly rivalry and deafening sound of the props and engines normally fill out the remainder of the afternoon.

Things wrap up around 4:00 p.m., giving pilots and volunteers ample time to secure their aircraft and relax before everyone gathers in the hangar to cap off the day's festivities with the awards ban-



The Lobster Lake fly-out on Friday of Fly-In weekend has become a well-attended event.

COURTESY GREENVILLE INTERNATIONAL SEAPLANE FLY-IN

In Memorium

The Greenville Fly-In has become a family reunion of sorts for those who have come year after year. And at the end of the day it's the people, not the airplanes, that make water flying so special. Last year was a difficult one for all of us in the community with the loss of some very dear friends. For 17 years, beginning in 2006, Randy Strebig and Allison Wheaton made the annual trek to Greenville from Angola, Indiana, in their Maule M7 on straight floats. Randy headed up the Indiana Seaplane Pilots Association and was tireless in his efforts to open lakes in his home state to seaplane use, while Allison had instructed for both Jack Brown's Seaplane Base and Kenmore Air for many years. Both were kind-hearted, dedicated, adventurous, generous, compassionate, always ready and willing to lend a hand, and irreplaceable ambassadors of aviation. Over the years they forged lifelong friendships with those in the Maine Seaplane Flying Community and we always looked forward to seeing them come out each September. Sadly, we lost Randy and Allison this past fall. Their one-of-a-kind personalities and companionship will be greatly missed at all future Fly-Ins. The 50th Annual Greenville Fly-In will be dedicated to them with tributes planned during the Friday evening festivities and a moment of silence on Saturday just before the Bush Pilot's Canoe Race begins—an event in which Randy and Allison always excelled.

This year's Fly-In also will be dedicated to the late, great Max Folsom, an icon in the Greenville community and a true bush pilot in every essence of the word. The Folsom family was the first to operate a seaplane service in the Moosehead region. They are known for their decades of hard work and commitment to aviation in northern Maine and their many firsts in the region. Renowned for his flying skills and instinct, Max put more people into the left seat of a seaplane than anybody in the state of Maine. Max was the mastermind behind the only civilian DC-3 to be converted to a floatplane, and he and his father, Dick, were the first pilots to perfect a water bombing technique that is still used today by the Maine Forestry Service to fight forest fires in remote areas. Both Max and Dick were founding members of the first Greenville Fly-In, and Max was heavily involved in organizing the event for many decades.

quiet sponsored by P.K Floats. Plaques are given to competition winners as well as for sportsmanship and the most-unique aircraft of the weekend. Drinks are shared and companionship enjoyed in a setting like no other. Pilots from across the country as well locals and friends new and old salute a weekend well-done.

Sunday is more laid back but equally enjoyable. Crowds are smaller, though a dedicated number of people still venture down to the seaplane base in the morning to watch the last of the competitions and to bid farewell till next year.

For pilots the day begins at 8:00 a.m. with the lakeside Seaplane Pilots Association's breakfast sponsored by Aerocet Floats. If conditions allow, the Spot-Landing Competition begins at around 10:00 a.m. Aircraft depart the cove and enter the standard pattern at

800 feet. On the downwind leg, engine power is reduced to idle. Pilots may use flaps, but not retract them or add power until on the water. The target touchdown area is between and at or beyond two large buoys. No part of the floats may touch the water before the buoys. Each pilot gets one attempt, and the closest to the target area wins.

TAXI SLALOM

If the winds are favorable one last competition takes place—the Taxi Slalom Course. This time the aircraft are divided into classes based upon speed and configuration. The start boat will give the green flag; pilots must navigate the prescribed

course and return. Aircraft must not leave the water, except for boat wakes. Shortest time back to the starting point wins.

Meanwhile, the dedicated group of volunteers are hard at work with site cleanup and facilitating swift and streamlined exits for all visiting aircraft. Soon it comes time to head home and, flying south over Indian Hill with Moosehead Lake receding aft, the feeling is always bittersweet. Before long, however, the mind begins to look forward to what's in store for next year's Fly-In.

One of the most important objectives of the Fly-In is to support Maine aviation. "As an international seaplane organization, we do scholarships and donations to Maine Aeronautics, the Civil Air Patrol cadets and the University of Maine," says Gary Norris. "That's part of our goal—to give back to the aviation community."

With the 50th anniversary Fly-In still on the horizon, all signs point to it being a celebration to remember. The first great gathering of seaplanes remains strong and maintains its tranquility and uniqueness while continuing to inspire and energize those of us with the passion for water flying. ■

Jakob McKenney is a passionate author and commentator with a fervid interest in the water flying world. He has been the announcer for the International Seaplane Fly-In since 2016 as well as the Indiana Seaplane Pilots Association annual splash-in. He is the author of The Glorious DC-3 on Floats: An Unwritten History of the World's Largest Floatplane and has several aviation-related book projects in the works.


FOR MORE INFORMATION

Further information on the 50th Annual International Seaplane Fly-In including NOTAMs, registration and a schedule of events will be published on the event's website: www.seaplanefly-in.org. A directory on where to stay in the Moosehead Lake Region can be found at DestinationMooseheadLake.com or by calling the Moosehead Lake Region Chamber of Commerce at 207-695-2702. Accommodations typically book quickly the closer we get to Fly-In weekend so the sooner you make reservations the better. You can reach the International Seaplane Fly-In directly at info@seaplanefly-in.org and 207-695-6121.



A Storm is Coming

The christening of the Sam Agakux



The Cleveland Volcano in the Islands of Four Mountains erupted the day before this photo was taken.

By Burke Mees

It was a flight that, in other circumstances, might have been completely ordinary. No different than a thousand others that have taken place over the years. In its time it was the

kind of activity that used to be part of everyday life in the Aleutian Islands.

It was a nice summer day with 25 knots of west wind. A layer of clouds bunched up around the terrain but opened up over the ocean. Visibility was unrestricted but there was the misty haze that's characteristic of this time of year. I was at the controls of an old Grumman amphib making the hour-long trip from Dutch Harbor to the village of Nikolski with four passengers. On board were Arnold and Julia Dushkin who live in Nikolski; Father Ioasaph, the local Russian Orthodox priest; and my old friend, Scott Darsney. The cargo included some baggage, boxes of groceries and a few items to be hand-delivered to the village. This scenario had taken place countless times over the years starting in 1948 when Bob Reeve initiated commercial Goose service and ending in 2012 when PenAir retired the airplane.

This flight would have been unremarkable in its time, but the fact is it didn't occur "in its time." In this case the year was 2023, long after the Grumman era had faded into the distant past. The whole thing was an anachronism, but

you wouldn't know that by the people on board. Everyone involved dated back to those former times and they had settled into the old scene as if it had never left.

What was going on here? The airplane in question was a Grumman Widgeon, and it was going to Nikolski for a formal ceremony where it would be given a name and blessed according to Aleutian custom. This was the kind of event that transforms an otherwise ordinary day into something worth writing about. Before describing the events of June 4, I should give some background on what led up to this day and explain how the whole thing came about.

THE BACKGROUND

I had been part of the Aleutian Grumman era in its later years, but that was a long time ago. I have no nostalgia about those times; it was mostly just a daily struggle to mediate the competing demands of safety and practical results in a way that seldom draws the line at

the exact right place. There were times when I could have done a better job of it but in the end it all worked out well enough, and along the way I developed an attachment to the places and the people in that part of the world.

Eventually I did what a lot of seaplane pilots do: I caught one of the waves of opportunity that come along every so often and I rode it into the Big City. We call that "moving into town" or getting a "real job." In other words, I moved to Anchorage to fly wheelplanes, in this case the B737. Whether the work is any more "real" is a matter of dispute and at the time Terry Smith told me, "It's not the end-all be-all of anything, but it's a decent job," which is exactly what it's been.

After the move I stayed involved with the Goose, first as a part-time check airman, then after the airplane's retirement as a freelance aviation mercenary. In the years that followed I built up some savings and avoided some of the more egregious life mistakes, which perhaps explains my recent descent into reckless and irresponsible behavior. What did I do? I abandoned all reason and

The author at the controls of his Widgeon on the flight out to Nikolski in the Aleutians.



bought a 1942 Grumman Widgeon. In my defense I wasn't looking for this. Rather, I was minding my own business and it just came along. Bret Brown was selling the plane and I decided I could make use of it for a while. A Widgeon comes in handy for getting around in Coastal Alaska in general and the Aleutian Islands in particular. Let's just say I have no regrets.

I'd been flying this airplane for a couple years before people started calling my attention to certain obligations of Aleutian tradition. If I was going to keep doing this, I'd have to give the plane a name. From there it goes without saying that it would have to be blessed in a ceremony performed by the Russian Orthodox priest who serves at the Unalaska Cathedral. That's just how things are, and while this is a matter of tradition it's also a matter of practicality. The fact is, the spiritual world is not far removed from this stormy landscape of steaming volcanoes and deep waters.

The matter was settled but I had to make some arrangements. The first task was to decide on a name.

THE NAME

Choosing a name requires some discernment and in this case there were specific criteria. For example, the name should connect the airplane to the place, and I was informed it should be in the local language. It didn't come right away but I figured the right name would present itself with time and I'd know it when I'd see it. That's exactly what happened. While looking through the Aleut Dictionary I came across the phrase "Slam Agakux," which means "A Storm is Coming." Done. That was it. No question about it.

The simple phrase asserts a fact of life that there's always a storm heading our way, a force of nature beyond our control that will arrive in its own time and in its own manner. It's not a big deal. We don't need to be intimidated by it or lose sleep over it, we just have to stay nimble and be poised to meet the storm with the judgment and discretion appropriate to

Arriving Dutch Harbor



the situation. Our response will usually involve decisions that fall short of being perfect—sometimes too aggressive and sometimes too conservative. It's a messy process but we do the best we can.

This is something the coastal seaplane pilot understands, as does the Bering Sea crab fisherman, as does every seafaring Aleut who has paddled kayaks in these waters for the past ten thousand years. An entire outlook is contained in this brief phrase. The inevitability of the coming storm and our need to accommodate ourselves to it is a first principle of Aleutian life, which is really not all

This was the kind
of event that trans-
forms an otherwise
ordinary day into
something worth
writing about.

that different from life anywhere else.

Yes, there was no doubt I had found the correct name, so the next step was to determine where the ceremony would take place. But that also was obvious. The location would have to be the village of Nikolski.

NIKOLSKI

Nikolski is a hundred miles southwest of Dutch Harbor on Umnak Island. It's a beautiful spot situated on a Bering Sea tidal lagoon with a salmon stream that flows through town. When the weather allows for background scenery that's provided by a nearby seven-thousand-foot-tall, glaciated volcano. In the other direction you can sometimes see the conical shapes of the Islands of Four Mountains rising above the distant ocean waters, one of which erupts on a semi-regular basis. At this point about twenty

people live in Nikolski but archaeologists will tell you it's been continuously inhabited for ten thousand years. Its most prominent feature is probably the St. Nicholas Russian Orthodox Church that dates back to the 1800s, although the current structure was built in 1930.

Back when the Goose provided commercial service, Nikolski got two flights a week if the weather was decent. Of course, the weather wasn't always decent, and the flights didn't always happen on the scheduled days. A lot of the time we just got there

when we could. Nikolski has a 3,000-foot gravel runway, but on the days with too much crosswind we could land on an adjacent lake. To be honest, the Grant Aviation King Air that provides the current service is probably more reliable, except they can't land on the lake.

Why did the ceremony have to take place in Nikolski? It just did. The choice was self-evident, even if I couldn't entirely explain why. As for when it would occur, that would be during a trip I was planning in June. The exact day, of course, would be determined by the weather. That's how it works when it comes to making plans in this part of the world. The only thing you know for certain is that a storm is coming.

JUNE

By the time June came around and I got to Dutch Harbor the storm had arrived. A stationary low was hovering in the area producing incessant wind, rain, and ceilings. The weather was mildly inclement but really not all that bad. The ceilings never got too low, the visibility never got too bad, the wind was never too strong. Every day the weather was flyable.

To tell the truth this was perhaps a best-case scenario because this low-grade marine weather had the welcome effect of keeping the fog away, which is the real hazard this time of year. When high pressure puts a lid on stable air over the cool waters of the Bering Sea, that's when we get the thick, persistent, and unpredictable fogs that can shut things down for days on end. These treacherous conditions can persist until a storm

comes along to mix things up and sweep the fog out. That's the summer for you, the time of year when you can find yourself grounded until a storm comes along and improves the weather. In this case the rainy weather was keeping things in the good enough category, and I was grateful for that.

After arriving in Dutch Harbor and getting settled in, it looked like June 4th would be a particularly decent day, so we decided on that. I gathered up all the relevant people and made plans to make the trip to Nikolski, which brings us back to where this story started: flying west over the Bering Sea in a fully-loaded Grumman, just like we used to do.

THE CEREMONY

On arrival at Nikolski the wind was pretty much down the runway, and we parked on the ramp next to the derelict hulk of the Reeve Aleutian DC-3. That airplane had come to grief during a crosswind landing a half-century ago and the gear leg jammed through the wing has been a monument to the hazards of Aleutian aviation ever since.

People from the village arrived on four-wheelers to greet the airplane, just like the old days. There was a certain amount of catching up, after which we called the ceremony to order and got

The Widgeon on the rocky beach at Akutan.



A stiff wind plays with the long beard of Father Ioasaph, the Russian Orthodox priest, as he blesses the Widgeon, newly named *Slam Agakux*.





down to business. I used a Sharpie to write the words *Slam Agakux* on the bow, in the same place where *Spirit of Akutan* or *Spirit of St. George* had been written on the airplanes I used to fly. The priest stood firm with his long beard and vestments blowing sideways in a stiff wind. He held a liturgical book and read the blessing that most closely applied to the present circumstance. The ancient text was presumably modified for an airplane although I couldn't hear all of it with the noise of my jacket hood flapping in the wind. Then the priest circled the airplane, flinging holy water in the wind while the cantor followed behind chanting the melodious prayers of the Eastern Liturgy. It was a beautiful ceremony with that Byzantine-Aleutian character

that you only find in Western Alaska. Afterwards we adjourned to the

18. Tom had a single-pilot air service in the 80s and 90s and was a fixture in these islands. I was almost surprised to hear that, but not really. If you've been involved with the human drama of commercial air service in this part of the world then holding the event at Nikolski makes perfect sense; no further explanation required. I understood this as a matter of instinct and apparently Tom did as well.

The fact is, the spiritual world is not far removed from this stormy landscape of steaming volcanoes and deep waters.

WHAT'S NEXT?

community center where we enjoyed a minor feast. That's when I learned this wasn't the first airplane to be blessed in Nikolski. Years ago a similar ceremony had taken place for Tom Madsen's Beech

Now that the *Slam Agakux* had made a proper debut into Aleutian society, what's next? It didn't take long to answer that question. The next day I dropped in at Akutan, the village that

Cockpit view of Bogoslof Island, which is the tip of an undersea volcano. An eruption in 2017 more than doubled the size of the island.



BURKE MEES

had been the main Goose destination in earlier times. It had been more than a decade since a Grumman had pulled up on the rough cobble beach in front of town, and it was a special event.

On another day I made a flight with a friend whose grandfather flew P40s during the war. We beached the airplane and hiked up to one of the old P40 wrecks that had probably been piloted by someone her grandfather knew.

I took some old friends to some of the unnamed lakes nestled in the mountains of Unalaska Island. These are out-of-the-way places only accessible when the wind is just right, places with dramatic scenery that the life-long locals have never seen.

We made a flight to Bogoslof Island, which is the tip of an undersea volcano that only emerged above the surface in 1796. A recent eruption in 2017 had more than doubled the size of the island since the last time I was out there.

What we did not do was relive any glory days, because there were no glory days. It was just working for a living,

but there was always something special about the places, both then and now.

In the end we succeeded in putting

the *Slam Agakux* to good use and establishing its place in the local landscape.

This of course is just the beginning.

A lonely marker near the abandoned village of Makushin.



BURKE MEES

Now that the airplane has been properly christened there will be more to come.

THE COMING STORM

After spending about ten days in the Islands it was time to go home. Why? Because, of course, a storm was coming. Unlike the modest low pressure that had been lingering in the area this one was serious. If we got out ahead of it we'd have a good VFR window all the way to Anchorage. If we didn't get out, we'd lash the plane to the ramp and spend the next day checking the ropes. I announced to my fellow travelers that it was time to move.

The next morning we awoke to a stiff breeze and a thin cloud layer that foreshadowed things to come. Once we got underway we encountered the usual low ceilings across the broad waters of Unimak Pass. Before long the tailwinds built up to more than 50 knots, which allowed us to bypass the usual Cold Bay fuel pumps and continue nonstop to King Salmon. By the time we arrived the ATIS was advertising 37-knot winds, which were mostly down the runway. Only on the last leg to Anchorage did we clear the effects of the storm and enjoy a smooth, uneventful leg while the weather continued to build behind us.

It had been a good trip and "The Storm" had been a part of it. It determined our schedule and guided our decisions. It kept the fog away, it set the day of our departure and provided tailwinds on the way home. Had we stayed another day it would have kept us on the ground.

A storm isn't necessarily a bad thing. Sometimes it causes problems, sometimes it works to our advantage, but in the absence of proper discernment it can bring about our demise. The Storm is a lot of things, but in the end it is what it is. The only thing that's certain is that it's always out there and heading our way. The words *Slam Agakux* written on the airplane's bow will serve as a reminder of these things. ■


Burke Mees is a Grumman pilot in Alaska and a frequent contributor to Water Flying. He is type-rated in the Grumman Albatross and the Turbine Mallard.



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FEATURED EVENT

July 22-28 - Wisconsin: EAA AirVenture Oshkosh. Annual air show and gathering of aviation enthusiasts held each summer at Wittman Regional Airport in Oshkosh. This is the world's largest general aviation convention with the busiest seaplane base. The AirVenture Seaplane Base (96WI) is located 3.8 miles to the southwest of KOSH. Seaplanes moor in a protected lagoon adjacent to Lake Winnebago, docks are available for unloading, and 100LL is available for refueling. Camping, fresh water, toilets, showers, food, and bus transportation are provided. The EAA AirVenture Seaplane Base is located at 96WI or if you drive, the address is 5202 Streich Lane, Oshkosh, WI 54902.



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MAY 2024

May 4-5 - Alaska: Great Alaska Aviation Gathering, Alaska State Fairgrounds and Palmer Municipal Airport, Palmer. More than 25,000 aviation enthusiasts and professionals attend annually. Over 100 aviation-related vendors (flight schools, parts suppliers, airlines, aircraft manufacturers, and more). Aircraft static displays, free youth aviation activities, aviation career fair, lots of food trucks, Fly Market & Swap Meet, Show & Shine Aircraft Show (show your plane off, registration is free), live music, and beer garden.

May 18 - Virginia: Lake Anna Seaplane Splash-in, Lake Anna. N38-04.590 W077-48.740. Unicom 123.45. This is a social gathering with food, fun, flying, and camping. RSVP before May 8, Bob Woodberry's house, 703-785-1505 or n75196@aol.com. 120 Old Mill Ct. Mineral, VA. Nearest airport LKU; fuel available, 12 miles away, or 7W4, no fuel, 10 miles away.

May 31-June 2 - New York: 52nd Annual Speculator Seaplane Fly-in, Speculator. Town Beach at the

northeast end of Lake Pleasant. Use K09 Piseco's frequency 122.8 for arrivals and departures in the local area. K09 is located just southwest of Lake Pleasant. Lodging available within walking distance of the beach at: Cedarhurst Motor Lodge, 518-548-6064 or Lake Pleasant Lodge 518-548-5253. For further information, email donboardman@yahoo.com.

JUNE 2024

June 7-9 - Michigan: Otsego Lake Splash-in, Gaylord. For over 40 years families and friends come to the park to enjoy seaplane flying, as much as the seaplane pilots do. Lake is located just south of KGLR.

June 8-9 - Washington: Thunder Run 2024. Since 2009, general aviation pilots and emergency responders have been holding drills to simulate what they can do to help in the aftermath of a 8.0 plus magnitude earthquake, followed by a tsunami, on the west coast of the country. Everything learned in those past 11 years of drills will be brought to Thunder Run, a drill planned for June 8 and 9, 2024. That involves about 100 general aviation airplanes, emergency coordinators from California to Canada, and pilots, air traffic controllers, ham radio operators, and others practicing what they will do in the immediate aftermath of such an earthquake. For more information, please visit: <https://www.evac.org/northwest.htm>

June 13-16 - Michigan: Grand Marais Bay Splash-in, Gaylord. Grand Marais Bay is 35 statute miles from the Newberry (Luce County, ERY) airport VOR on the 325 degree radial on the Green Bay Sectional. Use 122.75 Unicom. All traffic landing to the west, use right traffic pattern; landing to the east, use left traffic pattern. Contact Ed Bowen, grandmaraischamber@gmail.com.

June 21-24 - Washington: WSPA Tanglefoot Splash-in, Tanglefoot Seaplane Base (D28), home to Loel and Olson Fenwick. The base has three docks, beach, and ramp space for straight floats and amphibious aircraft. For those on wheels, the Cavanaugh Bay Airstrip (66S) is located next door and is operated by Allen Lieske. Accommodations at both the airstrip and seaplane base include camping with shower and restrooms.

June 22 - Florida: Moon Landing Splash-in. Splash in at the Moon Seaplane Base for food, music, and fun. Contact Dave Hensch to RSVP at FloridaSeaplanes@hotmail.com.

June 22 - Tennessee: Splash-in on Douglas Lake. 882 Lakeshore Drive, Dandridge. Closest airport is KMOR, Morristown, TN. Docking, mooring buoys available at the lake. Join us by land or "sea" for a cookout at the lake from 10am-2pm.

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JULY 2024

July 25 - Wisconsin: SPA Annual Corn Roast, Oshkosh. SPA's Annual Corn Roast at EAA's AirVenture '24 is a sellout every year, and there is a hard limit on the number of attendees we can allow on the Corn Roast property, so be sure to buy your tickets early. Purchased tickets can be picked up at the SPA Booth in Hangar C, or at the front gate of the event.

July 26 - Wisconsin: Wipaire Watermelon Social, Oshkosh. EAA Seaplane Base. Celebrate seaplanes and friendships with food and beer. Pick up your tickets from Wipaire at the airshow.

AUGUST 2024

August 11 - Minnesota: MSPA Pig Roast at Surfside SPB. The Pig Roast is an event that is fun for the whole family, bring your spouse, children, parents and neighbors! This event is a great way to introduce someone new to the world of seaplane flying. There will be live music during the event.

Costello & Hipps will be back this year providing entertainment to round out the day. Admission is included with current MSPA membership. You will be receiving emails to renew if needed or entry tickets prior to the event.

SEPTEMBER 2024

September 5-8 - Maine: Greenville International Seaplane Splash-in. Since 1973. One of the world's largest and oldest continuously held seaplane events. Check the website for Thursday night's dinner/social waterfront location. Friday night lobster/steak dinner at Aeromarine waterfront hangar. Same location for Saturday night banquet. For accommodations contact the Moosehead Lake Region Chamber of Commerce at 207-695-2702 or visit mooseheadlake.org. Book accommodations early. Camping at airport is on a first come/first served basis. Maine SPA field directors are available to answer any questions.

September 6-8 - Wisconsin: Eagle River Seaplane Fly-in. This is a weekend event with contests and



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fly-outs. Room reservation should be made directly with Maple View Resort in Conover, Wisconsin. 715-479-4600. Maple Lake is approximately 4 mi northeast of Eagle River airport. Fuel is available in limited quantity. 122.75 frequency in use on lake.

September 7 - Canada, AB: COPA #165 Annual Seaplane Splash-in. Beaver Lake in northeastern Alberta, 10am. Hot meal and drinks. Sandy beach to park on. Safety boat/shuttle Zodiac available if anyone prefers to moor. Frequency: 123.200 (same as the local airport CYLB). Use caution, forestry helipad base one mile east.

September 7 - Florida: Moon Landing Splash-in. Splash in at the Moon Seaplane Base for food, music, and fun. Contact Dave Hensch to RSVP at FloridaSeaplanes@hotmail.com.

September 20-22 - Minnesota: MSPA Annual Safety Seminar. Twin Cities Sectional Chart. Seaplane, ski-plane, and wheel-plane pilots welcome at the Saturday full-day seminar. Evening banquet on Saturday. Restaurant, marina, fuel, and grass runway at East Gull Lake Airport (9Y2) and hard-surface runway at KBRD, docks, sand beach. Camping at the East Gull Lake Airport available. Accommodations at Madden's on Gull Lake, call 800-642-5363; email reservation@maddens.com. Other questions and event

registration, contact Steve Guetter at 952-484-9457 or www.mnseaplanes.com.

September 21 - New York: Wings and Wheels Seaplane Fly-in. Regional Airport (KPEO). Frequency is 123.45. Seaplanes may arrive Friday afternoon and stay until midday Sunday. There is a ramp for amphibians, docks and a beach for straight floatplanes. Saturday is the main event. Friday: no planned activities, but town ramp and docks are available to seaplanes all weekend. Great little town to explore. Saturday: seaplane contests, seaplane parade, car show, evening banquet. Sunday: departure day.

September 21-22 - Indiana: Indiana Seaplane Pilots Association Splash-in. One of the highlights of the year for the Indiana Seaplane Pilots Association is the annual Pokagan State Park Indiana Seaplane Fly-In held every September.

September 29 - October 2 - Oklahoma: 2024 LakeFest Safety Seminar and Fly-in. Emphasis is on Lake Amphibian safety, knowledge, proficiency, and fun. Every year, nearly 200 Lake fans attend, with as many as fifty Lake aircraft in attendance. We spend four afternoons, beginning with the arrival day, flying and meeting individually with other members. The world's foremost Lake experts lead morning educational seminars.

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Budget

The information in the calendar of events is provided to the Seaplane Pilots Association by volunteers. Notify SPA at csr@seaplanes.org with new or updated information.



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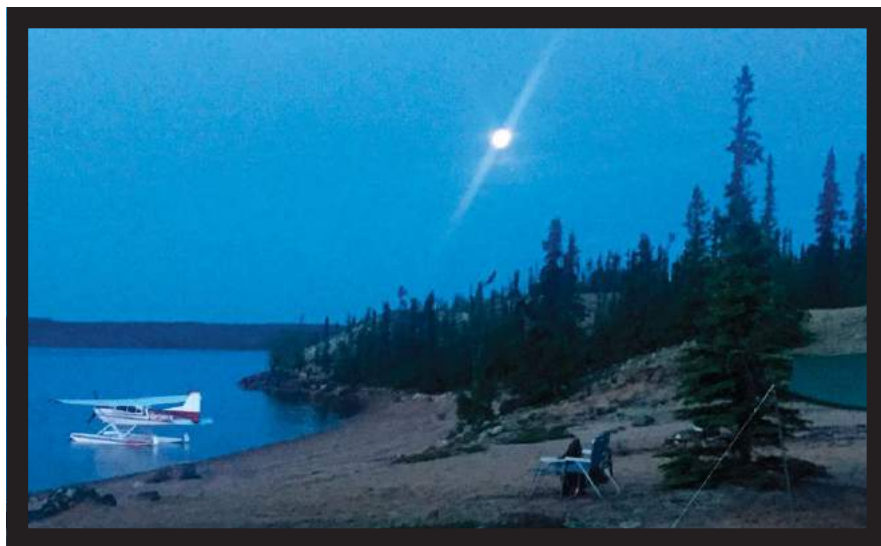
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SNAPSHOTS

This serene photo was taken in the wee hours of the morning at Fish Lake, which is about 100 miles north of Yellowknife in Canada's Northwest Territories, by Bob Kembel on one of his and wife Joanne's camping and flying trips north in their Cessna 185 on Wipline 3700s. They are life members of SPA.



Left: "Hello SPA. I've attached a picture from a few years ago of my intrepid crew on my J3 Cub on straight floats," wrote Neal Almond. "This was on a trip from my lake (3FD9, Altamonte Springs, Florida) to Brown's Seaplane Base. Luke always loved flying in the seaplane. Water, wind, and time with dad—what more could an English Springer Spaniel desire?"

Right: Leisa Lowrey wrote to say that her husband, Dr. Jon Lowrey, cashed in the bid he won for the ICON Flight Experience at the silent auction at SPA's 2023 AirVenture Corn Roast. "Our nephew and he were able to enjoy the ground school and flights at KTPF this past weekend," she said, "and it was fantastic! The instructor, Chris Ahn, was very knowledgeable and quickly tailored the flight portion of the day to match the different experience levels and interests of both pilots. Jon was particularly impressed with the spin resistance demonstration. The day was definitely worth our donation to the SPA! Our thanks go to ICON for offering it for the auction."



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