



ASC president's report

Jason Acker

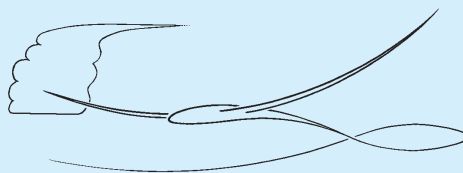
WHILE THE SPRING SOARING SEASON started early for many of our clubs, the unseasonably warm weather quickly helped with the particularly intense forest fire season we saw in 2023 which hampered many of our planned activities and club training programs. On a positive note, I am happy to hear that many of the clubs were able to exceed last year's flight totals and we are seeing solid membership growth from where we were last year. At the end of 2023, we have 161 (18 CAGC, 76 Cu Nim, 56 ESC, 11 LSC) club members, a growth of 9% over 2022.

The Summer and Fall ASC Cowley camps were well attended in 2023 and provided pilots an excellent opportunity to explore the Porcupine Hills, Livingstone Range, and the Cowley Wave. Summer Cowley had 39 registered pilots complete 136 flights (275:24 h) over nine flying days and Fall Cowley had 40 pilots complete 103 flights (156:37 h) over seven flying days. Our decision to have a second towplane available at the camps and our introduction of *TakeUp Slack* in 2022 continued to be of benefit to the camp operations. The Fall camp featured a fine catered Thanksgiving supper at a Cowley village hall, not done recently. I think this should return as a "new" tradition. Thanks go to Sheldon Steinke, George Haeh and Ray Troppmann for organizing the camps this year. Dates for the 2024 Cowley Camps are 27 July - 5 Aug and 5-14 October.

This past year we were able to launch a renewed Alberta Soaring Council Youth Development Program. With funding from our Alberta Gaming Liquor and Cannabis (AGLC) Casino licence we are able to help support the development of youth pilots. In 2024, we will focus our program on four areas: affordability, instructor / coach development, equipment availability and facilities. We are providing up to \$750 in subsidies to seven youth members to support their SAC membership fees, tow fees and glider rental fees. This year, each club received a subsidy equal to 50% of the insurance costs for a two-seat glider to help make that equipment available for youth soaring development activities at the clubs. In addition, we reimbursed clubs for a portion of the annual instructor check flights and Transport Canada instructor rating renewals. Support from the Youth Development Program was also provided to help defer the costs of operating the Cowley camps. In total, clubs have directly received \$12,522 in funding from ASC with an additional \$11,901 going to support Youth Development Program priorities in 2023. We look forward to engaging with the community again next year to support youth soaring development in Alberta!

As outlined in our Treasurer's report, the ASC financials have been stabilized with our securing a → 20

ASCent



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Hot, stable day at Cowley. Then at 2 a cu pops on the Porkies. A glider grids, then ...

The Alberta Soaring Council is an alliance of Alberta soaring clubs supporting the Soaring Association of Canada.

ASCent is the annual journal of the Alberta Soaring Council

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AT Cu Nim, much work had been done around the club and, as pilots arrived, also much anticipation as they looked forward to the days ahead. The result wasn't quite what we all expected...

15 May (call it Day 0)

Task: AAT – Both classes – TPs Claresholm (40 km circle) and Herronton (20 km) with min/nom/max distances being 110.7 / 209.4 / 315.0 km.

It was a promising turnout of 24 pilots from western Canada (with one soul from SOSA) – Cu Nim had never been busier. Layered on this at the end of the week would be a concurrent shorter 3-day scoring to select a Provincial champion.

The contest began following a string of blue days in the mid-20s with an overlying high pressure area that didn't want to move. The entire prairies weather map was empty, featuring only one or two isobars. Given these conditions it was odd to have fairly strong winds from the southeast. The previous day's practice had only a handful of pilots struggling into wind in weak lift to reach the thin cu to the east and south of High River but if you could survive the initial push to get to them the flight became "easy".

Today the forecast was warmer, 26C, and dryer, with the same SE wind. A relatively short task was called as the potential for soaring was only marginal by mid-afternoon in an empty blue sky. Twenty pilots got launched in 50 minutes by the Cu Nim and ESC Pawnees and the ASC Scout, with the only launch excitement being Roy's Open Cirrus's gear collapsing on the start of the roll. FAI then Club classes got started about 2:30 to 3:00. It was soon clear that progress

south on the first leg was very marginal, and for safety the Club class was cancelled in the air with most of them in a gaggle near Black Diamond. Four landouts were soon called in, one even by our expert, Chris Gough. Then the remaining flock of 15 surrendered and came back to the airfield.

Only two pilots were able to go more than 20 km, and the scored distances were so low the score sheet recorded distances in 1/100s of a kilometre! So it was certainly not an official day with no one flying the 50 km minimum. Rob Frith needs to frame his Canadian record low competition distance!

Martin Dennis, KT on Day 0

Off tow, the house thermal got me to 7500 ft (3800 agl) but with a good drift to the north. I ventured out to test the conditions but then found myself back over the airfield below circuit height. While slowly climbing back up, the FAI class started with a flurry of white fibreglass flashes streaking across the line. This day will be a challenge, lift below 5000 was weak and it was difficult to get above that so there was not much of a soaring margin to use.

Reaching 7000 I headed out, crossing the start line at 6500 a second time. Heading out a bit east of the course line, bumping lift helped me maintain altitude, but the drift has my track made good going 180° to the course line!

While I was checking my watch and evaluating my 'progress', Team Branko in the DG1000 whizzed by for home. Things looking bleak, my dreams of 100 km/h flights will have to wait. I will return to fight another day, and accept my 8.23 km scored distance.

2023 WESTERN CANADIAN SOARING CHAMPIONSHIPS																		
					Day 0 (15 May)				Day 1 (19 May)				Day2 (21 May)					
CLUB CLASS					2.5 hour AAT				3.0 hour AAT				3.5 hour AAT				total	
					pos	kph	km	pts	pos	kph	km	pts	pos	kph	km	pts	pts	
1	Dragan Zubovic	D2	ASW-19	Vancouver	103.1	1	–	0.48	0	5	84.1	252.2	t 823	1	73.6	264.2	938	1761
2	Pavan Kumar	57	DG-400	ESC	108.7	1	–	2.8	0	7	83.4	269.4	734	2	76.5	358.2	923	1657
3	Roy Eichendorf	HV	O. Cirrus	Pr. Albert	102.0	2	dnf	0	0	6	84.5	279.1	a 820	6	68.5	241.1	a 800	1620
4	Ben Hornett	SO	LS-4	Cu Nim	105.3	1	–	11.22	0	3	89.1	267.4	t 881	7	56.1	275.2	661	1542
5	Sasha Pejic	XS	Jantar	Cu Nim	101.0	1	–	6.12	0	9	73.6	220.8	t 662	4	67.3	261.5	865	1527
6	Jay Allardyce	DX	ASW-19	Winnipeg	103.1	1	–	4.73	0	1	93.5	280.5	t 993	9	–	214.7	362	1355
7	Kelvin Cole	FBO	Jantar	ESC	101.0	2	dnf	0	0	8	74.2	245.7	686	8	–	225.7	388	1074
8	Team 4E	4E	Cirrus	Cu Nim	100.0	2	dnf	0	0	13	–	90.7	c 128	3	69.6	243.6	910	1038
9	James Swank	GW	Ka6E	Vancouver	84.7	2	dnf	0	s 0	12	–	92.2	154	5	55.2	224.4	843	997
10	Ryan Wood	HG	Libelle	Saskatoon	98.0	1	–	15.8	0	2	89.2	301.9	a 981	11	–	2.2	4	985
11	Tyler Paradis	TP	L-33 Solo	ESC	84.7	2	dnf	0	0	4	69.9	234.1	842	10	–	22.8	a 47	889
12	Rob Frith	PP	PIK-20E	Pt. Alberni	105.3	1	–	0.20	0	10	72.2	216.6	t 596	12	dnf	0.0	0	596
13	Mel Paradis	DW	LS-4	ESC	105.3	1	–	0.34	0	11	70.1	251.9	559	12	dns	0.0	0	559
FAI CLASS					3 hour AAT				3 hour AAT				3.0 hour AAT				total	
					pos	kph	km	pts	pos	kph	km	pts	pos	kph	km	pts	pts	
1	Chris Gough	99	Ventus b	Cu Nim	111.2	1	–	16.35	0	1	114.2	368.2	1000	2	82.8	275.9	532	1532
2	Patrick McMahon	EH	LS-6b	Cu Nim	111.2	1	–	4.44	0	5	102.8	382.9	820	1	91.5	290.1	556	1376
3	Martin Dennis	KT	ASH-26E	Cdn Rock	115.6	1	–	8.23	0	4	108.5	338.6	845	3	–	201.1	316	1161
4	Predrag Kupcevic	IDM	304CZ	SOSA	106.7	1	–	18.04	0	3	101.9	331.9	873	5	–	80.9	137	1010
5	Team Ray	WRT	DG1000	ESC	111.9	1	–	3.75	0	7	95.2	352.1	690	4	–	146.4	237	927
6	Team Branko	NIM	DG1000	Cu Nim	111.9	1	–	21.62	s 0	2	108.1	324.3	t 893	7	–	10.36	17	910
7	Bryan Swansburg	FB	Ventus CM	Pt. Alberni	117.0	1	–	25.02	0	6	104.5	359.2	766	9	dnf	0.0	0	766
8	Sergey Skobkarev	EB	ASW-20	Vancouver	109.5	1	–	18.05	0	8	91.7	316.7	667	9	dnf	0.0	0	667
9	Gary Hill	RD	ASW-20F	ESC	109.5	2	–	0.0	s 0	9	87.9	263.8	t 607	8	–	2.4	4	611
10	George Haeh	GH	ASW-27	Lethbridge	113.9	2	dnf	0.0	0	10	0	91.5	93	9	dns	0	0	93
11	Team ZH	ZH	Duo Discus	Cu Nim	107.5	2	dnf	0	0	11	dnf	0	0	6	–	43.1	72	72
Penalty codes: t = < min time s = start error f = finish error a = airspace c = TP cylinder missed dnf = did not fly dns = did not start																		

Pizzas all around for the evening crowd, and fine beer from a Black Diamond brewery (all other brands declared “swill”).

16 May, day cancelled

No contest. Overnight the air mass changed and the wind was right out of the north, bringing with it very thick smelly brown smoke from the forest fires burning in central and northern Alberta. It was totally IFR as the photo on the previous page shows; you could just barely see Cu Nim's north hill under the downwind leg of 07.

17 May, day cancelled

Thick smoke persisted, though the wind became light. No task possible, we hope for tomorrow. The evening meal was build-it-yourself tacos. Yum.

18 May, Day 1!

Task: AAT – both classes – TPs Parkland (20 km circle) and Herronton (15 km) with min/nominal/max distances of 105.4 / 160.5 / 219.1 km.

Still smoke at the pilots meeting but a bit thinner with the possibility of afternoon improvement, but still blue with 2-3 kt lift maybe. A small task was called and the fleet gridded in hope and to give pilots a job. The forecast for the remaining three days look a lot better.

Chris Gough went for a sniff again at 1330 and reported some thermals but judged the visibility still too poor for safe flight, and he cancelled the task. Entertainment tonight will be bratwurst and beer at the aforementioned fine brewery.

19 May, Day 1 for real

Task: 3 hr AAT – FAI class: Black Diamond start, TPs Longview (5 km circle), Champion (20 km), Standoff (35 km) with min/nom/max distances of 245.9 / 338.9 / 439.0 km.

Task: 3 hr AAT – Club class: Cu Nim start, TPs Longview (5 km) Kirkaldy (25 km) and Ft Macleod (30 km) with min/nom/max distances of 199.1 / 284.9 / 384.2 km.

There was blue sky to be seen above the thinning smoke. The forecast called for a 28C high with a large surface inversion to delay lift until 25C. Some towering cu forecast with 12,500 foot bases and possible scattered showers.

Launches began at 1215 to the west. Simon Youens was towing in the Scout and found that the density altitude was resulting in initial low tows over the unlandable sandpit and trees, so the Scout got parked. The two Pawnees were reduced to one for a short while for a refueling problem so the entire launch took 1:45 hr – much too long. The Club class didn't start until 1415.

It turned out to be a very good day having +100 km/h finishes in FAI class, with Chris well ahead in his speed. Jay Allardyce was first in Club but would have been beaten by a few points by Ryan Wood in his Libelle had he not lost 19 points for two minor airspace sins. Pilots reported that the smoke layer cleared at about 11,000 feet.

20 May, day cancelled

Task: Same both classes, 3.5 hr Club, 3 hr FAI: Hartell start, TPs Nobleford (20 km circle), Herronton (15 km), Claresholm (30 km) with min/nom/max distances of 240.9 / 361.8 / 487.8 km.

The soaring forecast was a bit better than yesterday with an earlier start to convection provided the smoke stayed away. The visibility at the 10 am pilots meeting was sort of okay as long as it improved by the noon launch time. It didn't, and the shorter B task was called in hope. Finally, the day was cancelled at 2 pm.

21 May, Day 2

Task: Same both classes, 3.5 hr Club, 3 hr FAI: Hartell start, TPs Granum (20 km circle), Herronton (15 km), Claresholm (30 km) with min/nom/max distances of 218.0 / 339.7 / 465.8 km.

It was the final day, and it looked like it would be a good one (one could see through the air). The weather forecast was much like the previous day but with a greater chance of overdevelopment, and the task was moved more away from the east.

What developed was a fairly rapid spreadout of cloud from the mountains beginning by noon giving significant shade down the legs. Launches started with the Club class, so they got away southeastwards before the soaring got really difficult resulting in 9 of the 13 finishing or having a decent distance. The day's difficulty was in evidence with the winning speed being a low 73.6 km/h. The starting time was too late for the FAI class with only two of the nine on course finishing, and Jay had an unexpected and rare land-out. And that was the contest.

The evening get together finished off with another of Denise Vanderkooi's famous pig roasts with other catered side dishes. ❖



Denise in her fashionable garbage bag and our caterer disassemble the pig for the evening feast.



How did this contest get going?

INTEREST IN CONTEST FLYING has been on the rise among Alberta pilots. The phenomenal weather and exceptional organization of the 2022 Nationals at ESC piqued the interest of pilots across Canada. For this contest season, Contest Manager Chris Gough found Cu Nim an interested host, but he was hoping for more than a weekend provincial contest. With contest support from SAC, and interest from pilots between Ontario and British Columbia, plans were set in motion to revive the “Western Interprovincial Soaring Championship” which had only been contested once in Claresholm way back in 1989. Our Western Canadian Soaring Contest (WCSC) would be a 7-day contest, booked for 15-21 May. But in order to support novice, and more local soaring pilots, organizers planned to run the planned Alberta Provincial Soaring Championships (APSC) through the final weekend of the week of racing. This would define the “Western Showdown”, and support pilots of varied experience.

A lot of work goes into making a club ready for a contest – facilities, social events, supplies. For example, Cu Nim had

a tie-down line at least 30 years old, but it could only accommodate about six gliders. At last year’s Nationals in Edmonton, almost all pilots wanted to tie down their gliders so we decided to create some more. The area east of the clubhouse had previously been a bit of a dumping ground. We had plenty of room to make a tiedown line there, and it would not interfere with the existing one. Harry Koehler and Chris Gough worked to get the new lines in before the contest and they were both well used.

We found we may even want to create some more facilities for a future contest. Maybe the “Western Showdown” will evolve Alberta gliding contests from a weekend affair to a week-long event, with a weekend option, and an especially compelling story into the final day of racing.

Had the weather cooperated, competition would have developed within the FAI and Club classes for the WCSC with a new contest starting in the final days, with all pilots competing for four championships into the final day. As you have read in this issue, all of the racing took place during the final weekend, resulting in WCSC and APSC results mirroring each other. In future years, this may be a unique



Philippe Erdmer

way to maximize the appeal of sailplane racing in Alberta, supporting novice pilots with contest mentoring through a WCSC, then taking control for the APSC. Thank you to Chris and his organizing team for a great event, and the improvements at Cu Nim the contest compelled that has built our capacity to host higher profile events. Thanks also to the volunteers and racers for their contributions to the very best of soaring in Canada!

Patrick McMahon Cu Nim President



Patrick McMahon

“We should fly down...”

Ray Troppmann

&

Michael Carson

“WE SHOULD FLY DOWN to the Canadian Western Soaring Championships”. Tyler Paradis throws that out in conversation while he’s helping reposition the DG fuselage in the shop two months prior to the event.

Well strangely enough, I had thought the same to myself but also thought it would be too big a task to take on. A week later I was invited to a new ESC Slack channel called the *DG-records-team*, where some interesting dual Canadian records were being discussed. One was the Multiplace 3TP distance record which was actually unclaimed to date. In the back of my mind, I was wondering if a flight to Cu Nim from Chipman could qualify and found that it could. Now I was getting more serious about flying a dual down to Cu Nim for the Western Showdown.

After getting approval to enter the ESC DG1000 in the WCSC as a dual team, I put out some feelers to see who might want to attempt the flight down to Cu Nim and then fly in the contest. Two pilots responded for the flight to Cu Nim, Clayton Barton and Michael Carson. Between the two of them, it was decided that Michael would join me in the flight.

I was convinced it was a good plan, we would pick the best flying day up to three days prior to the event and try the flight. Time to start thinking about logistics. My wife Lauren committed to be my retrieve crew at the contest and I thought she could also be our crew for the flight down. Well, it was two and half weeks prior to the event when I mentioned the plan to Lauren. I should have involved her from the beginning because she was unavailable for the three days prior to the contest. I wasn’t sure now how we were going to do this logistically and was about ready to give up on the idea. The next Saturday morning at the club I thought of a couple of people I could ask. The first person I asked, Trevor Finney, volunteered with excitement. He would follow us down with the trailer and then bring us back to Edmonton the same day. Logistics done – we all needed to get back home, me to drive the motorhome back to Cu Nim for the contest.

Now we were watching the weather and picking possible tasks. The 10-day forecast was not looking good, but then comes the 5-day forecast, which was looking more promising with good weather for Friday, 12 May. On 10 May the forecast is looking very promising for a 12 May flight – the best of the three days prior to the contest. We decided we were going, and on the morning of 12 May Michael and I carpooled to Chipman for the flight. The day wasn’t looking strong so we decided to pick the shortest

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AT THE ASC AGM awards presentation, Jason Acker mentioned that the Boomerang Trophy (a flight to another club and back) went unclaimed yet again. Honestly, I had no idea what the trophy was or how to get it, but Jason exuded a certain type of disappointment with this announcement, and that got me curious at a time I was thinking about my 2023 soaring goals. I only got licensed in August last year, and didn’t get in nearly enough flying.

My plan was simple. I got Condor and started learning XC-Soar through flying the Proving Grounds tasks as a part of the weekly competition throughout winter. I wanted to be competent in task flying, had my eye on some of the Chipman Proving Grounds triangles, and was planning to finish my Bronze Badge, do what I could of my Silver legs, and get fully qualified in cross-country flying by the end of 2023. I took Jason’s word as a call to action and sent a message a few days later to Tyler, to run a crazy idea past him. Get my Silver 50 (and maybe even Gold and/or Diamond 300) on a declared 300 km flight from Chipman down to Innisfail, claiming the Boomerang Trophy in the process.

Tyler’s response was inviting me to the recently started Slack channels *#boomerang* and *#dg-records-team*. Apparently, he had pitched a nearly identical idea to Ray a few days earlier but instead of Innisfail, the goal was Cu Nim. Over the following months there were plenty of messages about the logistics, the overall feasibility of the flight. As the date approached and check flights were taking place, things got more serious and all I had to really do was guarantee Ray that I could make Friday, Saturday, or Sunday work allowing us to pick the best day in that window.

Friday would be our day and on Tuesday night we had a more formal discussion to talk about the actual planned flight, our roles, and sorted out the remaining logistics. We were expecting 3-5 kt thermals and a day that would last up to 5 hours. A few quick calculations and I knew we would be cutting it close, but you don’t know unless you try and my worse case scenario was that the flight would easily count towards my dual Bronze Badge cross-country exercises, so I didn’t have anything to really lose.

Friday morning came, Ray picked me up and we headed to Chipman. Preparations were a bit chaotic since the glider was going to be staying at Cu Nim regardless of our outcome, so we needed to pack not only for a retrieve, but for the week of Western Canadians and Provincials. We got all of that finished and were ready to go by noon. We launched just before 1 pm, connected into some reasonable thermals, crossed the start line,

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task for our flight. We met with OO Bruce Friesen to discuss our intent and task to verify that it would be a valid record task for the dual 3TP distance.

Our day started at 13:00, later than we'd hoped as time was going to be a factor, with *Skysight* predicting that the day would end quickly around 18:00. We released into a thermal, climbed to a 6500 cloudbase and shot through the start line over Chipman towards our turn point straight south at Shouldice, 335 km away. From there we could go west around the Calgary airspace. Just south of Tofield, Tyler in AVL and Clayton in PCK passed us at 6500 feet as they were flying the towplanes to Cu Nim for the contest.

Cloudbase was lower than predicted but we had some good cloud streets enroute into a 12 kt headwind down to Stettler. The further south we got the higher the cloudbase, but that also came with more blue sky. We got low twice on our way to our turnpoint – we had our landout options picked. In both cases we were able to find thermals to bring us back to cloudbase again. The further we flew south, the more the wind became a crosswind from the east, which was to our favour.

After making our TP, we then headed west for Cu Nim, only 85 km to go with a tailwind. We had bigger blue holes but still had some strong thermals and the highest cloudbase of the day. After fueling up on a couple of those, we had our final glide for Cu Nim and then flew alongside the Calgary airspace until we were below 8000 feet. Seeing Cu Nim in the distance and having final glide was a great feeling. We crossed the finish line at 5500 feet.

After the radio call for a left-hand circuit for runway 07, Chris Gough responds, "WRT from Chipman?" "Yes, from Chipman." we reply. "Congratulations", he says and then meets us on the runway after we land to download the .igc file. Shortly after landing, both Michael's and my phone were getting messages with congratulations from our colleagues in Chipman. They had been tracking our flight on the ESC OGN as far as Camrose and picked us up again once we were in range of the Cu Nim OGN, apparently with a cheer! At 5.5 hours over 430 km it was no speed record by any means! I thought that's how long it would take to drive from Chipman down to Cu Nim. We now have the Multiplace 3TP distance record, officially 419.8 km.

It was a great feeling taking off from one airport and making the destination in a glider. We enjoyed a cool one with the Cu Nim members while waiting for Trevor to arrive to give us our ride back to Edmonton. ❖

and headed south. Around Tofield we met up with Tyler in ESC's Pawnee (AVL) and Clayton in ASC's Scout (PCK) on the same flight plan as us. As they headed south to go find some gas, they reported some good cloud streets in the direction we were going and wished us luck. The day was going just as we planned – how many of my Condor flights had gone – climb up near cloudbase and head for the next good-looking cloud.

Just south of Drumheller we started to get low. As we passed through 1500 ft agl we were scraping around and discussing fields to land in and were in and out of +/- a knot. Ray worked hard to regain 500 feet then headed to a better cloud where we found 6 kts and got back to the 9000 foot cloudbase. Off we went to our turn point and found dwindling options on our way west. Our *XCSoar* final glide bars were only a few thousand feet below final glide and we hopped from cloud to cloud in reasonably good lift. In our final thermal I heard the familiar sound from Ray's phone that we hit final glide, but my phone was still showing nearly 1000 feet to go. Being a newer pilot, I had a more conservative safety altitude and we likely also had slightly different MacCready values set. We were at about 8000 ft and in good lift, so I suggested we just take it to the top as we weren't racing the clock, we just had to finish. Ray agreed and we ended up reaching our highest point of the day, just breaking 10,000 ft.

As we navigated west around the Calgary Class B, I sent Tyler a message on Slack asking what High River's frequency was to confirm the one I had was correct. He was himself headed to High River to meet another ESC member who was flying Tyler and Clayton back to Edmonton after dropping the towplanes off at Cu Nim. His response was "You gonna landout?", but I didn't see it since I had confirmed the frequency myself. Twenty minutes later he messaged, "Status?" and I replied, "Final glide". Tyler: "For where?" Me: "20 km at 7400, Cu Nim". Tyler: "Whooo!!". I suppose I could have clarified we only wanted the frequency because High River is an MF and while we were going to likely remain above the airspace we decided to give our position and intentions anyway. Our finish and landing were uneventful, and we were met on the ground for a tow to the tie-down area, causing some confusion on where our tail dolly was, unaware we were a "stranger".

The rest of the evening was mostly relaxing, and I got to meet a number of people I had only heard about or flown with on Condor over winter. Notably Chris Gough, in what I can only assume is his sense of humor, gave me a bit of a hard time reminding me that I couldn't claim the flight as my 5-hour duration (we flew just over 5:20) as I was the co-pilot. I took that as a bit of a challenge. So on my very next flight did 5:09, with a 1000m altitude gain and Proving Grounds Triangle 1 – twice for good measure.

The trip ended with the drive back to Edmonton where two comments Ray made stood out. Just north of Calgary he said, "Man, we flew a long way". (I was thinking the same thing and we still had three hours to drive). Closer to Red Deer he paused in our conversation and asked, "do you still hear the vario?" I laughed and said, "yes, it won't stop". I can only assume Trevor wasn't messing with us from the back seat by playing a recording of a vario on his phone, but I wouldn't put it past him. ❖

A change of plans

If your destination is flexible, the journey can be rewarding

Ben Hornett, Cu Nim

IN THE WEEK following the Western Canadian Soaring Championship, I did what I do most weeks around this time of year. Each day around noon, I'd open a browser and navigate to *skysight.io* to check on the soaring forecast. Much like clouds that fall apart before I can glide to them, the forecast would look promising – but then it would evaporate with each hourly refresh. Where were the strong May soaring conditions that we look forward to in southern Alberta? The contest had been fun but only two of seven tasks days were valid as we suffered forest fire smoke.

Earlier in the year I had confirmed my participation in the FAI Pan-American Gliding Championships as part of the Canadian team for 2023. I announced that I would be out-of-office for the month of June and put in an order for a new flight recorder. A refresh of my email inbox brought deflating news. The Pan-Ams were postponed until 2024. What else could I do? Region 8 contest at Ephrata? No – it conflicted with a planned family trip.

With a degree of resignation, I sighed to myself, “it can't always be like the Nationals of 2022” (described by some as the best soaring Nationals in Canadian history). Those were the days. On that 23 May practice day, I had flown a 710 km flight with Jay Allardyce as my wing man. Had we closed our triangles, they would have been some of the highest scoring flights in Canada that year.

Meanwhile, as I reminisced, Jordyn Nickerson was endeavoring to instigate a mid-week flying day. After some back and forth between Patrick McMahon and the “Duo-duo” (Duo-Discus partners Guy Peasley and Gerald Ince), Tuesday 30 May was declared an operation.

I arrived at the field first and set about opening the hangar. Once the Pawnee was pushed out, I extracted the club LS4 and positioned it in the number 1 spot on runway 07. I intended to launch first and make use of as much of the soaring day as possible. The soaring forecast indicated that the mountains and area to the west and south of Cu Nim would offer enjoyable soaring. I loosely planned to head direct to Waterton Park to see if I could get a great photo of that incredible view. I launched just before noon, scratched for a few minutes and then landed while four other gliders launched and got away. Now sweaty and at the back of the pack, I took a deep breath and once again started my pre-take-off checks. Off tow, once again I seemed to have caught the wrong part of the cycle. With a sinking glider and sinking hopes, I limped south out of the

Calgary zone and found a thermal that boosted me and my spirits up by 5000 feet. Yes!

Seventy kilometres later enroute to Waterton, the clouds and lift were dissipating. With nothing but blue to the south and west, and perfect looking cu to the east, I abandoned my plans for photography near the US border and turned left. Having cast off the weight of my plan, and with a promising sky ahead, I picked up my pace. Since the cu went east but not south, I just followed the line at the edge of the clouds. After a while, I realized I was nearing the south end of Canadian Forces Base Suffield with its Class F restricted airspace. If I continued on, I would be later forced to retrace my track, or go much further east to get around Suffield once I turned north. After looking at the map for a while, I decided I would be too far east to make it home before the lift ended for the day.

As I turned north, conditions were excellent. Around this time, I started thinking about the overall distance I might be able to achieve for the day. I was about 180 km from Cu Nim at that point. Looking at the contest distance analysis page on XCSOar, I determined a 500 km flight might be possible. As I cruised north, the conditions to the north and east looked perfect. I thought to myself, “to heck with it, push for 500, and if you don't make it all the way back, so be it”. I had used the same self-motivation to push myself to keep going on my 500 km Diamond flight in 2021. I kept going until the sum of distance completed and the distance remaining eclipsed 500 km. But now I was starting to get a nagging feeling. It wasn't looking nearly as good to the west anymore – would I make it back?

Turning home with 200 km to go, I knew I had some work cut out for me. I was now also pointed straight into a stiff head wind. Around this time, I realized a few things:

- I was a long way from home base.
- My phone battery was depleted. I had a power bank but had forgotten the charge cable.
- 200 km east of Calgary, there isn't much of anything except wide open spaces.

The ground changes out there. The predominantly cultivated and irrigated farmland gives way to a more barren landscape. Well sites dot the surface, but residences are few and far between. Coulees scar the map like lightning bolts as you approach the Red Deer River. I hadn't realized it at the time, but before I reached my last turn point, I had crossed over Dinosaur Provincial Park. Landing out here with no cell phone would make for a long hike.

As I worked my way west, I radioed the Duo Discus that was on approach to Cu Nim, "I'm still going to be a while". "Have fun", came the reply. Now low over barren farmland, I wondered where I'd find a phone to call for a retrieve. But 1 knot is enough to stay aloft and then it built to 3 knots.

Once again, I'm on my way, edging home. Then another thermal and slowly final glide is almost in reach. Finally, with about 40 km to go, a strong climb – right at the 'choke point' where airliners are descending into Calgary International. From here I'm diving to stay out of the overlying airspace and following the airspace circle to the southwest. I head west at 100 knots and when I'm finally below 8000 ft I turn north for the last 10 km to Cu Nim. I increase speed and marvel at the golden landscape in front of me. I cross over the airfield and pull up in a turn just south of the house marked 'NO FLY ZONE' on its roof. I lower the gear and run through the landing checks.

My soaring season has begun.

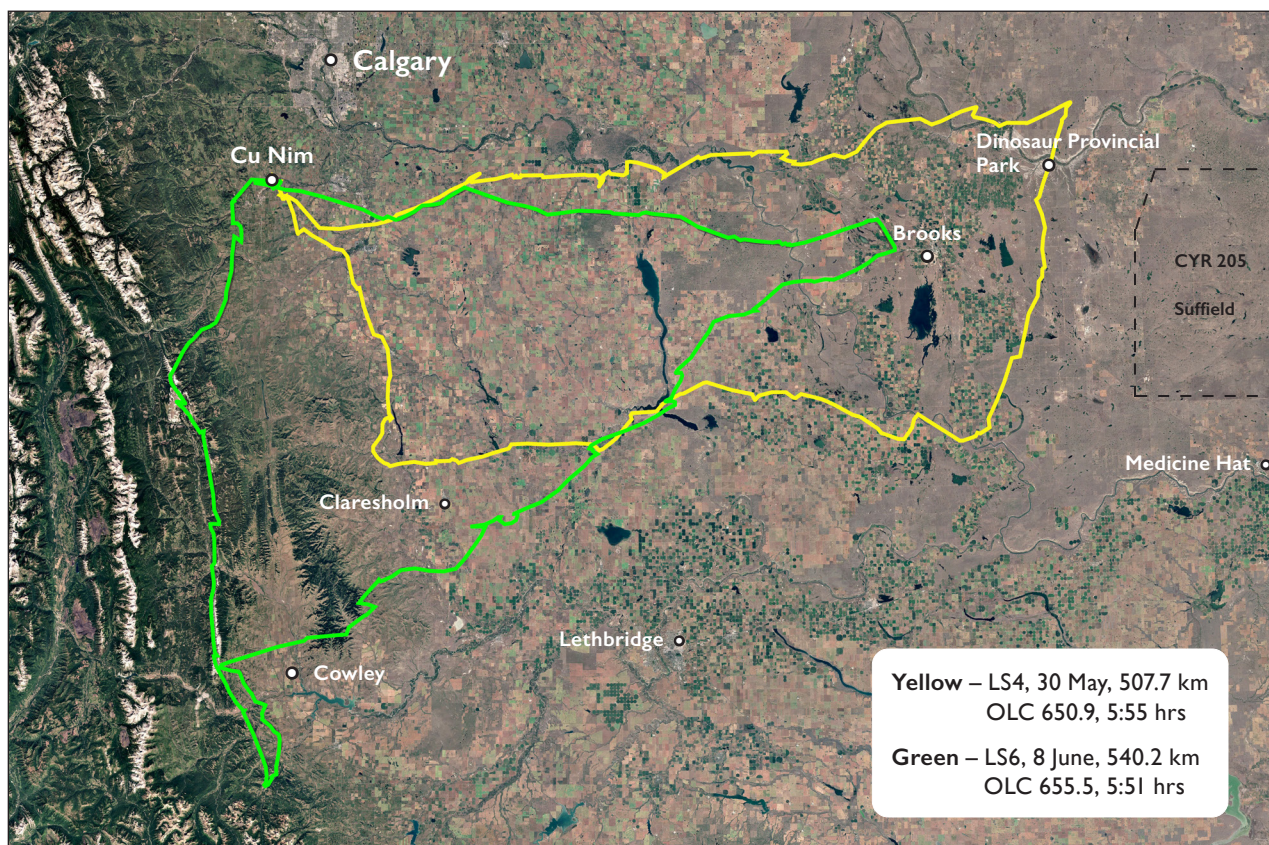
Post Script My next flight was on 8 June. *Skysight* was indicating soarable conditions to the east and west. Clouds had been building over the mountains to the west. Around 1pm, the sky burst into brilliant cu in all directions. Lined up on 07, Sasha and I grew anxious as tow pilot Simon could not be located. Finally, at 12:30 I launched, and Simon took me directly into a thermal for the release.

By this time, rain showers were visible to the east. I decided to head southwest and see if I could get to the mountains. I connected with thermals along the way and intersected the front range west of Chain Lakes Reservoir. I hopped the gap at the Oldman River and ran the Livingstone Range which was benefitting from a 9 knot easterly.

You can probably guess where I was headed. Leaving the south end of the Livingstones, I cruised towards puffy clouds leading to Waterton Park. What I didn't initially notice was that a layer of high cloud was developing to the south and things were getting smooth. Waterton, how many times have you thwarted me? Turning around, it looked better to the east but at this point I figured I would be limping in for a landing at Cowley.

A couple of thermals later and a bit of a struggle across the Porcupine Hills, I finally got out from under the high level veil. From here, things got a lot easier and that 500 km goal started coalescing once again in my mind. I aimed for Brooks and although there was a stiff headwind, the clouds were working, and I was making progress. I had a feeling the day would last. Once I rounded Brooks, the now tailwind was all the help I needed to make my way home to Cu Nim.

I bested my previous week's flight by just 5 OLC points and had enjoyed another six hours soaring the Rocky Mountains and the Alberta prairies. ❖



Cowley

Ray Troppmann, camp manager

THE 2023 SUMMER CAMP was an outstanding week with flying every day. Pilots came from Saskatoon Soaring, Edmonton, Central Alberta, Cu Nim, and Lethbridge Soaring clubs, with a total of 37 pilots registered. The Cowley camps are run by the Alberta Soaring Council and what's amazing to see is the camaradery and the willingness of all pilots to help each other out in any way. We have a lot of beautiful photos and videos of ridge flights posted.

There were 72 flights posted on the OLC for a total of 14,422.14 points. There were 136 flights with 275:24 hours of flying time including 11:10 hours instructional with 15 flights. Ryan Wood had the longest flight, 606 km, with the most OLC points, 801. Ben Hornett second with 441 km and 551.5 OLC points, and Patrick Pelletier was third with 427 km and 493 OLC points.

July 29 Saturday (Day 1) is always a rigging day but we always seem to get a couple winch launches in. This year was no exception with 4 winch launches. Tow pilots arrived and we got two tows in before a downpour shut down the operation.

July 30 Sunday turned out to be a decent day, with 13 tows. A couple ESC pilots tried the 5 hour Silver duration badge flight and also the 50 km flight, but neither were successful. The ridge was working and many laps were flown on it. Once again rain came and shut down operations, but two of the pilots stayed up in the sunny spots waiting for the storm to pass through.

July 31 The Monday forecast was for some stronger winds and possible wave. The pilots were excited and the Cowley altitude NOTAM was opened for the day, but only a handful of pilots were able to find wave and it never got too high. The ridge was also working again and we also had some cross-country flights.

Aug 1 Tuesday weather was looking good for thermaling in the valley. We had the first landout of the camp at the Pincher Creek airport while on task for the LSC Proving Ground sprint. Shortly after, the second landout was by Sophie Cole, and she reports it here on the opposite page.

Aug 2 Wednesday was a dual operation day with winch and tows, 24 in total. It was predicted to be a better thermaling day and some of the pilots were staying up in the 6 hour range. Lots of ground movement that day due to the wind changing and us having to switch active runway from 21 to 11.

Aug 3 Thursday was going to be a repeat of the weather that we saw on Wednesday. The pilots weren't eager to start too early due to the SE winds which are not typical in Cowley. Patrick (Peanut) launched around 11:45 on runway 21 then came the wind change around 1 pm and gliders changed grid to runway 11. Around 2 pm Peanut radioed that he was in wave again, coming close to the 18k ceiling, the only one to get into wave that day.

Aug 4 Friday was another non-typical SE wind day in Cowley, but again the thermals were great and pilots had some good flights. Then came the storm alert of golf ball size hail north of us. Radar showed that the storm should miss us but everyone was still keeping an eye on it. We had a bit of wind and rain but that was it.

Aug 5 Saturday with winds from the southeast. Another great day for thermals and ridge flying. I took one of our club members to the ridge for the first time, he was in awe and took some great videos of the flight. That night – a barbecue with 40 orders of ribs, salad, and Saskatoon pie with ice cream – was a great socializing evening with a Cornhole tournament on the side.

Aug 6 On Sunday the XC weather was looking great. Gliders were launching early, with Ryan first on the grid and in the air with his Libelle at 11:10 headed for his Saskatoon club – yep, that's right, Saskatoon. Some thought he was kidding; I knew he was seriously going to try to fly back home. There was a big fan base tracking his progress and reporting positions on Slack channels. Eight hours later he landed in a field very close to his club – 606 km and 800 OLC points with an average speed of 79 km/h.

It was to be the last day of the camp. Everyone got tows before we had a problem with the Pawnee's tail wheel and that cancelled operations and the camp as the Scout was already on its ferry back to Red Deer.

FALL CAMP

Cowley Fall camp, also known as the Diamond mine, attracted four pilots from Ontario, two from BC, with the rest from Alberta, 36 registered pilots in total. The camp had a slow start. Saturday rained all day, 30 mm. I also thought that we'd be waking up to snow on the airfield Sunday morning but there was only snow high on the Livingstone Range – such a beautiful sight. We had weak wave throughout the duration of the camp but four pilots were still able to find enough wave to claim two Diamond and two Gold altitude climbs. Three of those pilots were from Ontario making their long trip to camp worthwhile. There were also several pilots and passengers that had their first wave flight, answering their question of "how do you know when you're in wave".

next page

Landout #1 Sophie Cole, ESC

MY FIRST SOLO cross-country was my second flight in the LS4 that day. DW and I had already fallen out earlier in the day. I wasn't sure about giving it another go but decided I might as well, so Tyler towed me up again. He happened to drop me into a booming thermal! Initially I wasn't sure about it but he was, so he encouraged me – or more told me – to give it a go. Before I knew it I was at 8000 feet and the sky was still very blue. I saw Chris Chiasson and Loïs Fleury flying Cu Nim's DG-1000 above me so I joined their thermal and before I knew it I was at 9600.

My goal for this flight was to break the mental barrier of staying close to the airport and to get my Silver distance. As I headed out over the Porcupine Hills I told myself "There's lots of sky out there, let's go explore. Even if I don't make it home."

The flight east to Fort Macleod was pretty uneventful, never got super low and the wind was pushing me the right way. Fort Macleod is only 40 km from Cowley so in order to get my Silver distance I needed to go a little past the town. Once I felt I had gone far enough I turned around and almost instantly met with a whole lot of sink. I was able to make it to the airport in Fort Macleod and was getting set up to land there. With the 15% humidity it was still very blue and venturing over unfamiliar countryside without any clouds was a real concern. I scratched in some spotty lift for 20 minutes without finding enough to leave. I even started doing my landing checks and continued to search for something. Then, there it was, on my last turn before



calling intentions to land. The lift was weak but enough to get me back to 9500 feet. I decided to give it another go and push back to Cowley.

I continued to fly west and go for the dark fields as the sun had been heating them all day so I figured there would be something working. I was wrong, but I did manage to have a final glide all the way into a beautiful harvested wheat field. It was just on the wrong side of the Porkies from my original plan! It was a great flight and I completed my goal for the camp, the Silver distance, and an off-field landing as a bonus, and it was only Tuesday!

I would also like to mention that as a low-time pilot, this was very nerve-racking. It is thanks to all the outstanding instructors at Edmonton Soaring Club that I was able to not only earn my licence and cross-country privileges but also be part of an amazing bunch of pilots that I'm thrilled to have the opportunity to fly alongside and learn from. ❖

FALL CAMP (cont.)

With a big thanks to Tyler, we also had another first at the Cowley camp this fall with a NOTAM being opened on our behalf allowing us to enter and fly in the V300 within the Cowley Block for the duration of the camp. This really made flying the wave so much easier and safer for the pilots. The intention is to continue to open the NOTAM for the future camps.

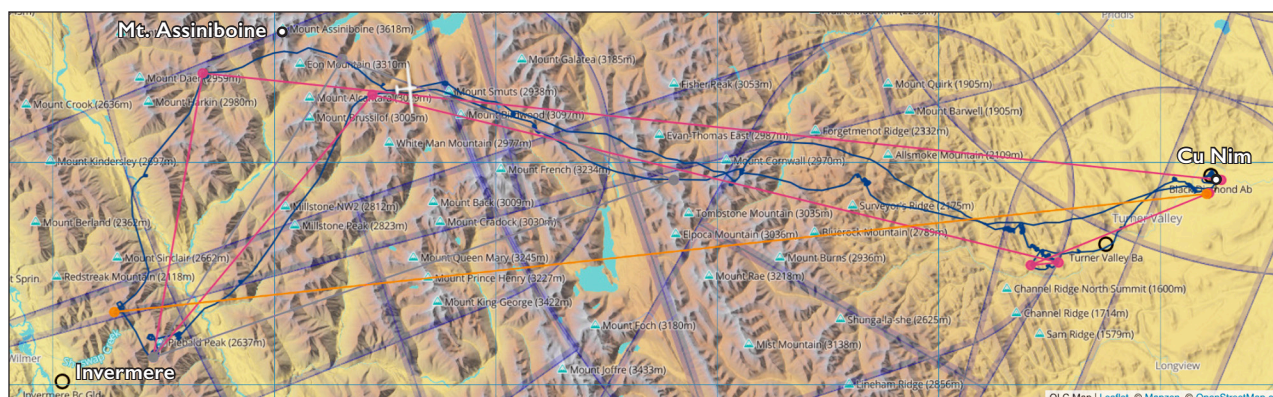
We had a total of 119 launches over the duration of the camp, most being 4000 foot tows. With the weaker wave it was hard to get into the wave, it seemed to be a small window that opened and closed throughout the camp. Our first day of flying on 2 October gave us some weak wave, this was a day of firsts for a lot of the pilots. The wave stretched north and south from the Cowley Block allowing some of us to venture off on shorter cross-country wave flights. This is something that seems to be gaining interest with a group of pilots.

We had two incidents with safety reports submitted, one for close-proximity flying with no visual by one of the pilots

and the second for a bird strike with a glider. For the bird strike, the pilot radioed a "Pan Pan" and started going through his bailout checklist which he shared with us on the next morning briefing. He landed with no issues and there was no damage to the glider – his best guess on the sound of the hit at the back was on the tail skid. We wish we could say the same for the eagle. The pilot saw three eagles pass and then the strike. It was a last-second visual for both the eagle and pilot. Eagles and other birds also use the wave for their fall migration south.

Our Saturday evening Thanksgiving turkey dinner at the Cowley community hall was arranged by Sheldon Steinke. The caterers did an excellent job with the meal and desserts. After the dinner some of the musically inclined pilots got up on stage and performed for the crowd.

The tow pilots had a busy Sunday with all the gliders grid-ded up and launched, some having to take relights to get into the wave, but it was enjoyed by all. The end of the flying day was busy with derigging and getting ready for the early starts to drive home on Monday. Overall, it was a successful camp enjoyed by all. ❖



An across-the-Rocks geology lesson

Philippe Erdmer, Cu Nim

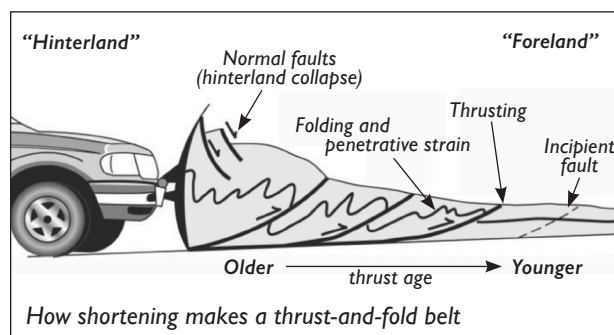
THE SCENIC BEAUTY OF THE ALBERTA ROCKIES attracts the attention of many visitors and locals of course, but also the professional interest of geologists and geophysicists who come from around the globe to study them. Getting to fly over them and read them like an open book is a unique reward of Alberta soaring.

As a new member at Cu Nim, and a geologist, my first taste of such reward came quickly. Having spent a scientific career researching the origin and evolution of mountain belts in western Canada and other parts of the world like the Appalachians, the Carpathians, Labrador, and Greenland, I was indeed primed. On a day of superb conditions, I was invited by Chester Fitchett to join him on a flight in his Arcus M to Invermere and back. The flight track was a nearly ideal route, geologically speaking, and Chester included a fly-past of remote Mt. Assiniboine that fully checked the box for scenic beauty.

The foothills and mountains display past rock movements and deformation at an overwhelming scale. For most people, the term *rock-solid* implies strength, immobility, and no material change over time: not a bad name to give a business enterprise if you're trying to sound reliable. But in the real world, rocks can bend, flow in the solid state, move, and get buried deep in Earth's crust or rise up tens of kilometres after they're made. Rocks are even elastic: throw one off a cliff, and watch it bounce because of the stored elastic strain energy.

The Rocky Mountains of Alberta are a foreland thrust-and-fold belt that is part of the North American Cordillera, the mountain belt that stretches from Mexico to Alaska.

What is a thrust-and-fold belt? Most geologic mountain belts, both past and present, have a foreland or bordering area of hundreds of square kilometres, where gigantic rock



Ben van der Pluijm

sheets have buckled and moved on slip surfaces called thrust faults, in solid waves and mountain-sized shingles. They moved from sea-level or below to kilometres of elevation, and by tens-to-hundreds of kilometres of horizontal displacement.

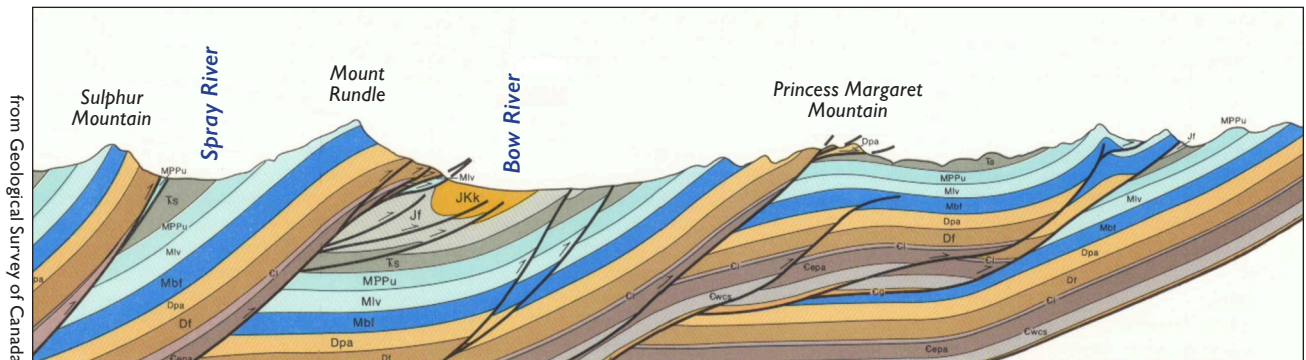
A thrust sheet is one panel of rock within the belt. Individual faults are bow-shaped in map view, can be up to 500 km long, and can transport a single thrust sheet for up to tens of kilometres. The motion is uphill, and special conditions of natural high pore-fluid pressure reduce the frictional resistance along the fault planes to zero. Like hovercrafts, mountain-sized rock sheets floated very slowly on pressurized cushions. In the Alberta Rockies, dozens of large faults and many more splay (secondary offshoot) faults give the individual ranges their distinctive long-and-sharp shingle appearance, and leave the rocks undamaged away from the rupture surfaces.

How do we know how old the rocks are? Geologists use the principle of depositional superposition which states that the bottom layer of a sequence of rocks is the oldest. It takes deep time to build mountain-sized thickness, but until about 100 years ago science could not tell how much time, or how old a rock is in absolute terms. We now determine



Philippe Erdmer

A view of Mt Evan-Thomas in Kananaskis Country (peak at left center). Three steeply-inclined brown layers of the Fernie Formation in the left, middle, and far right of the field of view, mark the base of three thrust sheets repeating the same sequence of layers.



from Geological Survey of Canada

A cross-section of the Rockies near Banff, showing the repetition of thick thrust sheets across about 30 km. Each layer is a rock formation deposited flat on a sea bottom between 500 and 150 million years ago. Shortening and deformation spanned more than 25 million years during which the overall rock mass behaved as a soft and pliable solid, now immobilized into mountain-sized waves.

the age of most rocks directly from lab measurements. A mass spectrometer can compare the amount of naturally occurring radioactive isotopes (the “parent”) within a mineral, to the amount of its radiogenic products (the “daughter”) which form at a known constant rate of decay. Analytical techniques have reached enough precision to pin down the age of a rock as, for example, 538.8 ± 0.2 million years, which is the “moment” of the first “life explosion” in Earth’s oceans at the beginning of the Paleozoic Era.

What drives the motion? A thrust-and-fold belt is driven by convergent (collisional) plate motion. Earth is 95% covered by seven major tectonic plates (and other smaller ones) that

range in thickness from 50 to 150 km, and are like sliding pieces of detached skin on a fruit. Their constant movement can deform rocks far inland from the plate boundaries. The closest plate boundary to Alberta today is along the west coast of British Columbia; it may have been even farther when the Rockies were formed.

When Alfred Wegener first proposed the idea of continental drift in 1912, he was a laughingstock among many scientists, who could not accept that continents or rocks within them moved, because they saw no evidence of motion. In time, his ideas led to the modern understanding of plate tectonics. Today, GPS technology routinely pro-

vides real-time evidence of the motion. The rate of movement of Paris away from New York across the mid-Atlantic spreading ridge is now just another measurable natural process.

Most plates move less than a millimetre a day, a rate imperceptible to human senses. However, this translates to 1-10 centimetres per year (in the range of fingernail growth), and that translates to 10-100 kilometres in one million years. Such slow but relentless motion has resulted in soaring mountains growing around the world for at least half of Earth's 4.6 billion-year history.

Are the mountains still moving? No, but the bedrock of Alberta remains under stress because tectonic plates are in constant pushing or pulling motion around Earth. Alberta has thousands of oil exploration wells. Evidence of stress transmitted from plate edges is provided by borehole breakouts which reshape open drill holes in a preferential direction. The breakout fractures result when the stress concentration around the borehole exceeds the rock strength. On a geological time scale, that is an instantaneous response to the ground stress field. *Rock-solid* is just an illusion, and the rock waves will keep forming as long as Earth's geodynamics keep operating. ❖

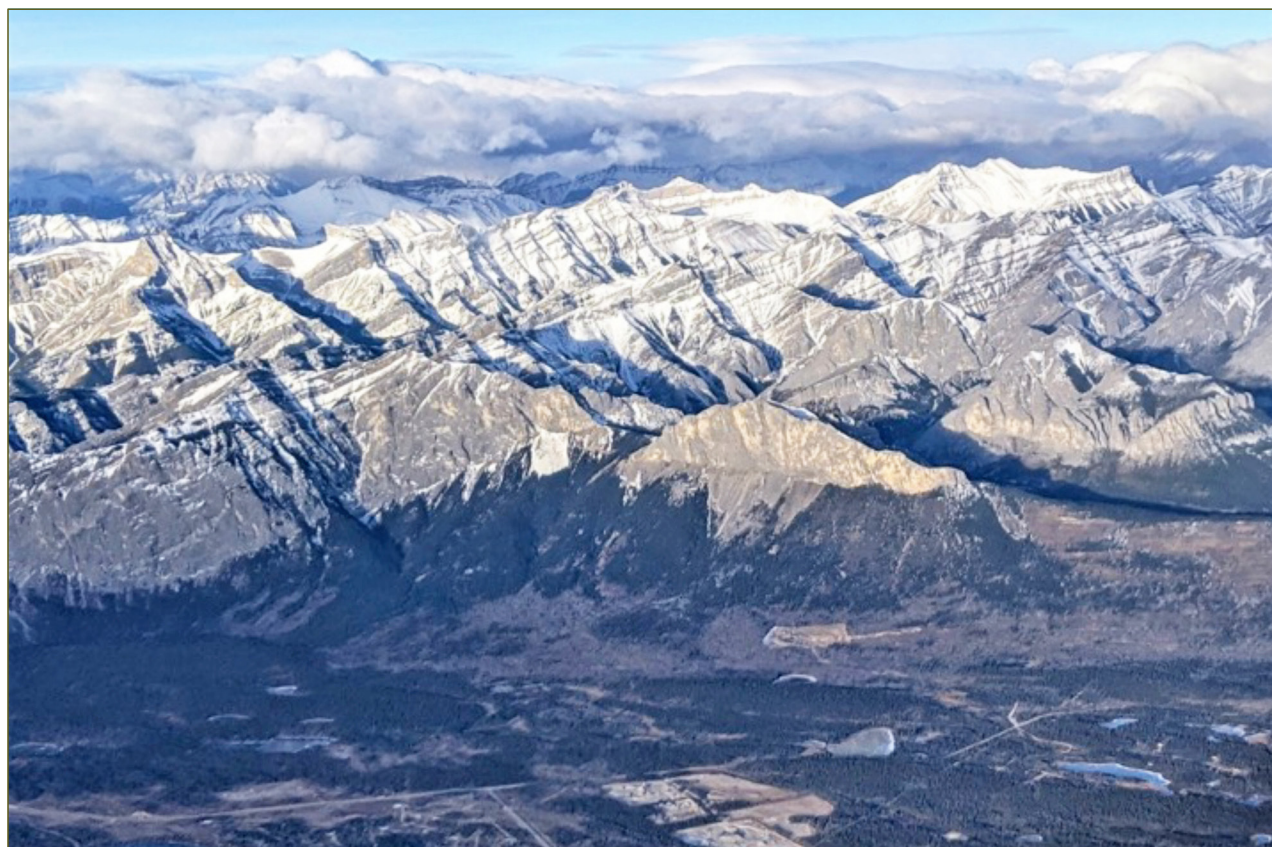
Chester writes:

I quite enjoyed getting a little background on the Rocky Mountains while flying with Philippe. A few takeaways for me are:

The foothills are quite “young” sandstone, ~100 million years old. The much older limestone that makes up our mountains is also there, still buried deeply. Simon was saying that on Yamnuska you can see where the much older limestone has ridden up on top of the young sandstone.

The mountains have been forced up like shingles. Philippe pointed out a distinctive band of brown rock called the Banff formation, which from 12,500 feet can be seen repeating on the mountain ranges. Very nicely illustrating the shingle analogy. It's a messy business making mountains. I'm glad ours are done growing.

Our trip was about two hours from Turner Valley to Invermere, and return. That was a speedy day ...



Patrick McMahon

Photo of the mountain front and stacked thrust sheets in the Bow Valley, by Cu Nim pilot Patrick McMahon on a November 2020 flight. Mt. Yamnuska is the isolated peak at centre-right, where the McConnell Thrust draws a sharp horizontal line at the base of pale-yellow Cambrian limestone carried by the fault over younger sandstone (in the tree-covered lower slope below the cliff).

Gliding on another continent!

Loïs Fleury

MY NAME is Loïs; I am a French engineering student from the southern Alps. I grew up with a bird in my head. I did my first solo flight in 2014 on my 14th birthday. Unfortunately, I had to stop flying gliders during my studies. However, I kept in touch with soaring through glider mechanics internships and paragliding practices.

During the second year of the engineering degree, every student in my course track needed to do an internship abroad. I immediately thought about a gliding club for my internship. I thought there must be a club around the world that could use a pair of hands during the summer. This gliding club was Cu Nim in southern Alberta. Officially I was an exchange student in random company, unofficially I was

a kid in a candy store! I quickly adapted myself to the club life and flying operation despite my very bad English. I was welcomed like a prince in the kingdom of the wind. I was glad to be able to help my host club, I used my glider mechanic experience to take care of its gliders. Sometimes I thought about the other students of my school stuck behind their computers on the other side of the world while I was at 8000 feet. I really spent two months in paradise. I flew a lot alone or with someone. I can't forget the incredible nine hours wave flight along the Rockies in an Arcus and every shared moment with all the people I met.

It definitely was one of the best experiences of my life. Thanks Cu Nim, thanks Canada, thanks Patrick. ❖



Patrick McMahon When I was involved at York Soaring in Ontario, twice we had the opportunity to welcome a French engineering student for a summer “internship”, something to do with an English language immersion obligation they have for their degree. Both times it was an excellent operational and cultural benefit to the club. Over the winter, we were approached by Loïs Fleury to come to Cu Nim for the summer as a student. We set low expectations for what he would expect from our 4-day a week operation. But from his arrival, it was clear that this was going to be a great summer for Loïs, and an even better one for Cu Nim. We made the club trailer available to him for his 10-week stay, he paid for a youth membership, and we put a total of \$500 in his flying account.

Loïs was expected to support operational days, help as an ambassador for guests to the field. He ended up exceeding these expectations, feeling a sense of duty to run wings and record flights. His technical expertise was critical for some fast turnarounds on DG-1000 snags that might have taken weeks to resolve without his intervention.

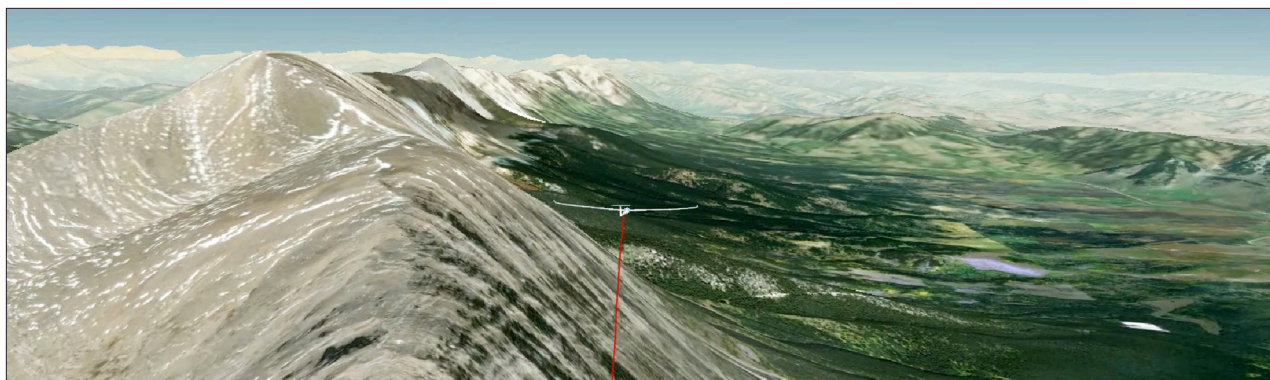
Cu Nim members (especially Philippe and Casey) were exceptionally generous in their support of his stay and ensuring he made the most of his time and place in the world. Loïs went exploring and car camping in the Rockies, and some museum tours. My partner Bryanna and I brought him into the city for an evening of patio drinks, a shower and a sleep in the city, but he was anxious to be back to the club for 8:30 instruction.

We didn't expect him to fly solo, but he worked through medical and paperwork obligations and ended up flying our ASK-21B, PW-5 and ASW-19. He made Cu Nim a home, sharing meals, and mounting his hammock between the pillars of the entry arch at the clubhouse to read a book and watch the sunset. We said goodbye at a very well attended BBQ (Loïs is holding the bag), and shared a card full of well wishes and thanks that brought a tear to his eyes.

We reinforced the Canadian stereotype of being friendly and welcoming people, we gained a friend, and Loïs far exceeded our expectations of his support. Thanks, Loïs! ❖

Passage to Heaven

David McIntyre



Patrick Pelletier

ACROSS THE CONTINENTAL DIVIDE, a wall of summer clouds approach, then dissipates as it enters Alberta, where parallel thrust-faulted mountain ranges define the eastern slopes. High above timberline, avens and several species of saxifrage bloom at my feet, and countless patches of reflected brilliance reveal distant snowfields – diverse shapes which punctuate the shaded eastern faces between Glacier and Banff.

Sitting on the crest of Centre Peak atop the Livingstone Range, I face north, looking over a gaping, serrated cleave, one of only a few jogs in this long knife-edge which cuts into the Alberta sky between Crowsnest Pass and the Oldman River Gap. Mountain goats have left their tracks around me, two ravens are overhead, and a prairie falcon is screaming from a cliff-side perch somewhere in the hidden shadows, far below. A light breeze blows, uncharacteristically, from the east.

I munch on a light snack, my mind lost in the distant clouds, my body relaxing from the tough climb. Looking along the mountain's cutting edge, I see the approaching apparition before my mind can identify it. Instinctively, I freeze.

Swooping down on me, a glider takes shape. It slices at my ridge-top perch, its pilot almost within reach. I recover in time to wave as the white plane soars past me through the cobalt sky, silent except for the air which races over its thin, gleaming exoskeleton. It banks into the wind and slips below the limestone summit, gliding along the ragged cliffs I've laboriously climbed.

Racing to follow its flight, I scramble to another vantage point, only seconds away. But, amazingly, the plane is gone – lost in a sweeping expanse of land and sky.

I return to my rocky perch, gather my camera and other scattered possessions, and begin my descent. Far below, I

see pikas scurrying over a tumbled, rocky bed. Individually, the little “rock rabbits” run, pause, and eek in an array of harmonica-like monotones. There is also occasional music from the sky, the now familiar rushing of wind which causes me to stop, secure my footing on the treacherous rock, and glance up past the cold, grey walls of the precipitous snow chute to the thin wedge of blue. High overhead now, two gliders cut through the trackless sea. I spin to follow their path – my mind a dizzying mix of up and down. And as I do, the gliders whip past my narrowing window in effortless, ridge-hopping arcs.

Timberline reaches up to meet me. Soon, a thick forest of subalpine fir surrounds me, and within it, a spring with delicious ice-water cascades from a rocky recess. Leaving its lush surroundings, I continue through a changing landscape – firs suddenly replaced by pines and a thinning understory.

A black bear boar with a glossy, jet-black coat pops into view. He stops, glancing over his left shoulder, then breaks into a loping run which quickly takes him from view. The lengthening shadows also harbour some of the other shy denizens of the forest. Elk, moose, and white-tailed deer move quickly however, as they too sense danger. Although touched by their passing, I have not forgotten the winds aloft. I stop, scan the sky, and eventually spot them – two winged craft, infinitesimal and silent – as they soar through the vast expanse.

Reflecting on the day's discoveries, I plan to meet and talk with the pilots at this gliding Mecca that evening. As I depart, I face the Oldman River valley and, farther away, the thunderstorm which is pounding the Porcupine Hills. Evening sunlight floods over me from a clear window above the Livingstone Range. Beyond the parked gliders, a brilliant double rainbow arcs high into the brooding sky; twin arches touching the Oldman's storied shores. →

A new Canadian “Beetle”

Randy Blackwell, ESC (ex-CLSC)

THIS EVENTFUL STORY starts in 1996, when our Cold Lake club's I-26 was flipped on its back by high winds after its pilot (not me) landed out at Cowley. Having developed a fondness for this under-appreciated little bird, much like the venerable VW Beetle, I bought the wreckage from our club and set about bringing her back to life under the skillful tutelage of our AME Don Keath.

As frequently happens with such projects, work and life got in the way so my I-26 project stalled until I retired in 2017. Dusting it off and re-assessing the damage, it became evident that I needed to find a replacement right wing.

In early 2019 Dick Parker (ESC) pointed out a listing for a comparably wind-damaged I-26 for sale near Seattle with a broken left wing but a repairable right wing. So I went to have a close look at I-26 #367. On learning that this 1967 glider had less than 300 hours on it and had been recently restored, I decided to resurrect it instead and to use my other I-26 for parts. I bought #367 and trailered it to an Edmonton-based AMO for the structural repairs.

For a year and a half this small AMO shop conducted repairs that I blindly trusted would meet with Transport Canada's approval. However, when the shop's owner suddenly passed away in 2020 and the TC inspectors stepped

in, I was horrified to learn that the structural repairs done to the right wing did not meet factory standards and would have to be removed and re-done.

To my great relief, Don and others generously came to my rescue and together we spent the next two years restoring #367 to pristine, airworthy condition. The colourful paint scheme was the creation of Jim Belliveau, CFB Cold Lake's graphic artist who is the creator of dozens of amazing paint schemes seen on CF-18 airshow demo aircraft. My only inputs to Jim's re-work of #367's paint scheme was that it be 'Canadianized', and to freshen up the existing dull red and yellow scheme.

On 28 April 2023, #367 passed its import/CofA inspection, and flew in Canada for the first time on 26 May at ESC. Over the next couple of months I flew this delightful little bird, usually with its open 'sport' canopy, to knock off the 20 years of rust that I had gained since I had last flown.

Starting next spring at ESC I have grand ambitions of achieving my remaining Diamond Goal and Diamond Distance in this I-26 – daunting but meaningful goals in such a low performance glider, one that several remarkable Western Canadians such as Julien Audette, Ursula Wiese and Harold Eley accomplished before me years ago. ❖



From page 18 Distant lightning stabs the rain-shrouded hills. The strikes are still etched in my mind when thunder reverberates across the valley. For a second, the gates of heaven are open. And the Promised Land is at my feet.

My brief introduction to the world of gliding concluded on 2 August 1997. That evening, the Alberta Soaring Council celebrated the Silver anniversary of the Cowley Glider Strip. Following several brief speeches, a veil of freshly harvested baby's breath was dropped to reveal a limestone

cairn with a bronze plaque. Its text is a replica of the one on the cairn atop Centre Peak. The parting words:

**Soar high on silent wings;
search out
the serenity of space.**

David and his wife Monika live right under the Livingstone Range. They are both active environmentalists at the local forefront in protecting the scenic beauty of the southern Alberta landscape. Their photos have often appeared in ASCent. ❖

ASC Treasurer's update, Trevor Finney

THE ASC financial position for 2023 up to the end of October continues to be stable. Thanks to all those people who have spent so much time tracking the finances at the Cowley camps. The April AGM had full reports regarding our finances. Since then, we have maintained our accounting by computer, email and telephone consults.

We have once again managed comfortably with our current funding source from the Alberta Gaming, Liquor and Cannabis Commission (AGLC) via a casino held in Edmonton in 2022. We look forward to further funding from next year's casino and would appreciate any support that members can provide in volunteering to work at the casino then.

We have had no large expenses this year, and a safe flying year. The ASC towplane expenses were lower than historical averages due in part to an insurance recovery we received in May related to the PCK ground handling accident which occurred in 2022. The AGLC funding allowed

ASC to support provincial clubs for instructor rating renewals, instructor check flights, glider insurance, and aircraft rentals.

Our Cowley camps were well supported and have cost us a little, but have been worth the funds to hear of the flights enjoyed by all who were there.

In summary, the ASC continues to be well funded. Our cash and investments totals as of the end of October are: Operating account = \$46,765.14 and our Casino account is \$15,541.45. We also have investment accounts for both Operating and Casino GIC accounts which total \$55,000. We are looking forward to funding next year's events which we assume will include Cowley Summer and Fall camps, and possibly an Alberta Provincial contest. We are also comfortable supporting the four gliding clubs and in particular supporting the youth as they enjoy the adventures of flying in gliders. ❖

ASC President's report

from page 2

casino licence from AGLC. Securing these funds is one of the core goals to rolling out a long-term financial sustainability model for ASC which will include developing a philanthropic donation program. In 2024 we will be exploring application for a charitable donation number with Revenue Canada to support our advancement activities. Our 2024 casino will be held in Edmonton 17-18 June; we will again be looking for local volunteers to help with this very important fundraising activity.

Building off the success of the 2022 National Championships in Edmonton, we were able to host the "2023 Western Showdown" in Alberta in mid-May this year. Hosted by Cu Nim, this event attracted 24 pilots / teams from across the western provinces (and SOSA) for a combined Western Canadian Soaring Championship and the Alberta Provincial Soaring Championship. While much smoke and some poor weather hampered the competition, in the end we were able to get in two racing days, with Chris Gough (99) the winner of the FAI Class and Dragan Zubovic (D2) the winner of the Club class. Congratulations to all of the competitors.

A special thank you to Jos Jonkers (Contest Director), Chris Gough (Contest Manager), Casey Brown (Scoring), Mike Busuttill (Safety), Denise Vanderkooi (Social Events) and all of the volunteers who made the 2023 Western Showdown a fun and safe event. I hope we will see this event repeat in 2024!

Some of you may know that the Alberta Soaring Council was established in May 1966 with the primary objective of

supporting the Royal Canadian Air Cadet Glider pilot training. This year we had the opportunity to continue that tradition as we were asked by the Alberta Provincial Committee of the Air Cadet League of Canada to help four cadets who were unable to finish their glider licence requirements during the past few summer training courses. Working with Derek Blatchford and Rhonda Barraclough from the Air Cadet League, cadets were provided with a scholarship which has funded the costs to complete their training with ESC and CAGC. In addition, Edmonton was able to help support additional cadets from BC with their training in 2023. Thank you all who have helped support this important program.

In September, the Alberta Soaring Council was able to renew our agreement with NavCanada for the procedures we use to activate the high altitude wave blocks around Cowley [CYA201(S)] and Grande Prairie [CYA215(S)]. Unlike previous agreements, we were able to make this a permanent agreement with NavCanada, so no need to now look at renewing every five years. Improving airspace was a theme this year. With the support from Tyler Paradis we were able to request and have approved a "Section 5.1" exemption which established restricted airspace between 14,000 and 18,000 feet around Cowley to permit increased safety of our operations during the Fall camp. We look forward to working with NavCanada next year to establish the same restricted airspace to support our members who have the goal of that high altitude wave flight.

It has been another exciting and safe soaring year for the Alberta Soaring Council affiliated clubs and members. Continue to be safe ... I look forward to us work together to continue to grow the sport in 2024! ❖



Clubs

Cu Nim

THE past year was another great one for members of the Cu Nim Gliding Club. Fleet challenges and challenging weather were headwinds, but we moved forward as a group with purpose on the culture side of the organization. After all, we are a social club with a flying addiction.

The Cu Nim “thank you” culture seems alive and well. Many hands are making light work, pilots seem especially open to record “I could have done better” moments through a volume of incident reports, and members are quick to give thanks with words or emojis in person or in chat!

Of particular note is the “social event overhaul” lead by my lovely partner Bryanna Wagg. With help from Michael and his partner Erica, Derek, Simon, and support on the grill from Harry and Sheldon, Cu Nim hosted four very well attended BBQs. The final two of the season were great celebrations to mark goodbyes to a new friend, Loïs Fleury, and an old one, Mike Crowe. Loïs joined us for the summer from France, making a huge impact through his short stay (see p17 story). Mike Crowe has been an “everything man” at Cu Nim – a soaring pilot, an instructor, a tow pilot, and a reliable set of strong hands. Mike is moving to Saskatchewan to be closer to family and will be missed. Special thanks to those who have contributed so much to Cu Nim in 2023, and in the years and decades before!

We had a changing of the guard at our spring AGM to kick off 2023. Casey Brown stepped away from the Treasurer position (the hardest position on the board) after five years. His dedication to Cu Nim required three people and an outside service to replace him. Derek Jones is the new Cu Nim treasurer, and his first order of business was vetting and bringing in a professional bookkeeping service. His second order of business was translating years of ‘engineer’ bookkeeping in Excel to GAAP bookkeeping with Quickbooks. This will ultimately make Derek’s job easier, but 2023 was busy and at points frustrating for him! The executive team also welcomed a functional membership director in Dan Reid who is trying to manage our student wait list (37 at the start of October 2023), and ensuring new members are supported through the start of their soaring journey. Mircea Pereni joined the executive to support “technical services” including admin of our Google Suite

and other digital services, working with Derek on the OGN, and other issues that might lead some folks (like me) to throw a laptop.

Elian Dupre Sarmiento was our Intro Coordinator and he modernized this “clunky” portfolio. He implemented a digital liability waiver, moved the flight certificate to automatic and online from a manually created PDF. He coordinated people and worked around the serviceability of the DG-1000, fire smoke, and other roadblocks to scheduling for flying intros. He took ownership of the intro target, scheduled a dedicated intro day when the colours of the leaves were turning, and was very effective within the constraints that the weather and the fleet imposed. This is the second hardest ongoing job in the club.

Cu Nim will set a recent record for flights flown from our airfield. As of 12 November, 1169 aerotows had launched from the club, toward a target of 1250. Nearly 47% of these were training flights. Cu Nim retained third place overall in Canada on the OLC despite scoring 37% fewer OLC points compared to 2022. It was not a great cross-country season in Canada. Cu Nim’s instructor cadre welcomed new and renewed instructors Dan Reid, Mike Busuttil, Dave Morgan, and Simon Youens.

Cu Nim is lucky to have in Chris Gough an effective CFI who is also a passionate cross-country pilot. In 2023, Chris organized another significant soaring competition, and for the first time since 2019, hosting it at Cu Nim. The “Western Showdown” was to be two competitions within one event. A week of racing for the revival of the “Western Canadian Soaring Championships”, and a weekend finale of the “Alberta Provincial Soaring Championships”. The hope was to have two separate contests concluding through the final weekend of the competition. The contest, with competitors travelling from all points between Ontario and BC, regrettably saw only two racing days, both on the final weekend – both competitions ended up sharing the same podiums with Chris on top in FAI class and Dragan Zubovic (VSA) on top in Club class.

Our maintenance portfolio experienced challenges, but really the silver linings should be celebrated. Relationships with local AMEs have improved dramatically; all partners now understand how critical prompt turnarounds are for

the operation of the club. TTY was serviced on time during Summer Cowley, and had its annual done through Fall Cowley, running a little bit long due to some fabric work. The DG-1000 had its 3000-hour inspection done over the winter and was delayed in its return to service at the start of the flying season. We had an incident and repair on our ASW-19, and the LS4 experienced very strange damage to an aileron control rod requiring a part to be manufactured. Thanks to Ben Hornett who has led this portfolio, and his efforts to make everything work smoothly.

We waited all season for a decision on our casino application, critical for capital planning. Jos led a "hangar committee" to evaluate structure options and costs. The club's ability to move on this is affected by the ambiguity around Casino funding and no decisions were made in 2023. With rising interest rates, Derek recommended accelerated pay-down of our one remaining ATB loan which should be closed in 2024 – 13 years ahead of schedule.

Cu Nim has a new way to get a snapshot of our ongoing financial condition, is budgeting for engine overhaul and glider renewal. We plan to renew the panels of the DG-1000 over the winter, and with nearly 75 flying members are at fleet limits based on our arbitrary 1 glider to 15 member ratio. Cu Nim is now one of Canada's large gliding clubs, and 2023 was another year in the direction of the goal of becoming 'Canada's Premier Soaring Centre'. Thank you to everyone who made this year so great, especially those not mentioned by name.

Patrick McMahon

Edmonton

ABSENT THE KICK START of the Nationals in 2022, the exec and membership were on their own to recreate the excitement and quick season start. It was also time to truly test our new procedures, fleet mix, and recruit/retain and engage new members, license new pilots and continue to challenge and allow our burgeoning cross-country and wannabee contest pilots a safe/encouraging space to grow and stretch. All while honouring and respecting the many long-term members as our beloved sport evolves and changes.

Another early start on 15 April and getting 87 flights before the end of the month was phenomenal – allowing us to get all our check flights completed and ab-intio training going in earnest. We had everyone qualified and ready in May for three of our six scheduled "fly weeks". In turn those fly weeks were key to helping newer contest pilots to get ready for the Western Canadian and Provincial contests.

When the numbers were compiled at the end of the season over 87 days of flying we hit the 1000 flight mark for the first time in recent memory, a 21% increase in flights and 19% increase in hours from 2022. We also moved up from 12th to 8th (one point out of 7th) in Canada on the OLC

rankings with more pilots attempting and posting their cross-country adventures. One of the most notable flights of the year was by Ray Troppmann and Michael Carson, flying our DGI000 C-FWRT 447 km to the contest at Cu Nim. They claimed the FAI territorial, multiplace, 3TP distance record (419.8 km handicapped). With our revived focus on contest and cross-country flying, ESC deployed four club ships to the Provincial contest as well as two private ships. ESC was also very well represented at both Cowley camps including the use of one of our Pawnees.

With all this growth, one of the secrets to our recent success has been simply operating longer days. However, we realized that these longer days on the field take on volunteers and often take away from their personal flying goals. Therefore, we are concentrating on training new tow pilots and instructors, an initiative that will continue into 2024 to keep up with the increased activity of the club. This has the dual result of personal growth for many members as well as additional capacity for training newer members.

Our ongoing focus on Objective Oriented Learning has also continued to show great results. Our target remains 10 active students, putting our typical roster about 15. Of our seven returning students we had three complete their flight tests in addition to one student through our Air Cadet partnership. This year we added a Student Coordinator which Amanda Vella took on with passion. Amanda quickly improved the onboarding experience for new students by providing them with a welcome guide with all of the basics and expectations of a new student. We adopted a new version of the Pilot Training Record Books which has assisted both instructors and students in the monitoring of their progression. With periodic interactions with the student coordinator, we can ensure students are aware of and more importantly, that the prerequisite requirements (such as SPP) are completed sooner than required.

We have had no problem this year attracting a healthy number of new students which is likely due, in part, to the record numbers of discovery flights (>150) we have had and continue to book many months out. As a result, we had three new students sign up as late-season members and several more who have committed to joining us in the spring. It is very interesting to see the new demographics of many new members, we have a budding aviator at the age of 14 as well as some brand-new Canadians coming to us with flying experience from their former countries. With some additional promotion on social media and the spring ground school we have no doubt we will have a full roster and likely a waiting list for next season.

Again, thanks to Fleet Manager Ray Troppmann, we had another season of high readiness and aircraft availability. The LS4 became a valued and well-flown member of the fleet. We had no significant damage or incidents grounding aircraft this year leaving us two tugs and seven gliders serviceable virtually all season. This contributes to our ability

to support provincial events through our towplane agreements with ASC and to continue to increase and support our members who want to compete away from Chipman.

We recognized in 2022/23 that as a soaring club there are two sometimes competing capital priorities, The fleet (everyone always wants a hot new aircraft) and the facilities which, if neglected, won't let us fly the hot new machines. With that in mind we are working towards a much more formal capital plan to help balance necessary maintenance, reserve funds (such as towplane engine overhaul), additional hangars for private aircraft and club fleet refreshment. Major investments will be identified, potential for grants and other assistance will be considered, and then we will budget appropriately.

Even as we closed the hangar doors for the last time in 2023, our Facilities Manager, Clayton, his team and a bunch of heavy equipment were filling the last low spot on the field, aka "Lake Chipman", a project continuing into 2024. Hopefully we will see everyone there and maybe on Concor, at a social event, or ground school in the meantime.

Steve Godreau

Central Alberta

CAGC had a good season of flying that consisted of a few familiarization flights but lots of flying by members. Jeff Runciman (a new instructor) and John Mulder did most of the instruction this season. Dale instructed and towed until he had to go help with the harvest. Ethan did a lot of towing too but his skills with farm equipment were needed in the fields before too long. Jerry was the primary tow pilot and we could have not done much flying without him at the helm of the Scout.

We had three Air Cadets join us of which two completed their Glider Pilot Licence. The third should complete his early next season. All the cadets did get their Power Pilot Licences when they went to their prospective power pilot camps with the Air Cadet League.

Our most senior pilot, 91 year old Peter, was an encouragement to these young men and woman and all of them gained much from the other. Peter really enjoys being part of the club and is willing to help out wherever he can, even pulling out the gliders to the flight line.

We had two visitors from the UK come for flights. One was a soloed cadet who, along with her family, were in the area so contacted us to go for a flight. She had hoped for two but a thunderstorm changed those plans. Leo flew with her and they ended up at cloudbase in relatively short order. This had never happened to her before! Another visitor was in the area on business hiking through the Burgess Shale. After his flight, he stayed around just to be in the relaxed ambience of the Alberta prairie and planes.

Dmitry has started a YouTube channel and with Tom contributing his video footage, CAGC now has a few videos on the Central Alberta Gliding Club channel. They are masterfully done and a pleasure to watch over and over again. Hopefully, if everyone "Shares" these videos, it will increase our visibility. Dmitry will post more footage this winter now that flying is over for the season.

We had a number of BBQs which was a great way to socialize and share stories and tales of flights in beautiful central Alberta and connect with each other and those who aren't pilots but did support us in pragmatic ways when we needed their skills and expertise. We look forward to the 2024 season with great anticipation.

Judy Soroka

Lethbridge

OUR SEASON started off as early as possible. We had several new members including two youth members. With only two instructors on hand we did our best to accommodate our students.

Our newest member, Roy Cowden, used to fly gliders years ago and wanted to be recertified as soon as possible. Roy went solo again after only a few flights and was soon checked out to fly the rear seat for introductory flights on winch and aerotow.

Future instructor in the making, and speaking of new instructors, LSC will have two or three new instructors for 2024 which will help greatly in 2024. LSC now has more solo pilots than students which should now see our pilots achieving their goals, something to look forward to in the coming years as the club continues to grow.

2023 was a very good season for us with an increase in launches and air time for our only club glider. LSC also had an incident-free year regarding safety. We are planning on holding ground school over the winter months to keep us all more safety focused.

Over the past years we have refined our operation to where we are comfortable and feel safe using the ASC winch. The winch is a very economic form of getting into the air, 103 were made this year. We have gone cross-country and into the Cowley wave from winch launches. If you have not tried a winch launch, why not come to Cowley and take some lessons.

We would love to see you spend some time with us to get you checked off using the winch. I would like to thank Ray Troppmann from ESC for helping out as our adopted instructor during the ASC Cowley camps. We are looking forward to the 2024 season with more activity.

Geoff Minors

2023 pilot achievements

Another very good year of self-improvement.

What's your personal goal for 2024?

Solos

Roy Cowden (LSS) – return to solo
Walter Di Tommaso (ESC)
Philippe Erdmer (Cu Nim)
Simon Garside (Cu Nim)
Diego Mendez (Cu Nim)
Robert Mayer (Cu Nim) – return to solo
Moksh Parekh (ESC)
Sheldon Steinke (Cu Nim)

Badges & badge legs

Joe Bowering (ESC) – Gold altitude
Randy Blackwell (ESC) – Silver distance
Michael Carson (ESC) – C / bronze , Silver altitude,
Silver/Gold duration
Sophie Cole (ESC) – Bronze, Silver distance/altitude
Carey Cunningham (Cu Nim) – Silver distance/altitude
Jordyn Nickerson – (Cu Nim) – C badge
Daniel Nazarko (Cu Nim) – Silver altitude, Silver/Gold dur.
Shaneel Pathak (Cu Nim) – C badge, Silver altitude
Sasha Pejic, Cu Nim – Gold altitude, Gold badge

Licence

Ethen Brown (CAGC)
Gustavo Conte (Cu Nim)
Pierre Dawe (ESC)
Walter DiTommaso (ESC)
Brian Holdaway (Cu Nim)
Hanna Kalyn (ESC)
Ian McCormack (ESC)
Raelle Miller (CAGC)
Mathieu Petit (ESC)
Juian Tan (CAGC)

Instructor

Mike Busuttill (Cu Nim)
Dan Reid (Cu Nim)
Jeff Runciman (CAGC)
Amanda Vella (ESC)

OLC – club results

Cu Nim	37,387.9 km	188 flights
	20 pilots	42,981 points
Edmonton	21,134.6 km	148 flights
	16 pilots	24,944 points
Central Alberta	382.9 km	3 flights
	1 pilot	433 points
Lethbridge	286.6 km	2 flights
	2 pilots	342 points

2023 OLC year, best 6 flights over 2000 pts

Chester Fitchett, Cu Nim	3738.1 points
Chris Gough, Cu Nim	3200.3 points
Ben Hornett, Cu Nim	3071.6 points
Bruce Friesen , ESC	2913.1 points
Pavan Kumar, ESC	2807.2 points
Sasha Pejic, Cu Nim	2606.3 points
Patrick McMahon, Cu Nim	2511.7 points
Gerald Ince, Cu Nim	2422.2 points
Patrick Pelletier, ESC	2175.2 points
Struan Vaughan, Cu Nim	2133.3 points

Best 500+ km flights in calendar 2023

Chester Fitchett, Cu Nim	Arcus M	1109 km
Chris Gough, Cu Nim	Ventus	718 km
Ben Hornett, Cu Nim	LS-6	543 km
Patrick McMahon	LS-6	523 km
Bruce Friesen, ESC	mini-LAK	512 km

Record

Ray Troppmann and Michael Carson (ESC)
Multiplace 3TP distance, territorial, 419.8 km

US Region 8 Contest

Chris Gough (Cu Nim) – FAI Handicapped – 2nd
Bruce Friesen (ESC) – Club Class – 3rd place