



A wedge-tailed eagle takes dead aim at a Bird of Time over Mount Terrible in South Australia on May 9th, 2021.
(image: Allen Moore)

In The Air

Are those dark clouds gathering on the horizon?



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My first RC sailplane was a *Boss T* designed by Seattle's Don Burt of *Superior Flying Models*. Along with my older brother, I mowed lawns to abstraction in the early 1970s just so we could eventually fall slightly short of the money needed for the SFM kit, accessories and associated Heathkit GDA-1057 radio control system. Our parents faux-begrudgingly plugged the remaining financial gap and after countless hours in the 'shop' (actually a corner of the bedroom my brother and I shared) we emerged with a pretty fair example of the type. We took it out to the expansive athletic fields which still lie just

east of Thunderbird Stadium on the University of British Columbia campus. We stretched out our high start and simply started flying. It wasn't without incident, but generally it was a successful enterprise. Dad (RIP) admitted years later that he 'just about had kittens' every time we launched that thing. It did set the hook for a lifelong fascination with the pursuit, so it seems like it all worked out well in the end.

I share yet another personal anecdote — as if you haven't heard enough of them already — to underscore the point that there was little, if any, 'paperwork' required to make all that happen. I think we may have taken out a license for our 72 MHz radio but probably let it lapse once the renewal came up and we couldn't afford the fee. Or more likely spent that money on *Hot Stuff* or *Klett* hinges to replace the ones where the pins fell out into the shag carpet in our bedroom and were irretrievably lost. But the last thing we even thought about is whether it was OK for us to go flying out at UBC. We just did. We used our heads, though. We never attempted to compete with *actual* athletics on those fields. If the *Thunderbirds* were scrimmaging on the pitch we either waited for them to finish or simply came back later. Once it was finally our turn, the only 'heat' we ever attracted was by the unarmed, disarming and oft-portly UBC security detail who had their hut just to the east of the fields where we used to fly. If they paid any attention at all — which was almost never — it was just as likely to ask 'so where do you get one of these things' or 'what is the range' as opposed to wanting to see if our licensing was completely up to date and in order. Truly, it was a simpler time.

I fear, however, that those days are gone forever. The two-edged sword that are drones, along with those who insisted on flying them too close to airliners, put paid to that forever. Around the world, the reaction has been to institute various forms of regulations which while not specifically aimed at RC model aircraft, has swept them up anyway. It's a fact: we are entering a new era of regulation that will have a direct impact on how we pursue this activity.

However, before I go any further, I want to short circuit any discussion — either **for** or **against** — with respect to the validity of the imposition of these regulations. In other words, whether they **should** or **should not** happen. It's a perfectly valid point to discuss, but it is likely going to generate more heat than light and there are lots of places to have that discussion. Just not here. And, candidly, it's likely that ship has already sailed anyway.

Age has made me a realist. When I was a younger man, I was prepared to fight city hall. As I get older I would like to think I have lost none of my fire to ‘fight the man’ but a perceived, growing shortage of time has made me more realistic. To accept the inevitability of some things and then simply figure out the best way to deal with them. So it is with the talons of the state which are descending, seeking to pluck our carbon fibre goodness out of the air. Consequently, I assert there are three things which are likely to occur in the future, for all of us. These *opinions* are based on an admittedly cursory review of the first iteration of regulations from various jurisdictions around the world:

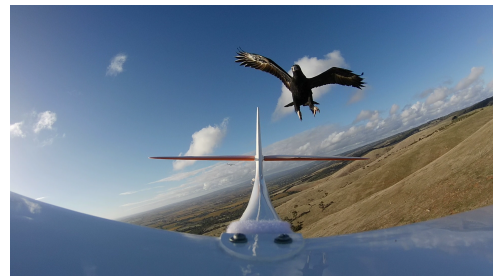
1. There is likely to be light-to-no regulation of any aircraft which weighs less than 250g or about 8.8 ounces. For the foreseeable future, if you’re flying with a plane that fits into this weight class, it will be the closest thing to the days of old out at the UBC flying — er, athletic — fields. Find a decent landing zone and lift band and just fly. Subject, of course to your city banning flying model aircraft in city parks, as some cities do, for example.
2. It will be possible to designate certain areas — your club’s slope site, for instance — as a place where model aircraft are routinely flown. Once designated as such, it will be possible to enjoy the lift zone more-or-less the way we always have. The burden, of course, will be getting your favourite flying site designated in that way. I’m assuming that this will all be front-end loaded work that once completed, won’t have to be done again. After that designation is received, however, your favourite flying site will have its rightful place in the national airspace and we can go about our business much as we did before. Within the boundaries all that hard work determined, of course.
3. The third reality — and the most draconian by far — will be if your activities don’t fall into one of the previous two categories. This is going to involve some sort of contrivance onboard your aircraft likely accompanied by more contrivances on the ground all of which are intended to automatically and precisely report, in real time, the position of your aircraft — **and maybe the pilot’s position, too** — to the national airspace system. Think that the regulations will differentiate between a rogue, multi-rotor photo drone from your cream puff *Bird of Time*? Think again. We’re all going to suffer the same regulatory blunt force trauma.

You are free to disagree with my assertions above. You'll notice, though, I have cleverly avoided being too specific about anything because the details are really not the point. Also, they will undoubtedly vary somewhat from country to country and likely over time, as well. The real point is that assuming that the assertions I have made are roughly correct, where does that leave us, exactly?

Surprisingly, I think it creates some interesting opportunities. The first which comes to mind is what I'll call the *250g Grand Challenge* (#250GC perhaps?) That is, what is the absolute best that you can do with that one, simple weight limitation? F3K machines would seem to be there already or close. But what about those F5F speed demon devotees out there — can an aircraft be designed that would provide the same kind of thrill but still fit in under the 250g rule? The *MicroMAX* reviewed by Pierre Rondel in the March RCSD seems to be trending in that direction. Perhaps there is room for some design competitions? Perhaps there have already been some of which I'm simply not aware?

The second, of course, is for entrepreneurs to be thinking about the best and least expensive way of addressing 'the third reality' requirements mentioned above. This is an area where I am totally out of my depth — I hope that someone who is an expert in the field might write a future article? — so I won't spend a lot of time trying to convey expertise I simply don't have. On the other hand, if all the time and trouble has been spent getting compliant, what things might it enable in the future that might present interesting challenges. BVLOS (beyond visual line of sight) cross-country racing is one thing which comes to mind. The other is long distance dynamic soaring such as practiced by those astounding pelicans and albatrosses to whom it comes completely naturally.

OK, I had better wrap it up before you, dear reader, think I have completely lost my mind. But I would love to hear your thoughts on the above. Please consider writing a response to this below — it will be welcomed. Or, better yet, dive in and write an article (or two) for a future issue of RCSD on these subjects. One way or another, this thing we do that we love *will* continue. I'm confident it will simply adapt to whatever future reality is out there.



You can watch the entire story of Allen's day at Mount Terrible in [his latest video](#) which is well worth watching.
(images: Allen Moore)

We have another great issue which almost contains too much to mention here, particularly given I have already spent quite a bit of your time already.

In addition to the continuing and very welcome contributions of James Hammond and Pierre Rondel, we have a few additional treats in store. Off the hop, there is the first of a three part autobiography by Bob Dodgson, the legendary sailplane designer and manufacturer of many outstanding aircraft in the 1970s, 80s and 90s. Even if you've read a version of this story elsewhere, we've added something unique to Bob's words which we think you'll enjoy.

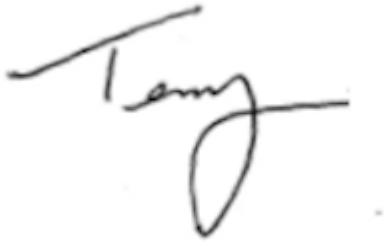
We also have the second instalment of Norimichi Kawakami's build log for his magnificent *Mita Type 3*. It is one of the most meticulous journals we have ever seen and we present it both in its original Japanese as well as an English translation.

Next, we are relaunching the legacy *RC Soaring Digest* regular feature entitled *PSS Candidate*. It provides details on a full-size aircraft likely well-suited to power scale soaring. But here's a twist: this particular article is written by the designer — and he's prepared to take your questions. You simply *have* to check it out.

We are also joined this month by the man behind the very popular *RC Soaring Diaries*, Michael Berends. We're delighted to have Michael aboard as a regular contributor where he provides some of the 'inside story' not in his videos.

Plus we have Tom Broeski back with another one of his brilliant tips, Peter Scott talks onboard computing power and, as usual, you may find a couple of additional surprises thrown in there for good measure. Thank you *so much* for reading, I hope you enjoy this issue and until next month...

Fair winds and blue skies!



*The gorgeous cover photo for this month's issue was taken by Laurent Ducros at Ménez-Hom in the Brittany region of northwest France on May 13th, 2021. The aircraft is a Polish Mucha design which was built by pilot Quentin Philippe and his father Paul during the first COVID lockdown in 2020. It took three months to build. The radio is full Jeti with MKS and Graupner servos. Laurent reports that day was made complete by "beautiful weather with wind from the northwest, 4/8 clouds and great thermals." Thanks, Laurent, for the opportunity to present this beautiful work. Now, we'd be honoured if you turn to the **first article** in the May issue or go to the **table of contents** to find the exact article for which you're looking. Downloadable PDFS: just this article or this entire issue.*

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