



This magnificent picture was taken on 2021-06-11 by Alexandre Mittaz after a mid-afternoon, one hour long thermal flight in the Val d'Hérens / Valais / Switzerland. The aircraft is a Drops388 from DropsFactory in Germany. Its wingspan is 388cm, weighs in at 5.8kg unballasted and is constructed with hardshell carbon fiber wings. To provide a sense of scale, Alexandre's wife can be seen at the extreme left of the photo (you'll have to look really, really closely).

## In The Air

Is great flying right on your doorstep?



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Jun 12 · 6 min read

One of the occupational hazards of this job is that I have a steadily growing list of 'must see' places to visit on this gorgeous Big Blue Marble of ours. I am truly fortunate to get to see (in some cases before it's seen anywhere else) some truly breathtaking photos of what clearly are the best places to fly in the world. If I can ever gather the courage to get on a plane again — and I win the *MaxMillions* to pay for it — I could easily stay busy travelling the world for the rest of my life and not even scratch the surface of great flying

sites. Take, for example, Alexandre Mittaz's photo which headlines this month's *In The Air*. If there is a scene which is more idyllic, I can't imagine what it is or where it is. I've even suggested to my wife that we simply sell our house, pack our bags and move to Switzerland permanently. Until, of course, I discovered there's a reason why there aren't many Swiss listings on the @YourCheapDreamHome Instagram feed.

I moved to Calgary, Alberta over 30 years ago, and for quite a few years after I arrived here, I lamented the fact 'there was no where to slope fly'. That condition went on for quite some time until, for reasons I am not readily able to explain, I began to look at the urbanized, prairie landscape through different eyes. I realized the reason I couldn't find a good place to fly is that **they are everywhere**. It was one of those classic cases of not being able to see the forest except for all of those pesky trees that kept getting in the way. I started keeping track of potential sites and while the vast majority I have not yet had an opportunity to try — yet — there are something like 25 sites which have real potential.

In retrospect, what likely changed the way I looked at my home town's offerings with respect to flying sites was the advent of small, lightweight, efficient and highly maneuverable designs like Mike Richter's *Alula*, for just one of many examples. Aircraft which, happily, fit under the 250g threshold where many of the new array of civil aviation regulations kick in as I described in last month's *In The Air*. Yet another great reason to be thinking about the *250g Grand Challenge* which I mentioned in that column as well.

For the sites I have tried and have had success there are three specific techniques which I use to assess the lift potential before I commit an aircraft (that is 'money') to a new slope:

The first is simple geometry: if there is a clean run up to a slope of even a modest inclination and the prevailing wind is blowing within anything close to 30 degrees of the fall line, there are precious few ways for the wind to go but up. It's not a perfect science, by far, but I'm still surprised at the reliability of this method to determine that the lift 'must be there'. And then have it turn out that it actually is. I'm not always good enough to exploit it, of course, but that's on me, not the quality of the opportunity.

Second, a bottle of kids' blowing bubbles is always close at hand in the car and my wife, Michelle, has waited patiently many a time as I walk around a potential site and start

blowing soap bubbles and studying their flight path intently. The kind soul she is, she has even explained to passersby that I am not actually a lunatic as I wander around, seemingly aimlessly, in the long grass, stopping occasionally to produce another cloud of 'tiny bubbles' (with apologies to the great Don Ho). Bubbles not only are the single most accurate method of determining wind direction (see previous paragraph) but if they go up there is a pretty good chance you will, too.

**Incredible head stabilization by Falcon and stationar...**



Thing you're as good as this little guy? No offense, but you're not. None of us are. (video: YouTube)

Finally, there is a trick that was taught to me by an old flying buddy of mine back in the late 1970s — George Cotten of Victoria, BC —who studied birds on potential slopes and made this very sage observation: for gulls and raptors who are already up there looking down on you — and undoubtedly laughing their asses off — study their tails, not just their wings. If the wings and tail are both steady, there's a good chance you'll be keeping company with them shortly. If the wings are steady but the tail is twisting, you'll do just as well to move on. There are times we have to face the fact our feathered friends are just way better at this thing that we do than we are.

So until such time that those lottery numbers come in and you can afford that big RV and launch out on the endless road trip exploring all the great flying sites you have seen and read about, first look around your home town. There may be places to fly which are

walking distance from where you already live. Oh, an important note: be really smart in the use of these sites for this purpose. Always obey prevailing city and other ordinances and by-laws, of course. If you're a good citizen who is being careful and considerate, nobody will be in a position to complain about this green, clean and interesting recreational use of the site. You may even be able to create a couple of converts!

And what about you? Do you have a tip or technique for exploring a brand new, potentially unflown slope? Or perhaps a method of picking out potential candidates? Let us know or better yet, contribute an article and share your wisdom with the RCSD readership. We would all love to hear from you!

## In This Issue

I have said it before but it bears repeating every month: I am humbled and gratified by those great contributors who are making RCSD one of their online homes. We have another great issue with probably too many highlights to list them all. But I'll try:

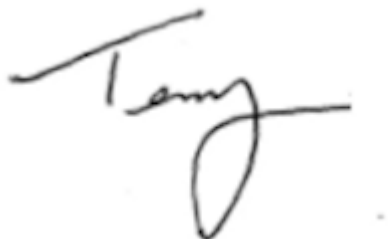
Way back in the first issue of the NEW RCSD, Phil Cooke reported on the Power Scale Soaring Association (PSSA)'s September event at the Great Orme in Wales. I'm thrilled to welcome Phil back as he reports on their first post-pandemic event from just last month. As always, it's hard to say which Phil does better, pictures or storytelling, because he does both so well. James Hammond returns with his fourth and final instalment in his *Designing for...* master class. This time 'round, James covers aircraft which would be suitable for that beautiful Swiss landscape above. Fear not, though, turns out that James is going to be back next month after all — see his latest for a hint as to why. Pierre Rondel adds to his previous and very well-received article on the STGmodel *Orden*. It's gone electro! In particular, check out the video in that article...it's fabulous. Bob Dodgson also returns with the second of his three part autobiography along with that signature, modern twist we have added. Last but certainly not least, Michael 'RC Soaring Diaries' Berends provides in-depth coverage of his new *Windburner* and *RPM* from Australia's Kevie Built RC Planes.

But wait, there's more! We also have more event coverage from the *2021 New England Scale Soaring Aerotow* by Steve Pasierb. Peter Scott writes another one of his inimitable reviews, this time for the FrSky Electronic Speed Controller. Broeski is back with yet another smart tip which will have you face-palming yourself punch drunk. Finally, Norimichi Kawakami provides the next part of his *1/3rd Scale Mita Type 3 Production*

Notes in both Japanese and English. And in the ‘really pleasant surprises’ department, Norimichi has provided a really neat bonus article. For that, you will just have to dig through the June issue to find that gem.

So, with a bit of luck, something for everybody. Thank you so much for reading and I really hope you enjoy what we have managed to cobble together for you this month.

Fair winds and blue skies!



*This month’s stunning cover photo is from Stéphane Ruelle, and was taken on 2021-06-06 at the site of the US GPS Triangle Nationals at the Siskiyou County Airport in Montague, California. Stéphane will have a full report on his attendance at the event in the July issue of RCSD. Now, without further ado, here’s the **first article** in this issue or go to the **table of contents** for all that other good stuff. Downloadable PDFs: just this article or this entire issue.*

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