

MONTANA PILOTS' ASSOCIATION



Heading Bug

July / August 2004

NOTAMS:

Hays MOA restricted airspace plan dropped

The FAA on Aug. 2 withdrew a proposal to establish restricted airspace south of the Bear Paws Mountains in north central Montana. The MPA and AOPA asked for a cutout over the Cow Creek Airstrip because it would have restricted access to this backcountry airstrip. The other Breaks strips are all south of Cow Creek and would not have been directly under the restricted airspace but access from the north would have been affected. The FAA withdrew the Bear Paw proposal because the military was unable to acquire use of the land beneath the proposed restricted area. The Air Force had intended to use the area for air-to-ground training for the Montana Air National Guard 120th Fighter Wing.



BLM lacks data

After learning of the Bureau of Land Management's plan to propose the closure of nearly 150 miles of the Missouri River to seaplanes, the Seaplane Pilots' Association (SPA) made a Freedom of Information Act request and found that the bureau had not collected or produced a shred of data supporting the proposal. While the bureau had collected numerous citizens' complaints about aircraft noise in the area, those complaints focused on military and land-based aircraft. Not one mentioned floatplanes.

SPA WaterFlying magazine

President's Message:

First I'd like to welcome the Southwest MT Hangar which has emerged as an outgrowth of the Dillon Hangar. This new Hangar, as of May 25, 2004, encompasses the communities of Dillon, Twin Bridges, Butte, Anaconda, Silver Star, Alder and Whitehall. The Southwest MT Hangar will be the MPA host for the 2005 Montana Aviation Conference in Butte, Feb. 24-26. I look forward to working with their officers and membership who represent that region of Montana.

During the months of June, July and August, the MPA participated in airstrip work sessions at Benchmark, Spotted Bear, Meadow Creek and Schafer Meadows, with close to 400 documented hours of airstrip improvements and maintenance through the United States Department of Agriculture, Forest Service (USFS) Volunteer Program. The reason for participating in the Volunteer Program is three-fold:

1. Validating the positive working relationship the aviation community has with the USFS.
2. The USFS can report documented volunteer hours as part of their annual performance reports.

Volunteers are considered USFS employees while engaged in an agreed upon task/duty and are entitled to tort claims and injury compensation.

For those of you who volunteer your time to make recreational airstrips a better and safer flying environment for the greater aviation community and others to enjoy, I thank you.

Included in this Newsletter, is a letter I want to share written to the MPA from Debbie Alke, Administrator, MT Aeronautics Division. In that letter she referenced the positive working relationship the MPA has with her office and other government agencies. To that reference, I again thank you for making the MPA an organization that is forthright and credible in action and for your willingness to build alliances for the betterment of Montana and our community as a whole.

Don't forget to mark your calendar to attend the 2004 MPA Fall Fly-in, Labor Day weekend in Glasgow. By all reports, the Valley Hangar has put together a great weekend for all of us to enjoy. I hope to see you there...

Chuck Manning
MPA President
Phone/fax:
406-844-3369 summer
406-257-6262 winter
cnmanning@centurytel.net

2004 Calendar of Events

- Aug. 18-21**—Aviation Career Summer Camp for high school students—for registration or further information call Jeanne MacPherson, 206-444-2506(e-mail jemacpherson@state.mt.us) or Len Wheeler, 406-449-5270 ext. 18 (e-mail Leonard.wheeler@faa.gov)
- Aug. 20-22**—*Third Annual Montana Fun Weekend Fly-In & Car Show*—Cut Bank, MT (CTB)—for further information contact montanafunweekend@yahoo.com
- Aug. 21**—*Sixth Annual Polson Fly-In Pancake Breakfast & Pitchfork Fondue*—Polson (8S1)
- Sep. 3-4**—MPA Fall Fly-In—Valley Hangar—Glasgow (GGW)—BBQ Friday night—Saturday-breakfast, antique & classic car show, Young Eagle rides and an Airshow by Phil Petrik in his T-28. Transportation is available to the Fort Peck Interpretive Center, Power House and Pioneer Museum—for more information call Prairie Aviation, 406-228-4023
- Sep. 3-6**—Para Plane Aviators are hosting a multi-state Fly-In—Fort Peck airport—for further information contact Glenn Meier at gmeier@cji.net
- Sept. 4-6**—Cleveland National Air Show—Burke Lakefront Airport, Cleveland, Ohio
- Sep. 11**—Wings or Freedom, Sidney Airshow —Sidney (SDY)—for further information call Sharon Rau, 406-443-1916 or Bryan Prevost, 406-774-3033
- Sep. 11**—Dillon Airport Days—Breakfast, lunch, airplane rides, bowling, flour bombing and spot landings—Dillon (DLN)—for further information call Dennis or Jean DeVivo, 406-683-5242
- Sep. 11**—Nelson, B.C.—for further information e-mail Tom Grypma at tom_grypma69@hotmail.com
- Sep. 17-19**—Mountain Search Pilot Clinic—Kalispell City Airport (S27)—for further information contact the Montana Aeronautics Division
- Sep. 25**—Columbus Fly-In—Columbus (6S3)—for further information call 406-328-4375
- Oct. 2**—MPA Board Meeting—Helena
- Dec. 2**—Happy 65th Birthday to the Montana Pilots' Association



He will be missed—Big Sandy pilot Wayne Turner was killed, Jun. 17 when his single-engine-air-tanker crashed north of St. George Utah. Wayne was flying a Dromader M-18 battling a wildfire on BLM land and had just dropped a load of retardant. A witness reported the plane pitched up and stalled following the drop. The plane crashed and burned despite a helicopter making water drops within minutes of the crash site.

Wayne, 58, had over 21,000 hours of flight time. He owned and operated a flying service, which provided aerial application, flight instruction and contract pilot services. Wayne was a flight instructor and designated examiner and also an instructor for the Montana Aeronautics Mountain Search Clinic held each September. Early in his aviation career, Wayne flew for Johnson Flying Service in Missoula.

Wayne had endless amounts of energy and loved the outdoors. It was his goal to climb the highest peak in every state and he was well on his way to success. He was caring and compassionate and always reaching out to others in need. It did not matter if he knew someone for five years or five minutes, he was always ready to help.

Wayne's first love, after his family, was flying. He will be remembered as a true gentlemen and a skilled pilot who was always ready with a smile, joke and a big bear hug.

Professors needed—There are several openings this fall at Rocky Mountain College School of Aviation in Billings for adjunct professors. The classes to be taught are private, instrument, commercial and CFI ground schools along with glass cockpit and power plant classes. The classes are taught during the day, on either Monday, Wednesday and Friday or Tuesday and Thursday schedules. If interested in teaching college level aviation courses in Billings, contact Dan Hargrove at 406-657-1060.

The MPA still needs members—Be sure and carry MPA applications with you for prospective members. If you do not have applications, contact your local hangar officers or Geanette Cebulski, MPA secretary/treasurer at mpasecretary@blackfoot.net. For questions, contact any of the officers listed below.

Montana Pilots' Association, Inc.

Chuck Manning, President

Kalispell, 406-257-6262 cnmanning@centurytel.net

Joe Roberts, Western Vice President

Helena, 406-442-8891 joerob7@msn.com

Charles Inman, Eastern Vice President

Havre, 406-265-4757 farmin@hi-line.com

Chuck Jarecki, Western Director

Polson, 406-883-2248 pennymt@digisys.net

Jim Lewis, Eastern Director

Lewistown, 406-538-9739 marlewis@mcn.com

Geanette Cebulski, Secretary/Treasurer

Seeley Lake, 406-677-3423 mpasecretary@blackfoot.net

Yoshie Simmons, Webmaster

Lewistown, 406-538-2511 yoshie@blueskyaviation.net

Art Lindstrom, Heading Bug Editor

Polson, 406-883-4160 airlindy1@hotmail.com



Hangar Reports

Sanders County (Plains) Hangar—The June meeting was a no-host dinner meeting and was held at the Rimrock Restaurant in Thompson Falls. At the last meeting Dan Lilja suggested our Hangar conduct a brush clearing work-party to restore the airstrip at Noxon. Upon inquiry he found that the power company that owns the property will not allow the brush clearing. Dan gave a video presentation of some of the back country strips he has recently flown into in Oregon, Idaho and Montana, including the Hell's Canyon area and the Missouri River Breaks. Also shown were aerial photos taken along the Rocky Mountain front and the strip at Benchmark.

By Steve Vondracek

Miles City Hangar—held a Steak Fry at Sunday Creek Airpark on June 5th. We had a very good turn out and a very nice day. I do believe we ended up with about 13 planes and had several people just drive in. The steaks were very good and all the other food people brought was great. No games were played as it got a bit warm to do too much but we all sat around and had a great visit. Miles City hangar is having their meetings on a every other month basis to see how it goes, seems to be going fine right now. We also had a Safety Meeting at the College but did not have very good attendance, maybe we will try again later in the year. Alvin Hirsch and Monte Reder attended a Search and Rescue meeting in Roundup on July 26th. That is about it from this end of the Big Sky, hopefully some of you will make it to the fall meeting in Glasgow in September and join Alvin and Barb Hirsch at their ranch for the annual fly-in on the first Saturday in Oct. Till then happy flying. *By Barb Hirsch*

Valley (Glasgow) Hangar—The Valley Hangar will be hosting the MPA Fall Fly-In Saturday, Sept. 4, at the Glasgow airport (GGW). For those pilots flying in on Friday, the Valley Hangar will be hosting a BBQ at the airport. On Saturday, the local 4H will be serving breakfast in the city hangar. The Flat Land Cruisers will have antique and classic cars on display and the Valley Hangar has arranged transportation to the new Fort Peck Interpretive Center, the Power House, and the Pioneer Museum. There will be Young Eagle rides and the afternoon will be filled with pilot activities and an air show by Phil Petrik in his T-28. Saturday night will feature a no-host dinner dance. The local Para Plane aviators are hosting a multi state fly-in at the Fort Peck airport on September 3- 6. The Valley Hangar is planning a flight to the Fort Peck Airport, Sunday Sept. 5. For more information on the Para Plane Fly-In, contact Glenn Meier at gmeier@cji.net. Pilots and their families are welcome to camp with their airplanes at the airport or may make reservations at a local motel. The following is a list of motels;

Campbell Lodge 406-228-9328
Cottonwood Inn 800-321-8213

Koski Motel 888-238-8282

LaCasa Motel 877-228-9311

Roosevelt Hotel 406-228-4341

Starlodge 406-228-2494

For more information, call Prairie Aviation (406-228-4023) or e-mail any of the Valley Hangar officers. *By Rusty Dahl*

Vigilante (Helena) Hangar—The April meeting was held in Townsend (8U8) and about 15 airplanes made the trip with others driving. Neil and Karen Salmi hosted the meeting at their hangar on the Townsend airport, across from the hangar/residence of Mike and Jeanie Ferguson. Neil is very involved with the RANS kit-built aircraft, and had an example of his handiwork for inspection. He gave an informative presentation on the challenges of home-building an airplane.

Helena's turf airstrip is now open for the season. The airstrip is approximately 2000 feet long and parallel to runway 9/27 on the south (tower) side between taxiways Bravo and Delta. Since it is not an "official" runway you have to request the "turf runway" with the tower. They will not give you a clearance to land, but will say something like "proceed at your own risk."

The May meeting's program was two "farm boys" from Kalispell joining the re-enactment of the 1932 National Air Tour. Hank Galpin and Ray Sanders, had quite a story to tell and the pictures to show of their participation in the 17-day event last September in Hank's restored Travel Air 6000. An interesting note is Hank and Ray stopped at Froid, Montana on their way to join the tour in Detroit. The 1928 National Air Tour's stop between Spokane and Minneapolis was Froid. *By Joe Roberts*

Southwest MT Hangar—The Dillon Hangar met in Butte on May 25 at the Bert Mooney Airport Terminal, guests of Rick Griffith, with 28 people in attendance. The group included pilots from Dillon, Twin Bridges, Butte, Anaconda, Silver Star, Alder and Whitehall. The purpose of the meeting was to decide if the group wanted to expand the Dillon Hangar. The new entity would be called the Southwest MT Hangar and include Beaverhead, Madison, Jefferson, Deer Lodge, Silver Bow, Granite and Powell counties. After considerable discussion from all areas it was unanimously agreed to merge into the Southwest MT Hangar. Byron Bayers will remain president until the next election and Rob Mc Dowell will remain vp. Heather Bracket was elected Sec-Tre. President Bayers named the following group to formulate the bylaws for the Hangar. George Warner and Dennis Divivo, Dillon; Rob McDowell, Lisle Wood and Dave Gates, Butte; Tom Earhart, Anaconda and Ron Coleman, Twin Bridges will serve with Bayers. This hangar will host the 2005 Aeronautics Convention in Butte. Combining the counties into one hangar could well make this the largest Montana Hangar. *By Byron Bayers*

2004 USFS/MPA Volunteer Program

Meadow Creek Airstrip (June 12-13):

Tasks accomplished:

- Rebuild roller (frame fabrication and installation) prior to work session
- Small tractor on site 6/11, removed 6/14 (29 hours total tach time billed)
- Rolled runway
- Replaced two windsocks
- Installed three new tie-downs (north end)



(above) Chuck Manning rolls the runway extension and (l to r) RT Atkins, Rod Bittney, Ed Ethridge and Chuck Jarecki provide the manual labor. (photo by Art Lindstrom)



(left) Chuck Jarecki and Perry Brown unload the cement for the tie-downs. (Photo by Art Lindstrom)

- Painted and installed tie-down markers (tires)
- Cleaned outhouses (removed 4 black widow spiders)
- Cleared visual encroachment trees on north bank (safety)
- Added two additional cones on south end
- Filled low spots on south end of runway
- Cut brush encroaching onto runway periphery
- Sprayed weeds
- South safety over-run/take-off extension

Completed *phase one* by leveling the rough area making a strip 900 feet by 30 feet on the south end between the cones and trees as a safety over-run/take-off extension. The process included smoothing with small tractor (clearing brush, filling holes, rolling, debris removal) hand-work (clearing brush, leveling, etc.) (Approx. 20 tractor hours)



(above) Perry Brown "packed in" the steaks for the Meadow Creek work crew. (photo by Art Lindstrom)

Phase two (spring 05) will consist of tilling/disking, floating, seeding and rolling.

Phase three (spring 06) filling low (settled) spots and rolling.

Current condition: Approximately 900 feet useable only in an emergency.

Still to-do:

- Marking tie-downs (need more painted tires)
- Replace rotted planks on picnic tables (Aeronautics took measurements)
- Bear Box (being constructed according to USFS specifications)

Schafer Airstrip (July 17-18):

Tasks accomplished:

- Filled holes on the east end of the airstrip using a buckboard and mule team, arranged by the Forest Service, to transfer the dirt, volunteers with shovels worked at both ends.
- Replacement of the perimeter fence rails. This work



(above) Regional Forester, Deb Mucklow's husband with mules and buckboard transferring dirt to fill holes in the runway. (photo by Dan Lilja)

required a crew to cut lodge poles, skidders to remove the bark, removal of broken poles and nailing up the replacements. The buckboard crew loaded the broken poles and transported them to the MPA camping area where they were hand-sawn into firewood.

- Earlier in the week a Forest Service youth volunteer crew moved the outhouse a few feet. All in attendance were glad that task had been completed prior to our arrival.

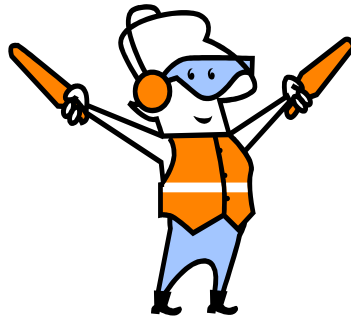
Loren and Jane Smith from Great Falls furnished another great meal this year of prime rib, corn on the cob and hand-cranked ice cream. Joe Roberts and Don Kinney did an excellent job cooking the meat.

Thanks to all who attended and contributed to another great time at Schafer.

Chuck Manning,
President
Montana Pilots' Association

Dear Chuck.

On behalf of the Montana Aeronautics Division, I'd like to extend our sincere gratitude to the Montana Pilots' Association for your efforts in supporting the mission of the Division.



The State of Montana Aeronautics Division owns or operates 16 airports scattered throughout the state. The Montana Pilots Association assists the Division at these facilities by providing:

➤ Runway maintenance—filling gopher holes, watering, mowing, shifting runway cones, weed spraying, clearing of brush and trees, sanitation facilities, tie-downs, replacing windsocks, painting of windsock standards, signs and other airport markings.

➤ Providing supplies—picnic tables/pavilions, fire rings, barbecues, storage buildings and food storage (bear) boxes.

The support played in maintaining these airports and other public use airports that are jointly maintained through cooperative agreements with other federal partners is greatly appreciated. These airports are vital to the Montana transportation system and provide critical services for emergency purposes, search and rescue operations, medical evacuations and fire fighting assistance.

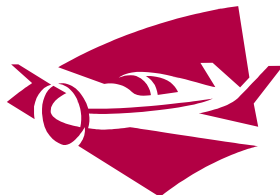
The Division sponsors many education programs for all sectors of the aviation community. These programs extend to children, educators, aircraft mechanics, pilots, flight instructors and many others. Members of the Montana Pilots' Association contribute greatly by assisting the Aeronautics Division through instructing at clinics, participation in career awareness activities and lecturing at a variety of forums.

As you can see, the important tasks accomplished with volunteer assistance from the Montana Pilots' Association simply would not be completed without the manpower and financial assistance received by the Aeronautics Division.

Thanks again for all that the Montana Pilots' Association does to ensure safe airports and educational opportunities for not only Montana citizens but all persons visiting and transitioning through our great state.

I look forward to enjoying many more years of the great partnership that we enjoy—thank to all members of the Montana Pilots' Association.

Sincerely,
Debbie Alke
Administrator

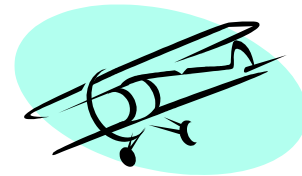


FAA unveils Sport Pilot and Light-sport Aircraft Rule

FAA Administrator Marion Blakey on July 20 released the Sport Pilot and Light-Sport Aircraft rule in an effort to enhance the fun of aviation, help shatter cost barriers, and allow already certificated pilots to fly once again using a driver's license in lieu of a medical certificate. When it goes into effect on Sept. 1, it will introduce a new level of pilot certificate and category of low-performance aircraft with takeoff weights of up to 1,320 pounds and maximum airspeeds of 120 knots. While it could take some time for the industry to fully gear up to produce new airplanes and the FAA to train pilot examiners and draft written tests, the really good news for many AOPA members is that they can be back in the air in a matter of weeks, thanks in large part to AOPA's efforts. "It was important to AOPA that our members who love and support general aviation, but no longer have a current medical, be able to fly again," said AOPA President Phil Boyer.

According to the final rule, pilots who hold a recreational certificate or better, but whose standard or special issuance medical certificate has lapsed, will be able to fly under sport pilot rules with a valid driver's license and by self-certifying that they are medically fit to fly. Pilots whose medical has been revoked, suspended, or denied by the FAA will need further review by the FAA and could be required to obtain a special issuance certificate. Pilots flying under the sport pilot rules will be able to fly many familiar certified airplanes, including Piper J-2 and J-3 Cubs and models from Luscombe, Taylorcraft and Ercoupe, when the rule becomes effective on Sept. 1. The complete sport pilot rule can be downloaded from the FAA's Web site

(http://www.faa.gov/avr/arm/rulemaking/SportPilotRule7_19.doc), but be warned that the document is 452 pages long. (From AOPA *epilot*)



THE FIRST DAY OF THE NEW RULES

What will really change on the morning of Sept. 1, when the new Sport-Pilot/Light Sport Aircraft rules take effect? The one thing we could find, with help from EAA info analyst Charlie Becker in the AirVenture Sport Pilot tent, is this: If you want to fly a standard-category aircraft that qualifies as a light-sport aircraft, such as certain Aeroncas, Luscombes, Pipers or Ercoupes—EAA has a long list of dozens of airplanes that qualify—you can burn your current third-class medical or let it lapse, show up at the airport on Sept. 1 with only your valid driver's license, and fly as a Sport Pilot. That means day VFR only. (From *Avflash*)

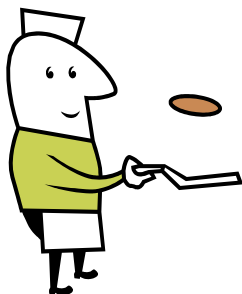
“Places to go, things to do”

Fun Day Trips *by Geanette Cebulski*

Philipsburg, Montana is located in the Flint Creek Valley southwest of Drummond between the Sapphire, Flint Creek and Anaconda Ranges. You may have seen the television commercials advertising the Sapphire Gallery and the Sweet Palace and telling of the beautiful drive from different locations in western Montana. Well forget driving, it is also a beautiful flight! Philipsburg is an old mining town and one of Montana's largest cities during the gold rush days. Many of the old buildings have undergone extensive restoration. Philipsburg has one of the oldest operating opera houses in Montana - Opera House Theater Company, which boasts backdrop paintings by famed western painter, Edgar Paxson. Several plays are scheduled each summer and you can see three different plays if you stay the whole weekend. You can stay in a beautiful old restored hotel on the main street and there are several great places to eat. We strolled down the main street checking out the local gift shops and antique stores, enjoyed ice cream treats at the old fashioned soda fountain, bought a bag of salt water taffy and walked back to the airport - about a mile. (Good thing we had that taffy to keep us going!) We hope to make it back again this summer for one of the plays. Philipsburg, Montana (U05), CTAF: 112.9, Elevation 5212', LAT/LON N46-19.2, W113-18.3, Runway 16/34 is 3600' and paved.

Nelson Pilots' Association needs help!

The city of Nelson, British Columbia, is trying to close the airport and the local pilots are sponsoring a fly-in to show public support for the airport. The Fly-In is scheduled for Sept. 11 and the Nelson Pilots' Association is inviting all pilots to fly up to beautiful British Columbia and they will provide the fuel. For more information on the fly-in and the events planned, e-mail Tom Grypma at tom_grypma69@hotmail.com.



Looking for the \$100 hamburger?

By Geanette Cebulski

A scenic place to fly for a great Montana meal is the Yesterday Calf-A in Dell. Dell is located south of Dillon near the Montana/Idaho border between Clark Canyon and Lima Reservoirs. The Yesterday Calf-A opened in 1978 in the old Dell school house and serves meals with homemade breads, pies and real potatoes. Just find a chair and sit down at one of the large communal tables. A hamburger w/ chips is \$4 or if you are camping at Clark Canyon and want breakfast, their basic breakfast (bacon, sau-

sage or ham and eggs with toast, hash browns and coffee) is \$5.75. If you would prefer pancakes they serve large sourdough pancakes for \$4. You can call ahead (406-276-3308) to arrange transportation or buzz the restaurant when you fly in and they will drive over and pick you up. You may want to consider walking, it is only a mile and you will need the exercise after eating because Linda, the owner, "guarantees no one goes away hungry." Dell, Montana (4U9), LAT/LON N44-44.1, W112-43.2, CTAF: 122.9, Elevation 6007', Runway 14/32 is 7000' and paved with lights and a PAPI.



Online now, the new web-savvy FAA--

In the past, getting a replacement certificate meant being grounded four to six weeks while awaiting the official paperwork in the mail. (The FAA reminds us it is illegal to fly without an airman certificate.) But if you're one of the those unlucky sods who washed your airman certificate along with your last pair of jeans and now need a temporary replacement, rejoice! The agency has now set up an online service (<http://registry.faa.gov/airmen.asp>) to send you a temporary certificate via fax or e-mail in hours or days instead of weeks or months. In addition, you can also get the new permanent certificate and pay the whopping \$2 fee for it online. FAA spokesman Roland Herwig says the agency typically processes about 50,000 applications for replacement certificates each year. However, in the last 10 or so months that has spiked to about 100,000 because pilots want the cool new laminated certificate with hologram introduced last year at Oshkosh.

--and the FAA taketh away "N" numbers.

While you're online checking out the new airman certificate it would be a mighty good time to update your address as well. As part of an increase in the FAA's regulatory enforcement program, aircraft owners must, within 60 days of June 1, have current addresses in the data base or face suspension or revocation of their registration and cancellation of their tail numbers. The FAA says having accurate addresses is a safety issue, so pilots can get Airworthiness Directives and safety and maintenance information. Ah, but what about homeland security? "Let's just say that all modes of transportation have been impacted by security issues in the months since 9/11," FAA spokesman Roland Herwig confirms.

Help save the MPA money—The Montana Pilots' Association is offering current members the option of receiving the Heading Bug by e-mail instead of regular mail. The money MPA saves by making this offer can instead be used to preserve and protect Montana's aviation community. To sign-up, contact Geanette Cebulski, sec./teas. at mpasecretary@blackfoot.net. Please provide the following: full name, mailing address and e-mail address.

Bears, Belugas, Bay Company and Boreal Forest

By Chuck Jarecki

If you are looking for an interesting Canadian destination, only a one-day flight away from Montana, where you can see polar bears, Beluga whales and caribou, plus learn more on the history of the Hudson Bay Company and native culture, a trip to Churchill, Manitoba, is for you.

Almost every summer for the past 20 years, my wife, Penny, and I have taken some type of flying trip to Canada's Yukon and Northwest Territories. In July 2001, we decided to fly to Churchill, on the western shore of Hudson Bay, to see the wildlife and learn more of the history and culture of the area.

As you follow the railroad north to Churchill (there is no road to Churchill), the first sign of the town are the massive grain elevators rising above the horizon. Churchill is a deep-water seaport and offers the shortest sea-lanes to Europe. All year long, cereal grains from the Canadian provinces are shipped to Churchill by rail for storage until the sea ice melts in late July. Before you land, circle over the nearby Churchill River estuary to observe the numerous Beluga whales swimming about. This is one of the principal calving grounds for these white sea creatures. Also, circle over historic Fort Prince of Wales, situated on a point on land across the river from town.

At the Churchill airport there is a friendly Shell Oil dealer with free parking. Do not park at the terminal, a fee will be charged. There are numerous accommodations in Churchill. We stayed at the Iceberg Inn which is a fairly new facility with eight comfortable rooms and transportation to the airport.

Everything in Churchill is within easy walking distance. There are plenty of places to eat, lots of shops to purchase the obligatory polar bear souvenirs, an informative visitor center, a Parks Canada reception facility and an excellent museum on native culture. We spent part of one day on a tour of Fort Prince of Wales across the Churchill River, where an armed Parks Canada employee on a four-wheeler drives ahead to guard against stray polar bears. On the return crossing of the river we watched whales and, using hydrophones, eavesdropped on their underwater communications. We also saw a polar bear on the rocky shore and another large male bear swimming in Hudson Bay. We ended the sunny afternoon by walking the rocky shore of Hudson Bay, observing the fragile native plants, listening to the cries of the sea birds, and gazing at the glacial scoured granite rocks with their mantles of varicolored lichens.

I have always wanted to visit the former Hudson Bay Company post at York Factory at the mouth of the Hayes

River about 150 miles south of Churchill. This historic site served the Company for over three hundred years, much of that time as their principal administrative headquarters and depot for furs and trade goods. But since our plane was on wheels I did not think it would be possible to land in the area until a Parks Canada employee in Churchill told us about, a dirt strip on an island in the Hayes River in front of the Post. He advised buzzing the buildings and someone would come out in a boat to get us.

We took off, heading generally south along the coast at five hundred feet. The terrain is flat with numerous ancient shorelines. The tide was out and the mud flats stretched a half a mile or more from shore. Large boulders dotted the exposed bed of the bay. Herds of caribou were seen grazing on the tundra. The sheer numbers of animals as they moved along made it appear as if the ground was in motion. The numerous ponds and lakes were filled with snow geese and Canada geese grazed on the tundra vegetation among the stunted spruce trees of the taiga. We flew over several polar bears, some with only one cub and some with twins.



An hour later we reached the Hayes River and York Factory with its imposing white two-story, multi-windowed warehouse. The 1,500 foot airstrip is located on the upstream end of the brushy island and there is no windsock. We landed without a problem but the runway did have soft spots and ruts. Shortly after shutting down the engine, two native men arrived by outboard motor boat. They were the owners of the airstrip and had a goose-hunting lodge nearby. Each spring during ice breakup, high water partly destroys the airstrip and they have to grade it with an old dozer parked nearby. We were the first airplane to land there that year and they had not finished the repairs.

The men took us across to their lodge and we walked the short distance to the remains of York Factory. The summer Parks Canada caretaker provided us with an informative tour of the grounds and buildings. Numerous artifacts were on display in the old warehouse. We spent two hours looking around before walking back to the lodge and a boat ride back to the island for our return flight to Churchill. We learned a little more about the significant role the Hudson Bay Company had on Canada's history. Even if you cannot land, it is worth the trip for a fly-by inspection.

The next morning we departed Churchill for the rest of our trip, which included Arviat, Rankin Inlet, Baker Lake, Coppermine, Norman Wells, Fort Providence, Fort St. John, Red Deer and home to Polson. But that's another story.

Montana Pilots' Association, Inc.
P.O. Box 1178
Seeley Lake, MT 59868-1178

Return Service Requested

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Heading Bug

P.O. Box 4311, Helena, MT 59604

MONTANA PILOTS' ASSOCIATION



INCORPORATED

July / August 2004

The Bi-monthly Newsletter

of the

Montana Pilots' Association, Inc.

We're on the Web at <http://montanapilots.org>