

# Centennial of Wright's 1911 Record Soaring Flight

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## Summary

The centennial of Orville Wright's record soaring flight on 24 October 1911 was celebrated at the SOARING100 event on the Outer Banks of North Carolina USA between 21-24 October 2011. The ceremonies, lectures and glider flights highlighted the historical significance of the location to motorless aviation.

Over the weekend of 21 – 24 October 2011, a grass-roots partnership of the primary sporting soaring associations in the USA, with the help of Kitty Hawk-based First Flight Foundation ([www.firstflight.org](http://www.firstflight.org)), celebrated the centennial of Orville Wright's record soaring flight of 9 minutes 45 seconds set on October 24, 1911. The event, called SOARING100, attracted over 10,000 visitors to the Outer Banks, NC venues of Jockey's Ridge State Park and Wright Brothers National Memorial.

"We were overwhelmed by the attendance," remarked John Harris, president of the Rogallo Foundation. "People are still enthralled by the Wright brothers story and excited about sport soaring, whether with sailplanes, hang gliders, paragliders or models."

"The goal of SOARING100 to complete the story of the Wrights experiments on the Outer Banks and instill greater interest in the role of gliders over the last century was well-received," added event chair Jim Short. "This was a remarkable grass-roots effort that happened because of the generosity, volunteerism and enthusiasm of all involved."

Kicking off the event was the dedication of a National Landmark of Soaring, coordinated by the National Soaring Museum, at Jockey's Ridge. The Landmark plaque honors those who have flown the Outer Banks dunes, including the Wrights, Francis Rogallo (father of the modern hang glider) and modern hang glider and paraglider pilots.

A historical symposium, coordinated by Dr. Tom Crouch of the National Air and Space Museum, focused on the role of gliders in the earliest development of the airplane, possibly the first such event. A "Legends of Hang Gliding" symposium, organized by John Harris, was another first at which hang gliding pioneers gathered to discuss the development of their sport. "We were indeed pleased that these unique events occurred at SOARING100," said Lola Hilton, executive director of the First Flight Foundation, the lead partner for the event. "And there was more," she added. "Individual speakers included NASA Space Shuttle pilot Susan Kilrain, National Park Service interpreter Darrell Collins who was the National Soaring Museum's prestigious Barnaby lecturer and Amanda Wright Lane, great grand niece of the Wrights and featured speaker at the October 24 formal recognition of the Wright record."

Flying sailplanes at Wright Brothers National Memorial and hang gliders at Jockey's Ridge State Park dominated much of the program on Saturday and Sunday. At the Wright Memorial a flying Showcase of Soaring History featured 15 historically significant sailplanes and motorgliders, taking off from the First Flight Airstrip and landing on the nearby historic grounds of the National Park. After landing the Showcase pilots became docents, discussing soaring while showing their planes to the throngs of visitors.

Static displays included a just-completed replica of the Wright 1911 glider built by Rick Young of Richmond, VA and another, as-yet uncovered, version built by family and friends in honor of the late Jim Dayton of Mechanicsville, MD. Other displays included significant sailplanes and hang gliders and a World War II military gliding exhibit. An especially created video explaining the history and reasons for the Wright 1911 soaring experiments, commissioned by the First Flight Foundation and sponsored, in part, by a grant from the Outer Banks Visitors Bureau, premiered at the Wright Brothers pavilion.

Formalities and speakers, including Mike Murray, Superintendent of the Outer Banks Group of the National Park Service, concluded the ceremonies on October 24.



Art Greenfield, National Aeronautic Association Director of Contests and Records (at podium), addresses attendees at the dedication of Jockey's Ridge State Park in Nags Head, NC as a National Landmark of Soaring, with (left to right) John Harris, President, First Flight Foundation; Rich Hass, President, U. S. Hang Gliding and Paragliding Association; Al Tyler, Chairman of the Board, Soaring Society of America; and Bliss Teague, District IV Vice President, Academy of Model Aeronautics. (Photo credit: Phil Umphres)



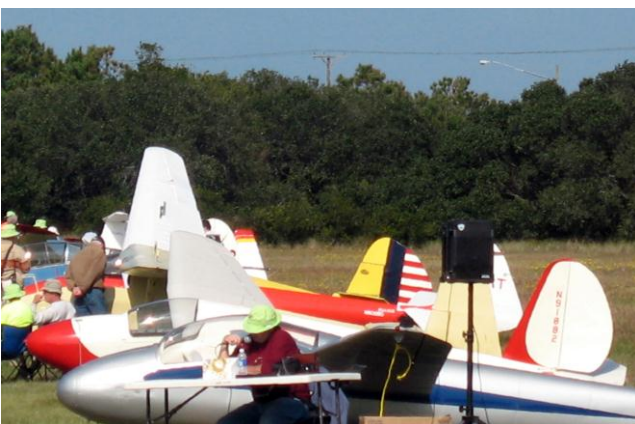
A crowd gathers for the official centennial ceremony on Monday morning, October 24, at the Wright Brothers Memorial Pavilion. A 1911 glider replica is on the right and historic hang gliders are above. (Photo credit: Wolf Elber)



Shane Neitzey on final approach in front of the Wright Memorial during the Flying Showcase of Soaring History at SOARING100. (Photo credit: Wolf Elber)



Youth activities included hand-launched glider and kite building workshops with opportunities to fly their creations. (Photo credit: John Moody)



After landing, Showcase pilots and crews became docents, describing soaring and the planes to throngs of visitors. Announcer Tom Swanson is in the foreground. (Photo credit: Steve Thompson)



The replica 1911 Wright replica started by the late Jim Dayton and partially finished by friends and members of his family. Note upright pilot seating. Visitors to Jockey's Ridge enjoyed trying the wing warping and unique Wright controls. (Photo credit: Paul Rabourn).