

SOARING 100: The 100th Anniversary of Orville Wright's 9 minute 45 second soaring flight

At Kitty Hawk, NC USA almost a century ago, on 24 October 1911 to be exact, Orville Wright soared for nine minutes and forty-five seconds, heralding the first extended soaring flight and a flight that was intentionally planned. On the weekend of 21-24 October 2011 this flight (a record that lasted almost 10 years) will be celebrated where it happened, on the Outer Banks. The sport and science of soaring will be showcased as an exciting aerial activity that is ecologically kind using nature's air currents instead of fuel.

It is known that there were soaring flights before Orville's flight. Lilienthal soared briefly in the 1890's during his thousands of glides. Chanute's pilots Avery and Herring soared momentarily in 1896 when wind gusts pushed them up forty feet higher than their starting points. The Wrights soared on the sands of Kitty Hawk as they were learning to control their 1902 glider. What differentiated the 1911 flight was that Orville and his associate Alec Ogilvie went to Kitty Hawk with the specific intent to fly and experiment without a motor. They were intending to soar. Their actual goals remain the province of historical conjecture, but the fact that they soared for a longer time than required for the FAI "C" badge (a 1920's development) remains.

Named **SOARING 100**, the celebration is organized by the First Flight Foundation (FFF), the Soaring Society of America (SSA), the United States Hang Gliding and Paragliding Association (USHPA), the National Soaring Museum (NSM) and the Vintage Sailplane Association (VSA). Activities will commence on Friday afternoon 21 October with the proposed dedication of a National Landmark of Soaring and continue into Monday 24 October, with a ceremony at the Wright Memorial on the actual centennial of Orville's landmark soaring flight.

Historical vintage and modern gliders will be present to create a flying and static display aimed to attract new people to soaring. Three replica Wright 1911 gliders are expected to fly as part of the celebration. An historical symposium, organized by Dr. Tom Crouch, Senior Curator of Aeronautics at the US National Air and Space Museum, is planned to educate the public about the earliest glider pioneers from Cayley, through Lilienthal, Chanute, Pilcher, the Wrights and others up to modern times. Hang glider history and demonstrations, will remind visitors that hang gliding, a relatively modern air sport, is closely akin to some of the earliest experiments in motorless aviation. One of the largest hang gliding schools in the United States is located in Nags Head, NC and volunteers from that school will demonstrate vintage and modern hang gliding and paragliding. Models, kites, historical exhibits and activities for youth and young-at-heart will be included, all relating to the air, the wind and soaring. A number of soaring groups and societies are planning to join in the festivities and hold meetings at the Outer Banks on this historical weekend. See your friends. Be there!

The events of **SOARING 100** will be held at sites throughout the Outer Banks, particularly in Kitty Hawk, Kill Devil Hills and Nags Head. The 1911 replica gliders are expected to be flown at Jockey's Ridge State Park in Nags Head, site of the largest live dune on the Atlantic coast that can still be used for soaring.

SOARING 100 organizers hope to coordinate with other pioneer soaring celebrations that may be held around the world during 2011. 1911 was an important year in the emergence of soaring as a sport.

Stay 'tuned' through the NSM (www.soaringmuseum.org), the FFF (www.firstflightfoundation.org), the SSA (www.ssa.org), the USHPA (www.usHPA.aero) and the VSA (www.vintagesailplane.org) for details as they emerge.

