



Congratulations to Mike Osmer! Mike has passed the first stage of being a Skyline Tow Pilot and is now Husky certified. It won't be long before we see him in the Pawnee. Way to go, Mike!!



Here are birthdays for club members:

December

Richard Auer	12/31
Allison Diaz	15/16
Brian Dolinar	12/9
Cindy Lawyer	12/18
John Schaeffer	12/27
J Saddler	12/27

January

Kobe Kerns	1/25
Justin Mensen	1/25
Chrus Wuerker	1/8



In the December issue of Soaring magazine, the following Skyline members were noted:

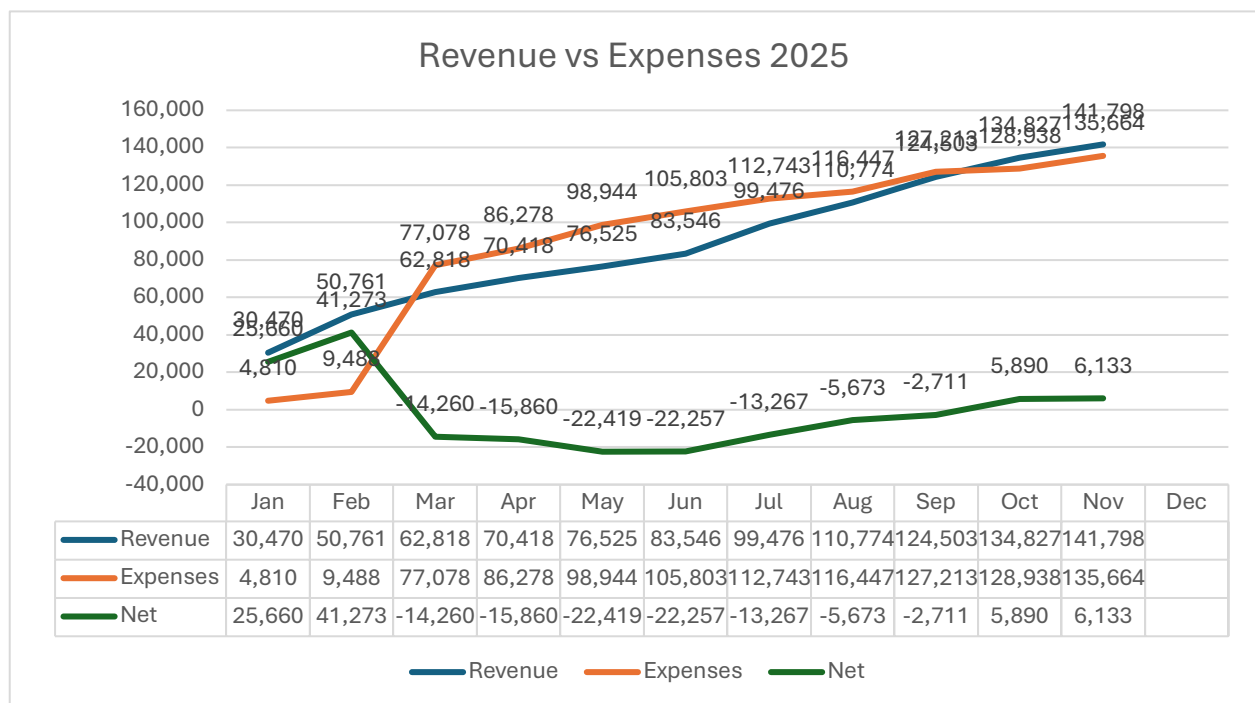
A Badge - Manny Serrano

B Badge - Jonathan Faux, Cindy Lawyer

Congratulations, Manny, Jonathan and Cindy!!

Treasurer's Notes

Ralph Vawter



Great work Skyliners, as of the end of November, we remain having positive results. Please note that we have some large upcoming expenses. Get out to the airport before operations close and get current. Thanks to all for making Skyline Soaring a safe club to fly with.





SURF'S UP AT MT. SHASTA!!

Photo by Gretta Brown, used with permission

COFFEE WITH A NEW PILOT – PAUL BROWER

Edited by Marcelo Morichi

1. When did you take your practical test?

A: December 6, 2025

2. How long did it last?

A: Including the ground portion, the test lasted about 3 hours.

3. Who was the tormentor (Designated Pilot Examiner)?

A: Piet Barber

4. What were the flight conditions that day?

A: It was a calm day with mostly overcast skies and it was COLD. The start of operations was delayed by one hour in order to let the temperature rise above freezing.

5. How many flights did you complete? What do you remember most vividly about that flight?

A: I completed two flights. The first involved a simulated rope break at 300 feet and a quick return to runway 10. The second flight went to 3000 feet. With the calm conditions, I felt very comfortable in completing all of the required items on the test – boxing the wake, slack



line recovery, stall demonstration/recovery, and turns. The last thing to complete was slips to landing. My slip wasn't as aggressive as it could have been and I was already a bit high, so I had to add in airbrakes at the end to get the glider down in the grass safety area; the glider really just wanted to keep flying! I was worried that my demonstration of slips to landing was not good enough. When we got out of the glider, Piet said we didn't need to do any more flights – I had passed everything!

6. The knowledge test tends to be something many student pilots procrastinate on. What's your helpful advice for them?

A: The Dauntless test prep software, as recommended to me by Ron Wagner and others was a great study aid. Our online syllabus also has lots of great references that I think most students tend to gloss over in the early part of their training, but reading those early on and asking instructors questions can really help develop your knowledge base so you are ready for the test with minimal preparations.

7. Who was your first passenger after you became a pilot?

A: I have yet to fly with a passenger, but my intent is to take my wife Sonia on the next nice flying day.

8. What is your most memorable flight since you become a pilot?

A: During my training, I really enjoyed flying at Burner field for the first time. I also recall a really great day with Shane Neitzey as the instructor where we caught a wave up to around 7000' and were able to fly around quite a bit until the clouds starting closing up below us. Shane threw open the spoilers and we dove down through a hole in the clouds before it closed up. It was exhilarating!

9. What are you goals as a glider pilot for the next two years?

A: I want to get checked out in all of the gliders the club has and in flying backseat in the ASK-21. After I've gained more experience, I hope to work on my commercial rating.

10. If you met with Paul when he started his flight lessons, what advice would you give him?

A: Fly as regularly as you can, pay close attention to all the details given in the training syllabus and relax while you fly.

11. What are the two things that Skyline Soaring Club does well in developing new pilots? What is the one thing that could be improved?

A: Having a mix of instructors is both good and bad. I find the diversity of thought useful but it can also sometimes lead to confusion when different instructors have slightly different perspectives to offer. It requires the student to use some judgment in listening to advice. Overall, with the awesome tracking system we have I think it works out well and the benefits of hearing the experience of many pilots outweighs the challenges. Skyline Soaring also has an incredibly well-organized program and knowledgeable members who are always willing to offer new help or lessons on everything from flying to aircraft maintenance to ground handling. It's a great club of people!



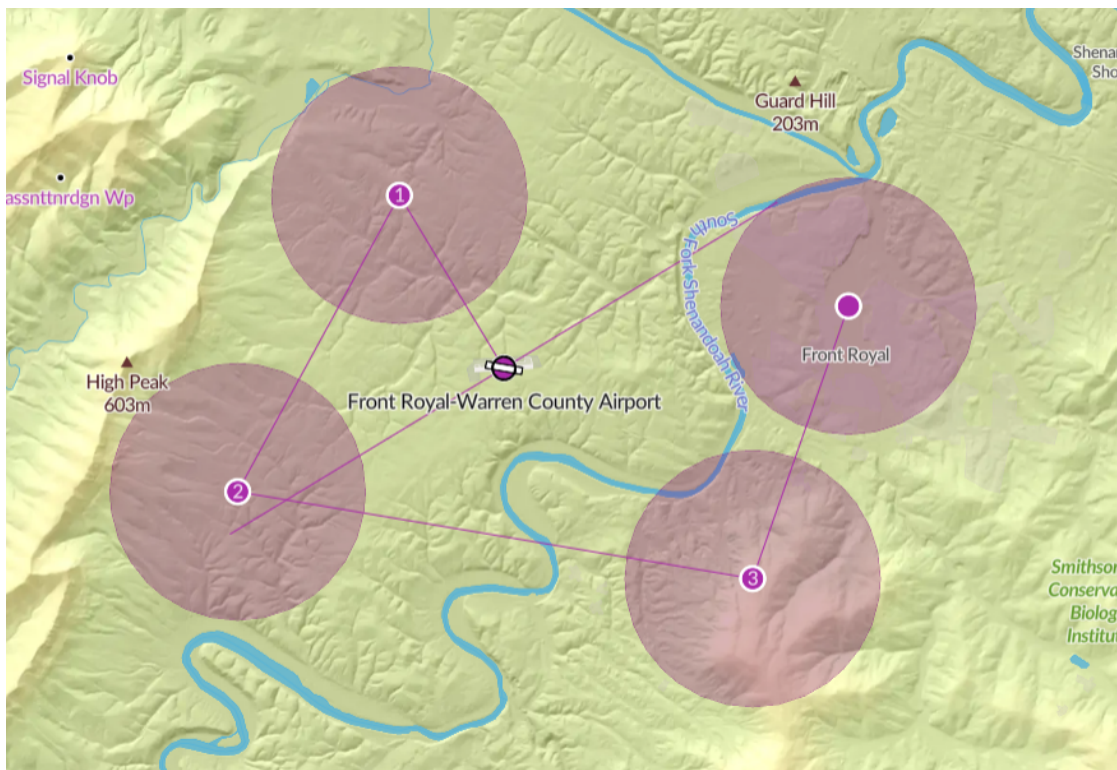
Skyline Challenge 2026

Rolph Vawter

Skyline Soaring does a great job with our student members. We have a curriculum, blocked off time for students and free instruction. Statistics show that around 60% of all Skyline flights are made by students.

What about the certificated pilots? We wait for our turn in the queue to fly a club plane, take off, circle around and catch a few thermals and land back within our allotted time. Then we gab it up with other pilots about how great the flight was, where the thermals were, or weren't, and await our next turn with a glider.

I propose we step it up a notch in 2026. Let's set up a course, or a task in soaring lingo, around the airport and prep for some actual cross country flying. The first one will be small, such as in the attached picture.



This should be relatively easy, keeping the airport within landing distance. We can add some challenges to it: most times around the task in a single flight; fastest around the course, etc. As this becomes done easily, we can add more, longer tasks, all in the name of learning cross-country flying.

How will we keep track of this? The club has either a Nano or an Oudie for use by members. One or both of the Discii have computers to assist in navigating the task. Or, members can

download a version of SeeYouNavigator onto their phones. Available on the web for either Apple or Google based phones. Interested members should also create an account with WeGlide. WeGlide accounts are free through the SSA (ssa.org),

If you are interested in participating in this please contact me directly (vawterralph@gmail.com), rather than clogging up the club email. I will coordinate with all. We can have sessions on the use of SeeYouNavigator and WeGlide.

Should you have any input or questions about how we should do this, please feel free to contact me.

Club Recognition

The club received a piece of mail addressed to the club at the airport. The mail was from Business Rate and noted that Skyline Soaring Club has been officially recognized as a Top 3 of 2025 Front Royal Award Winner in the Non-profit Organization category. Congratulations, Skyline!!!



CHINKO - CAR

Chris Zaboji

Earlier this year I was invited to fly to the Central African Republic (CAR)—a country I honestly didn't even know existed at the time—to conduct flight reviews for a friend and several pilots on his team. While in college, I spent a month in Florida at an accelerated flight school working toward advanced ratings. One of my Airbnb housemates was a South African pilot named Stefan, and we quickly became friends. We stayed in touch as our careers progressed and I even visited his family in Cape Town with a fraternity brother of mine. Years later, Stefan took a job flying a Cessna Caravan for African Parks at Chinko, a protected area in the eastern corner of the Central African Republic. Chinko is enormous—roughly 7,000 square miles—and exists to rehabilitate and preserve land damaged by decades of illegal poaching, deforestation, and uncontrolled migration.



The journey began on October 23rd in Amsterdam. I flew Royal Air Maroc through Casablanca, then took a redeye with a stop in Douala, Cameroon, before arriving early the next morning in Bangui, the capital of CAR. Before departing, I was warned that photography in the capital was illegal and that customs could be... interesting.

Thankfully, Stefan and a French-speaking African Parks employee met me at customs and handled everything. Once through, I was handed a high-visibility vest, walked back through the terminal, and straight out onto the ramp where the park's Caravan was parked—security far removed from what you'd expect at Dulles or JFK. I was told that to airport workers, wearing any kind of high-vis vest meant you were important and not to be questioned.

Despite being exhausted from the redeye, excitement took over as we waited for the rest of the passengers — wild dog specialists from France heading to Chinko for research. When the load planner arrived, he asked Stefan to sign for an aircraft that was slightly overweight. Stefan refused, which quickly turned into an argument that made it clear the planner had little understanding of his own job.



Stefan told me this happened nearly every day and he was sick of it.

Eventually, we launched east for the 2.5 hour flight to Chinko. We briefly crossed into the Democratic Republic of the Congo before re-entering CAR. There are no weather stations, no fuel alternates, no radar, and no air traffic control in this part of the world. If you're not landing at Chinko, you're turning back to Bangui. Stefan explained his emergency planning, and it was eye-opening. An engine failure doesn't mean diverting—it means your aircraft becomes someone's house within days. CAR is roughly the size of Texas. The straight-line distance from Bangui to Chinko is about 370 miles, yet driving it would take well over a month due to the lack of roads. Any emergency here is no joke. One story stood out: a helicopter pilot named Frederick once landed at a remote strip near a village to refuel from a barrel he carried with him. He was immediately robbed by the village locals. Since then, he lands in random fields and hopes for the best.

Only Chinko pilots and the UN operate in this airspace. With no barometric pressure reporting, everyone flies at 29.92 and makes position reports on a single nationwide frequency. As we approached Chinko, we contacted "Chinko Control," which turned out to be a handheld radio held by the air boss. A local worker physically checked the runway for wildlife before clearing us to land.

The camp was far more developed than I expected. There were offices, multiple buildings, full-time cooks, and a medic equipped to perform minor surgeries. Guest accommodations included five rooms overlooking the runway, Starlink internet, hot water after 4 p.m., and power shutoff at 9 p.m. It was a comfortable place to spend five days.

My mission was to conduct flight reviews for three FAA-licensed pilots. The Caravan is N-registered, while the two Savannah light sport aircraft are CAR-registered. With special

government permission, I was allowed to instruct. These pilots flew daily and were highly proficient—I mainly offered new perspectives. We spent an hour on ground review covering FAA procedures, which felt ironic considering they operate in a country with essentially no controlled airspace. Imagine trying to cough up Class B restrictions when you fly in remote Africa with zero airspace whatsoever.

Because the Caravan is expensive to operate, I conducted training for Stefan while flying real missions. We had hoped to get an IPC complete as well, but there are only 3 approaches in the entire country, all at Bangui. It is nearly impossible to ask for anything from the tower there since they have no radar and only time based arrivals. We gave up on the IPC but the flight review was doable.

I had the pleasure of coming along as Stefan moved company personnel from Chinko to strips all over the place. We dropped off rangers in training to a strip 20 minutes north of Chinko where they would spend the next 4 months learning how to survive out on their own. The rangers would be the liaison between migrants from local Sudan and would keep them out of the park. They would interact with local villages and be the face. Before we flew up there, I was warned not to shake hands or touch anyone there under no circumstances. Turned out, there was a scabies outbreak in their camp.

The Savannahs were fun to fly. If you've ever seen Mike Christensen fly his beautiful red Aeroprakt at KFRR, it is very similar. The first guy was named Cedric, a Swiss pilot that has been with the park for about a decade. We went up and did airwork and a few landings. It was of course all to standard. The second pilot was Harsh from Mauritius. Our flight was a 3 hour patrol flight at low level around the park where we were on patrol for any wildlife activity that would be plotted on a tablet with GPS, illegal poachers, and anything of interest.

On top of that, there was a group of rangers that were deployed the day prior that forgot to bring a few pots and pans so we flew to their camp and



made a drop. 3 hours of low level flying with no doors was probably my personal highlight for the trip. The vegetation is extremely dense and varied it was fascinating to watch slip underneath.

After returning to Bangui, we stayed at a safe house, had pizza and beers, and the next morning I flew home via Addis Ababa. A hot shower and a glass of wine in the lounge felt like civilization had returned.

A few takeaways from this experience:

1. I am extremely grateful to live in the United States, the house and city I live in, my job, pretty much everything. While we have a lot of problems of our own, it is nothing like the daily struggle and level of poverty I saw. The monthly minimum wage in CAR is \$60 a month. People bathe and defecate in the river. There are wars, unrest, food insecurity, and extreme poverty. The country is rich in natural resources, but foreign countries come in and offer to build them roads or a new airport terminal in exchange for mineral rights, but the CAR has zero resources to upkeep anything and it goes unused or becomes abandoned.
2. The people, despite these depressing circumstances, were quite friendly. Chinko is the largest employer in the CAR, and with 200 or so local workers at the camp everyone I interacted with (keep in mind the French language barrier) was smiling and friendly to me. They would pull out soccer goals after the work was done for the day and play soccer on the runway. They would drive us out of the park to visit local sites and always waved and said 'bonjour'.
3. Every person you came across had a smartphone. Every single person. Also, they were quite stylish with their clothes.
4. The most dangerous part of the trip was driving in Bangui. There are no traffic rules, signs, lanes, or crosswalks—pure chaos. If you ever come here, do not rent a car. You will crash.
5. USAID used to be one of the major funders for the park. It was a tough look for me as the only American when their funding got pulled earlier this year with the change in administration.

It was an incredible privilege to be invited. The experience reshaped my view of Africa and deepened my appreciation for my life in DC, flying for United. I'm grateful to those who work in conservation at places like Chinko, protecting a fragile planet under the hardest conditions imaginable.



Skyline Soaring Club, Inc.
is a private,
501(c7)
non-profit

organization, dedicated to the enjoyment and promotion of the sport of soaring. SSC is based at the Front Royal-Warren County, Va. Airport and is an affiliate club of the Soaring Society of America. For information about the club go to www.skylinesoaring.org

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