

Pine Mountain to Steens Mountain, 7/15/2015

By Jared Anderson

I have had my eye on the state record for some time now, and have been especially excited now that I live here again. I just had my first day back in the air a couple days prior at Woodrat, flying with Josh Cohn. It had been a full month of no flying after getting injured from a reserve toss and subsequent tree landing. I was a little shaky, but everything felt pretty good, and it was great to be in the air again.

After that we headed up to Bend. I knew I had to work all week and couldn't fly, but nevertheless I had to torture myself and look at the weather forecast: OK Monday, better Tuesday, really good on Wednesday.....like maybe state-record good...and of course Josh Cohn happens to be visiting and will be flying that day... Come Wednesday morning, I was starting my work day and noticed that the forecast looked even better! I texted Josh in envy, saying I should be flying today. He responded with a lengthy and convincing arm-twisting: "play hooky". OK!!! A couple of phone calls and 45 minutes later my gear was loaded and Josh and I were on our way to the Y. We met up with John, Josh M. and Mike W. and got to launch around 11:45.

A few minutes before noon, I was the last one to launch. About 30 minutes earlier, enticing Q's had been forming over Pine, but we were presently dealing with an inversion at about 6500'. That was pretty much what the forecast said; marginal around Pine, everywhere else stellar if we could get away. Sure enough, to the East and SE, nice streets were setting up as far as you could see. Josh C and I bounced around launch for about 35 minutes before finally pointing downwind and heading SE. There were a couple of low moments, but after getting away from Pine the thermals got gradually better and better. The forecast was for winds 7-10 blowing pretty much directly down Hwy 20 to Burns. Our original plan was to attempt a flight past Burns and slightly NE, maybe towards Ontario. Instead the winds pushed us more south. It was a little tiger-countryish at times, but after about 35K from launch we finally connected with the cloud streets, and then it was definitely game on....and I felt we had viable roads within gliding distance pretty much the entire day.

Interestingly, for such a great XC day, it was relatively docile. My best climb was 5.7M/s. The winds were in a good direction, but never more than 10mph or so. The climbs did not top out terribly high until the last two hours, with my final climb being the best, 4063m. What made it great was being able to stay in the cloud streets, and that generally the climbs were just 'there'.

Josh and I flew together pretty much the entire day, up until the final climb and glide. Josh was flying a Trango XC3, and I was on my Enzo 2. The Trango is a great performing wing, but over the course of the day, the Enzo did show an advantage.

Our route took us somewhat parallel and south of Hwy 20 for about 75K, at which time the highway veered more North, and we continued straight towards Steens Mountain. I had flown a similar line earlier this spring with Daria Krasnova, and I must say this is some incredibly beautiful country to fly over...though I do have a bias for the stark beauty of the desert. At about 120K, there was a table rock formation in the near perfect shape of a heart. Pretty cool. Even cooler was the approaching Steens Mountain. After so many trips to the Steens since childhood, it is hard to describe how stoked I was to be approaching it from high above on a paraglider. Right at the foothills of the Steens, just crossing the road north of Frenchglen was my final and best climb. From there I was sure I could make it on glide just over and into the east side of the

north extent of the Steens. It ends up I was barely correct, and I scraped over the ridge and over the Fields-Denio road about 10K north of Mann lake. I made a couple of attempts to find lift on the terrain to the east, but nothing materialised, so I turned back for a west landing in a spot with the least amount of sagebrush I could find. Total flying time 6:42, and 234.3K straight line distance. By the time I packed up, the local Bend crew had retrieved Josh and were on their way to get me. Thank you so much Mike, Josh, and John for grabbing my truck and chasing me on that very long haul.

Bonus for the day was looking down on my hike out and finding my first ever Native American arrowhead sitting half-buried in the alkali soil. What an awesome finish to an awesome day!

In closing I will say that I think Pine Mountain is definitely prime for a significantly better flight. Keep an eye out for a day when the winds are pushing north of Hwy 20/Burns, where there will be massive pumping cloud streets stretching NE to the border of Idaho and beyond. Also a southern line past Lakeview, connecting with the Warner mountain range seems like a good bet. Has anyone explored launch possibilities off of Paulina Peak, because that place seems to be an early morning thermal-pumping machine! Maybe we will have a couple more opportunities this summer to push the record out a little further. I look forward to seeing you all out there.

Here's the tracklog:

<http://www.paraglidingforum.com/leonardo/flight/1213858>