

New Glider World Record Claimed in Georgia

David Stevenson of Atlanta, Georgia, flew more than 560 miles in a Silent 2 ultralight sailplane (285 pound empty weight) on April 24, 2005. He launched at 9:04 a.m. from Marion County Airport in Jasper, Tennessee, and was towed by John Bloomfield of Chilhowee Gliderport to his release point in the northwest corner of his home state of Georgia.

After several tricky low saves in the weak, early morning lift, he was able to connect with the Sequatchie Ridge. Utilizing the strong northwest winds to surf the mountain ridges at more than 90 mph, Stevenson proceeded to his first turnpoint at the northern edge of the Sequatchie Valley near Crossville, Tennessee.

He next headed south towards his second turnpoint just north of Gadsden, Alabama. He then turned north again to Dunlap, Tennessee, in the heart of Sequatchie Valley. On the way back up the ridge, he experienced a flight computer shutdown due to a faulty electrical connection, but the onboard flight recorder fortunately continued to log the flight.

Using his back-up sectional charts for navigation, Stevenson left the ridges and plateau behind and transitioned to thermal soaring in the Tennessee River valley. Utilizing the 20-knot tailwind, he

headed southeast on a line for Charleston, South Carolina. At Cleveland, Tennessee, he experienced another low save with a weak thermal after already picking out a field for landing. As he progressed into the higher and drier terrain of the southern Appalachians, the cloudbase rose to over 6,000 feet.



David Stevenson flew more than 560 miles in this Silent 2.

As he neared the Atlantic coast, the lateness of the day's heating cycle was working against him. With the next airport 25 miles away, Stevenson made a safety decision to cut short the elusive 1,000 K (628 miles) goal. He landed at Hampton, South Carolina, at 6:41 p.m. after flying 9½ hours. Fellow pilot Murray Forbes of Atlanta

assisted him in his venture as ground crew and official observer.

Preliminary statistics are: 59 mph average cross-country speed, 61 glides with 85 mph average glide speed and 28 percent thermalling time with an average of 370 ft/min climb resulting in a 49.7 L/D. Stevenson is submitting his flight to the NAA and FAI for record approval as a declared 3-turnpoint distance in the Ultralight Sailplane category. A several-time national champion, Stevenson will represent the U.S. in the 2006 World Club Class Championships in Vinon, France.

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