

Plenty of action at Wallowa County Fly-In

By Kana Oliver
Special to the Chieftain

More than 20 planes flew into the Joseph Airport for the ninth annual Wallowa County Fly-In on Aug. 12. Aviation fans flocked to the airport beginning at 7 a.m. They began their morning with a delicious pancake, eggs and sausage breakfast served by cheerful volunteers.

Later in the morning, six Ravens flew close in formation, passing over the airport several times streaming smoke. Between the airshows, patrons ventured down the first portion of the runway to admire the visiting aircraft and vintage vehicles. The planes were interesting to look at on their own, but the stories each pilot told took center stage.

Jeff LeFore of Milton-Freewater was buzzing with excitement, perhaps more than anyone else. LeFore is a beekeeper who takes pride in flying his striking black and yellow Rev2 Supercub. For LeFore, flying is more than just a hobby. He uses it to manage his 7,000 hives in four states.

The Rev2 is new. He picked it up just a week before flying to Joseph with his girl-friend and three Jack Russell Terriers. He's ecstatic over the honeycomb design on the tail of his plane.

Bees and flying are a family tradition for LeFore. His grandfather started the business with 3,500 hives in Nebraska and Southern California, using a Cessna 210 to commute. LeFore's father continued the tradition, and eventually passed it on to Jeff, who began flying at 23.

"I got my license because I love to fly, and the bees are a good excuse to get a plane," he said. Or three or four.

He bought his first plane in 1993, a 1962 P35 Bonanza (affectionately known as the "forked-tail Doctor killer" as so many doctors who were beginner pilots flew the popular plane). His next craft was a SQ2 Supercub purchased in 2011. Since then, he has logged 1,800 hours of flight in this plane.

As of last week, he's added the tricked-out Rev2 Supercub with bushwheels to his collection. He intends to use it to land in Montana, Alaska and other remote locations to check bees or vacation, camp and hunt.

The fun continued with airshows throughout the day including jaw-dropping aerobatics from Mark Peterson in his P51 Mustang and fly overs by Scott Carter and Tim Bovee in their Miss Veedol, along with Jim Shotwell in his AT-6 "Texan"

Most of the activity took place on Saturday. However, on Sunday morning, Andy McKee and Tim Locke took those with Pilot's Wings for a free flight around Wallowa County.

The proceeds from the event will go to the North East Oregon Aviation Foundation to benefit aviation education. From their two summer events -- the Puget Sound Antique Airplane Tour and the Wallowa County Fly-In -- they have generated more than \$15,000 towards the foundation and aviation education.

Staff writer Kathleen Ellyn contributed to this story.



Paul Wahl/Chieftain

Throughout the day Saturday at Wallowa County Fly-in, visitors marveled at the craftsmanship of vintage airplanes on display at Joseph Airport.



Paul Wahl/Chieftain

Greg Johnson pours a griddle full of pancakes during Saturday's pancake breakfast at the 2017 Wallowa County Fly-In at Joseph Airport. The pancake batter was rumored to have a bit of extra "yeast ingredient."



Paul Wahl/Chieftain

Tim Bovee, of the "Spirit of Wenatchee," a group of pilots that fly and promote the Miss Veedol replica airplane, adds the finishing touches Saturday morning at the Wallowa County Fly-In. Because of smoke from wildfires, the number of pilots and aircrafts was down a bit for this year's event.



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Jeff LeFore of Milton-Freewater buzzed into this past weekend's Wallowa County Fly-in with his striking black and yellow Rev2 Supercub. LeFore is also a beekeeper.

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