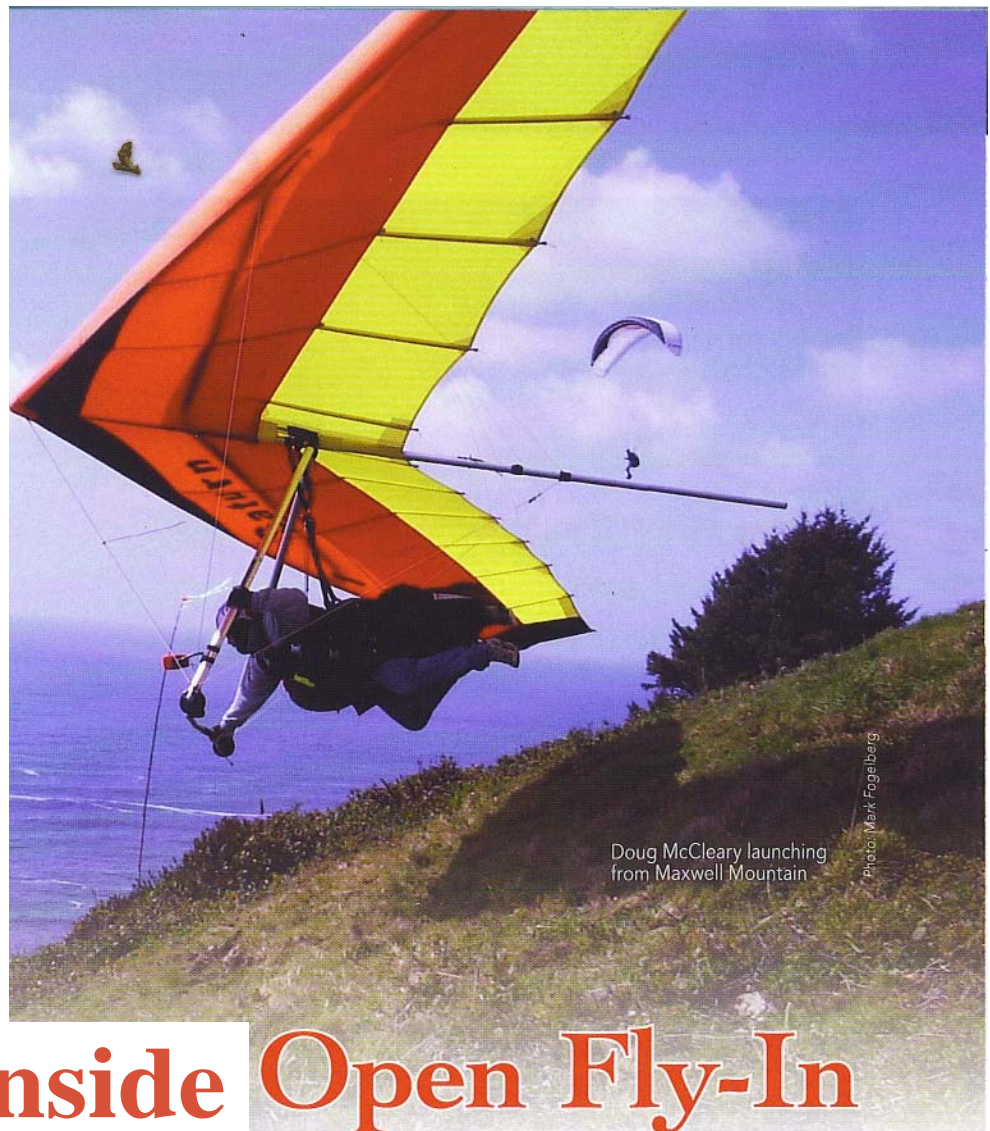


By John Kraske

My enthusiasm was dashed and practically washed away by the weather on my drive south from Washington. Torrential rain and gale-force winds created a mud slide near the Edgewater Motel in Netarts, Oregon, sometime during the night, and pelted our room mercilessly throughout our first evening and on into the wee hours. Our hopes were dwindling, soggy at best. The morning of the event we pulled back the blinds and viewed the gray, wet-wool world through a steady curtain of drizzle. At least the wind had settled down. We made breakfast and slogged our way over to the pilots' meeting. The turnout was sparse and less than optimistic. A video of flying in Costa Rica was playing, a cruel and unusual punishment. The handful of us watched with envy.



But Doug McCleary of the Oregon Hang Gliding Association, the energetic power behind this annual event, was



Doug McCleary launching from Maxwell Mountain

Photo: Mark Fogelberg

Oceanside Open Fly-In

cheery and optimistic, announcing that the gracious land owner of the Maxwell Mountain launch would allow us to fly from his property for the event, and that the weather forecasts hinted that we'd be flying by 1:00 p.m. "Yeah, right!" I thought as I gazed out at the land of cheese, trees, ocean breeze, and mud up to your knees. I loaded up my crew, consisting of my daughter Sea and new granddaughter Penelope, and headed for Oceanside and a caffeine fix at the local espresso joint.

As we sat and sampled our waking-up and warming beverages -we could see blue coming from out over the ocean, and a couple of paragliders were floating around above the beach. By 11:00 we were squeezing my little Nissan into the salal surrounding the set-up area. Hang gliders dominated the 500' launch on Maxwell Mountain, but I was able to lay out my paraglider and get off in a slightly cross wind that gave me a half-hour of air time before I spot-landed on the beach, not quite on the bull's eye.

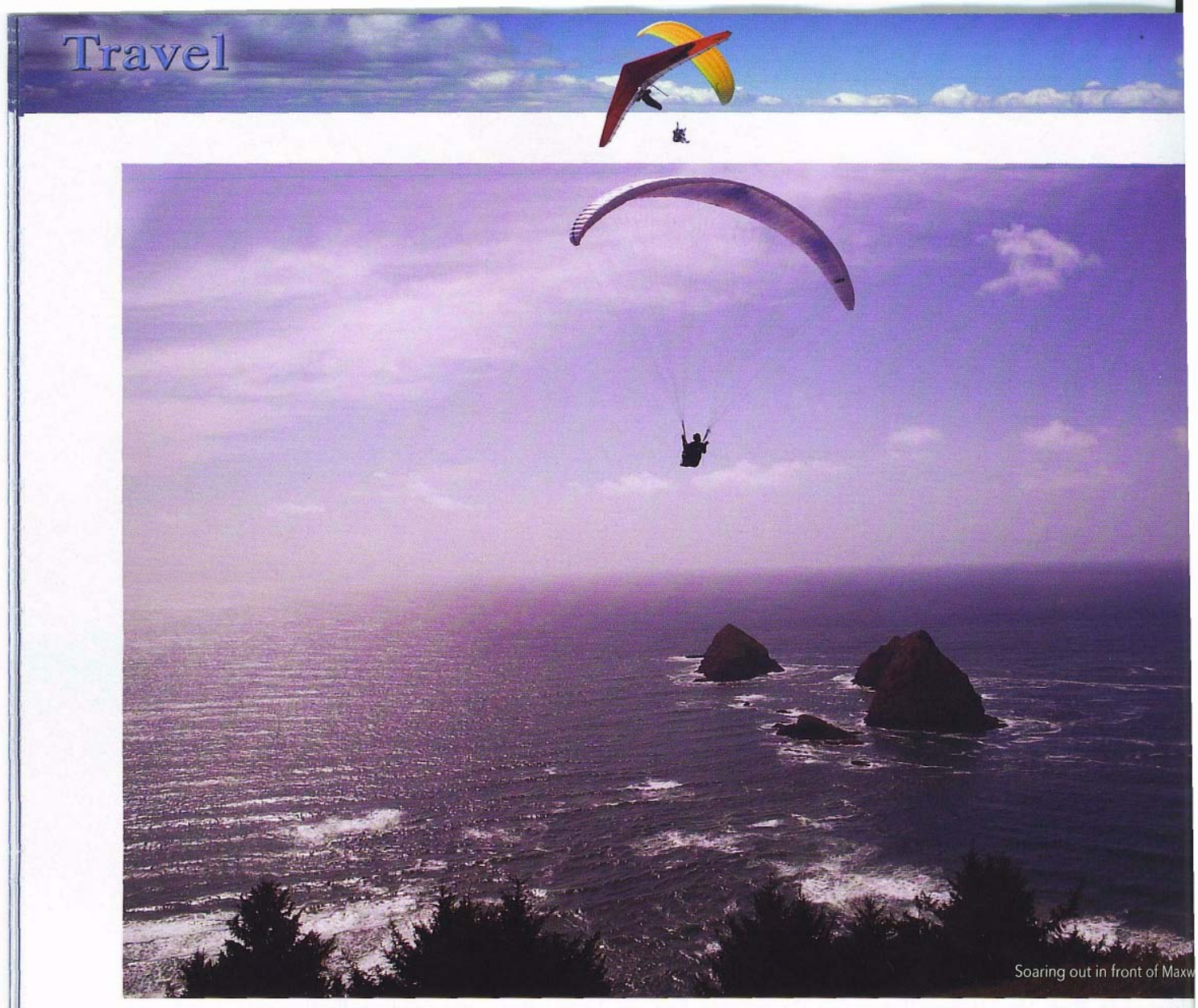
My daughter drove down and retrieved

me, and by the time I launched again there was a gaggle of colorful hangs and paragliding effortlessly above and out in front of launch. The air was smooth as silk with a few mechanical bumps here and there, created by passing, turning, dodging wings. My Seattle-area flying buddy Ross and I soon headed south, towards Happy Camp and away from the crowded skies. We started out a little low, but what the heck, the beach was large and we could land anywhere. We didn't need the beach at all and found plenty of lift all the way to Happy Camp.

"Let's try for landing out in front of our cabin," I yelled - we were staying just south of Happy Camp where the vertical ridge becomes pretty shallow. At just a couple hundred feet over the beach I opted to jump this gap for the next ridge to the south. I was expecting to sink out, but I maintained enough altitude to get me across with Ross hot on my tail. Here the ridge, lined with homes, benches up from the beach, levels out and then

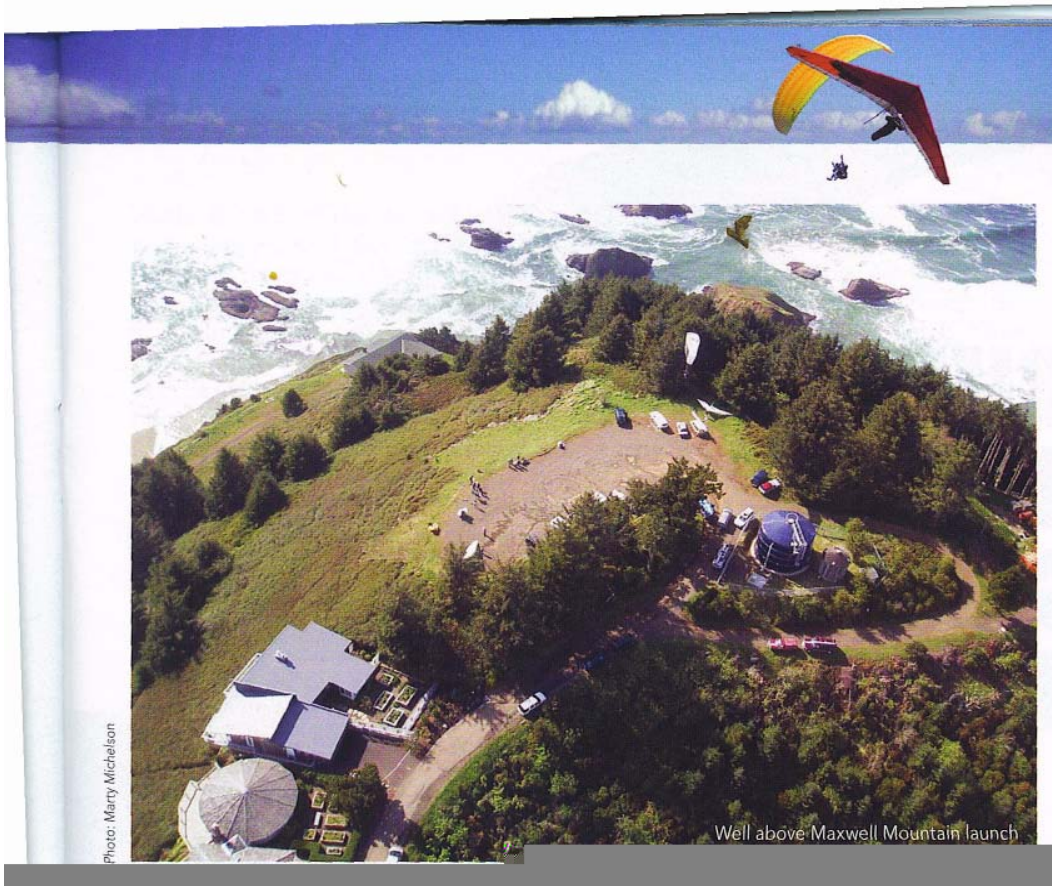
benches up again to a higher ridge. We were soon soaring above the higher ridge and experiencing some two-turn thermals that must have been generated by the sand spit across the bay where a gaggle of seals basked in the warm spring sun. My maximum altitude read 396 feet. I considered landing in the parking lot, but uncertain wind conditions convinced me to err on the side of safety and I headed back towards Happy Camp. Ross was on the beach when I landed.

Next Photo: Portland pilot Steve Forslund was having a ball entertaining hordes of tourists by flying the mini-ridge in front of Rosanna's restaurant, just above the beach.



As we packed up our paragliders, a couple of spectators approached us with questions about flying. "We're your guys. We can take you tandem," we responded in unison. In no time we were in their mega truck and heading back for Maxwell. By now the skies were bright with wings. Hangs were working a high ridge behind Maxwell, paragliders were working the rocky and rugged coastline north to and above Cape Meares, hang gliders and paragliders were working the sand ridges south to Happy Camp and there was a mixed gaggle of colorful wings out in front. Portland pilot Steve Forslund was having a ball entertaining hordes of tourists by flying the mini-ridge in front of Rosanna's restaurant, just above the beach.

By now Maxwell Mountain ' packed with hang gliders and paragliders waiting to launch, and lots of spectators. Ross and I briefed our students and got in line to launch. Ross was off first, skimming the slope as they banked away to the south. I waited behind a hang glider pilot who finally got his perfect cycle and was away in a steeply banked turn. We were next and banked south into the lift band; worked our way up out front and then decided to break north for Cape Meares We had about an hour of airtime before my student/passenger started saying something about "cold." I had worked Cape Meares and all the evergreen-shrouded hills between Maxwell and the cape. At one point we were high enough to see all of Tillamook I Garibaldi, Bay City, and Bay Ocean to the North



We flew north and east of Cape Meares. We flew above the lighthouse on the cape and watched the hikers, roller bladers and picnickers below enjoying the blue coastal skies. We finally set down on the rocky beach north of Maxwell Mountain, bagged up and climbed the stairs at the south end of the beach. Ancil Nance showed up in his vintage yellow Volvo and shuttled one of our passengers back to retrieve his mega truck.

This was the 19th annual Oceanside Open Fly-In, and without a doubt the best I have experienced. The event is a "fun fly-in" with several unofficial competitions in both hang gliding and paragliding. Beautiful etched-glass trophies were presented at the awards ceremony and dinner. Robert "CB" Schmaltz from Century 21 Real Estate donated two really nice pairs of cross-country skis for the first- and second-place paraglider pilots for the out-and-back distance event.

This year over 50 pilots registered, and probably 20 more non-paying fliers participated as well. At one point on Saturday afternoon someone counted no fewer than 41 wings over Oceanside. That did not include a bunch of hang gliders soaring the ridge behind Maxwell Mountain, the paragliders spread out between Maxwell and Cape Meares, or the hangs and paras who'd gone south along the dunes to Happy Camp.

from all around the country, throughout the year. For those of us who pursue foot-launch free-flight, it can't be beat.

But there's a storm on the horizon that is way worse than the weather I encountered the day before and the morning of the event. The launch and viewpoint on Maxwell Mountain is privately owned and there is talk of the owners building soon. I'm hoping we'll have a 20th annual Oceanside event. Even more, I hope the flying community and business communities of Tillamook County, Oceanside and Netarts can come together and find a happy solution to keep Maxwell Mountain launch open for public use.

We could write letters or emails to the Oceanside Chamber of Commerce, the Tillamook Chamber of Commerce (tillchamber@oregoncoast.com), Tillamook County, the State of Oregon or whoever might be influential in developing a Maxwell Mountain State (City or County) Park in Oceanside. I've sent emails to all of the above and even an article to the Headlight Herald (Tillamook County's weekly newspaper). Oceanside is worth the effort.

Website editors note: The majority users of the site include sightseers, sea-life watching groups, science teachers, and sunset lovers. All the aforementioned activities are



advertised by Oceanside businesses. Much of the community's identity and tourist draw arises from these attractions. Oregon Parks and Recreation has a matching funds program for the development of parks. The Trust for Public Lands in Oregon Organization could also possibly help with funding this for this public treasure.

