

# CO'S COCKPIT

By John "Smokey" Johnson



THE CHERRY BLOSSOMS AND THE DAFFODILS are starting to bloom, and it is a reminder that spring, the airshows, and flying season are just around the corner. We had a great series of winter meetings with amazing programs and a wonderful Christmas/holiday party, but it is time to shift to the summer season. As I compose this, I am in Florida attending the FAST NATA formation clinic in Williston, FL prior to the spring airshow opener at Sun

'n Fun, located at Lakeland, FL. Spring and the flying season are in full swing here already and it is wonderful to see everyone out in their aircraft flying in formation and aerobatics or just refamiliarizing themselves with pattern work, radio calls, and practicing emergency procedures.

For those Cascade Warbirds pilots and marshallers, this is a reminder that we all need to start preparing not only our aircraft but also ourselves for the rigors of the airshow environment on the ramp and in the air. Take time to review your individual aircraft pilot's flight manual. Review the marshalling hand signals. Make sure all your FAA documents including your medical and flight review are current. Verify that your airplane has passed its annual or condition inspection and that all ADs and open maintenance items have been repaired and corrected. Be sure to make copies of all your pilot and aircraft documents, and insurance COI to put in a special airshow binder to show the FAA. Be sure to review the FAA 8900 document, the test questions, and answers for flying in formation in waivered airspace.

We also have currency requirements which state you must have been in a similar practice flight within forty-five days and it must be logged in your logbook. If you use parachutes, be sure to include the packing slips for currency for those as well. Review your normal, abnormal, and emergency checklists, paying close attention to engine failure after takeoff and other critical emergencies that have memory items or do not allow you the time to pull out the checklist and work the issue.

Once that is all completed, take some time to go out and fly your airplane to get

reacquainted with its flight characteristics, including steep turns, a stall series, and short and soft field takeoffs and landings. If you have a two- or four-ship FAST formation card, try calling your buddies and start talking about and planning a flight with two ships, then a try a four-ship formation. Try and get some practice formation flying completed before we start the season at the Olympic Airshow on Father's Day weekend.

Let's be safe out there, take it slow, and work on basic skills until your actual flight proficiency matches what you think you can and did do last fall.

Our Operations Officer is busy working with the schedule to see which events we will be attending this season. Please be sure to check the CWB website calendar for updates to the seasonal events. So far, we are scheduled to fly at the Olympic Airshow, JBLM Airshow, and are trying to work with other events to coordinate our participation.

Be safe and see you all on the ramp soon.  $\ensuremath{\mathfrak{D}}$ 



Some of the Sun 'n Fun ramp displays, including sun! Photo: Smokey Johnson

# WARBIRD FLYER

Cascade Warbirds O

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Fred C. Smyth

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This is the official publication of Cascade Warbirds. The views expressed in this newsletter are those of the individual writers, and do not constitute the official position of Cascade Warbirds. Members are encouraged to contribute any matter related to warbirds, which the editor will gladly work with you to publish.

It is the goal of Cascade Warbirds to promote the restoration, preservation, operation and public display of historically significant military aircraft; to acquire and perpetuate the living history of those who served their country on these aircraft; and to inspire today's young people to become the aviation pioneers of tomorrow.

All correspondence to the squadron may be submitted via the email or mailing addresses below.

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# SOUADRON NEWS

#### SEASONS CHANGE

Spring is when the green returns to nature, to the IRS, and to the Finance Officer of CWB. If you haven't yet paid (check the due date on the newsletter envelope), we'd like to receive your 2023 dues. Still only US\$20, you can remit via check, cash, Zelle, or PayPal. If you need assistance, contact Fred.

## OSHKOSH, AKA AIRVENTURE

Your pick, either \$550 per night or \$550 for the week. If you're attending and have not already made arrangements for accommodations, get in touch with Dave Desmon at *davedes-mon@yahoo.com*. He has access to two private residences within, as he likes to say, lip-crawling distance of the local pilot friendly watering hole. Note: Wait list in effect at this time.

# SOME NEW FACES

We welcome **Drew Arp** of Mukilteo. And thank him for his service; he was USMC. Then there's **David Ray** of Yelm. He's the proud owner of an RV-8. **Brian Ruby** of Arlington also joins us. He, too, is a vet: '99–'03 USMC.

From Seattle is **Paul Newton**. He was a NASA research pilot and a Boeing production test pilot. He's looking to acquire a DHC-1 Chipmunk. Next is **Marie Stickford** of Edmonds, spouse of long-time member **Marty**. They own a Stinson L-5.

Another is **Eric Marr** of Spokane. A pilot for these past six years, he owns a NAvion and is interested in formation flying. Hailing from Lake Oswego is **Chris Buhlmann**. He's a 24-year retired USNR NFO.

Next is **Brad Chesson**, a 28-year USAF veteran (C-141 and C-17) and ATP pilot from Tacoma. From Canada comes **Stewart Fraser** of Port Moody in BC. A long-time pilot from Ferndale, **Andy Wallace** owns a Stinson 108. And from Missoula is **Donna Barragan**. She's a long time EAA and WBA member.

They'll be around our events, so take time to welcome them.

# MEMORIAL SERVICES

Squadron co-founder Robert "Crash" Williams passed in November 2022. The family is holding a memorial service on Saturday, April 22, 2023, at 2:00 p.m. at the Evergreen Covenant Church on Mercer Island, located at 3200 78th Ave SE. CWB members are most welcome.

Aviation pioneer Merrill Wien passed in January 2023. There will be a celebration of life on Friday, April 21 at 7:00 p.m. at the Museum of Flight on Boeing Field, Seattle.

## LAST RACE IN RENO

You've likely heard by now that this is the last year of Championship Racing at Reno/Stead. So, we've gone all out and have reserved *three* boxes just for our CWB members. The benefits are the same as every year, box seats on race days, pit passes for every day, reserved parking, and shared community coolers. This year it's \$397 for the week. Get in touch with Fred with questions or for payment options.

## 2023 SCHOLARSHIP WINNERS

We had an especially large and well-qualified group of applicants this year. Thus, it was with much effort that we were able to select those we thought most worthy.

Hailing from a family well-connected to aviation is **Lauren Hoyt** of Bothell. She will be a senior this year and is also in the Cascadia College Running Start program. She's aiming for an airline career.

Then there's **Shane McConville**, just graduated from Kennedy Catholic. He intends to enroll at South Dakota State University and plans to be a commercial pilot.

Patrick McKeehan is from Lake Tapps and attends Auburn Riverside. He plans to start his training at Green River CC and is looking forward to becoming an airline pilot.

From Bremerton comes **Dylan Michael**. As his father is a career State Patrol trooper, Dylan has hopes of becoming a State Patrol pilot. He will attend Central Washington this fall.

By John "Smokey" Johnson

**GREETINGS, WARBIRDS ENTHUSIASTS.** After serving as the B-17 Tour Stop Coordinator and Chief Photographer, I've picked up the Operations Officer duties from Sundance.

Ah, spring. The days are getting longer, the trees greener, and the weather...well, still wet, but with the prospect of improving in the not-too-distant future. Planes are coming out of inspections and maintenance, ready to be shown off and flown for the public. So it's imperative that we knock the rust off our skills, whether they're individual flying, formation flying, marshalling, photography or any of many other things we do.

This year also marks CWB's 30th birthday. Some celebratory events are in the early stages of planning. I'd like to see us commemorate our thirty years in the local aviation scene with a maximum effort by our flying and non-flying members alike to attend as many local events as possible. The Olympic Airshow will be our first major event. The Joint Air Warrior Expo at JBLM, Pangborn's Festival of Flight and Fly-In in Wenatchee, the Wings Over Washington Airshow in Bremerton, and the Hood River Fly-In have requested our participation. And there are many requests for memorial flyovers honoring veterans who have passed.

So, I invite you to get prepared and get involved in making this airshow season one for the books, fitting of our thirtieth year of keeping the history of military aviation alive. •

# **VOLUNTEERS NEEDED**

By Paul Youman

**WELL, IT IS LOOKING LIKE** there will be a fly-in season this year and a few events will be close by. This brings up, to me anyway, the need for volunteers to learn and participate in the art of "aircraft marshaling" at these events.

If you've wondered how to get more involved in squadron activities, this will be a good way to accomplish that end. If you're interested, contact Paul Youman at 425-820-6076 (I screen my calls, so leave a message) or pdyouman@frontier.com.

There is a minimum age of 16 but no maximum, lol! A training class is required and more information will be provided at class completion. Keep 'em Flying! •

I AM SURE MOST OF YOU have heard by now about the midair collision at Falcon Field in Mesa, AZ with a fourship flight of two CJ-6s, a Yak-52, and a North American L-17 Navion. This is my preliminary analysis based on viewing the photos and the video which was put online. The final summary and conclusions will be provided by the NTSB.

I thought it might be relevant to at least bring up the flight profile and description to discuss the hazards of dissimilar aircraft formation flying. Part of the risk with this flight of dissimilar aircraft is the Navion having limited visibility through the top of the aircraft due to a lack of plexiglass on the roof of the cockpit.

The Navion was #4 in a finger four strong left formation and the flight was in a left turn, which placed the L-17 low in a welded wing on the inside of the turn. It appears that the pilot became uncomfortable and detached down and away and on the inside of the formation. The L-17 pilot then tried to rejoin the flight and mistakenly maneuvered to rejoin with the #1 lead CJ-6 and did not see the Yak-52. The L-17 accidentally went underneath the Yak, which was #3 in the flight, and then slightly climbed. The Yak-52 propeller contacted the L-17 fuselage just aft of the sliding canopy and made numerous deep cuts in the top and side of the Navion. Somehow, the Navion made it back to the runway and, amazingly, no one was injured.

Just another reminder to stay alert and brief the flight thoroughly, especially with dissimilar aircraft. Early in the season with minimal formation flight time since last fall, it is advisable to detach if you are uncomfortable with any aspect of the flight. But advise lead so he can either roll wings level or call "knock it off" to discontinue the maneuver and get the flight back together without bending metal or swapping paint. In this particular accident, the two aircraft that actually made contact with each other were very lucky to get back to the airport without any injuries or fatalities.

Again, let's be safe, take it slow, and work on basic skills until your actual flight proficiency matches what you think you can and did do last fall. •

Each winner receives the tuition, books, and supplies necessary to successfully complete the private pilot ground school and also two dual flights. Those who do so by the end of September are eligible to compete for a further grant of \$2,500. We wish them all great success as they move into their aviation careers.

#### AIRCRAFT AVAILABLE

Mike Jones is selling his Nanchang CJ-6A. It even comes with parachutes! Contact Larry Pine with your interest. More info is at cascadewarbirds.org/for-sale. ❖



Photo: Barnstormers/Jeremy Lindgren

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I had officially hit the point in the restoration where one starts entertaining the thought of bailing out of the whole project. That is where I was as 2023 began—realizing how far behind this plane is. It seemed the momentum had dropped to zero, and getting movement was increasingly difficult. The plane is located in Oklahoma City, at a small shop, with few staff. I have been participating as often as my schedule allows for the past two years. Unfortunately, 2022 produced a series of health issues for the primary crew, which diluted focus on the restoration. This is understandable and frustrating at the same time.

I recently received some good advice from a fellow Cascade Warbirds member: "Sometimes it's best to go live at the hangar and get everyone pointed in the same direction." I made quick arrangements to go east and asked myself many times, "Why 'visit'

Oklahoma in February?" Windy, 20° that feels like 5°, and working in an unheated hangar all day. As pleasant as that sounds, I am glad I did. The O-2A is regaining momentum and is pointed in a healthy direction.

The first projects to tackle were fuel tank installation, FAA airworthiness directive (AD) inspection, interior work, paint preparation, and acquiring more help. I went to Oklahoma with the doubt I mentioned at the outset. While I was there, several things happened that helped me learn a lot about the plane and assured me it is in the right place. The hangar is littered with piles of Skymaster surplus. It also has stacks of O-2s (literally, one on top of another), still covered in dirt from the Arizona desert. These two attributes paid dividends.

In a previous newsletter, I talked about selecting fuel cells from heaps of spares in an attic. This good fortune came full circle. As we installed one of the tanks, we discovered an outlet fitting was bent. This fitting had a tight tolerance to pass through a rib hole and no real option to redirect it. Instead of doctoring this one, I opted to go with a different tank. Back to the pile in the attic I went. I now had the knowledge to scrutinize the angle of the fittings. I picked one that looked brand new, except for a rectangular scar down the middle. The O-2A had flame retardant material installed in the fuel tanks. Over time, this material breaks down, and the tank must be cut open to remove it. This tank had had the surgery, which is unattractive, but it passed a leak check with no problem. It was also a much better fit. Out of curiosity, we tried to redirect the fitting on the original tank and it ripped a weld right away. It's nice to have options.

While the wings were popped open, we had an eddy current inspection done on the main spar, a recurring AD. Considering the amount of work already done on



the wing, it was a nervous moment waiting for the little black box to say "pass." It did.

My next project was assembling seats from old stock. I fished around the shop to build left seats and right seats, properly configured. Most of these seat parts had never been used, and still had the inventory stickers from Cessna. I outfitted them with the original Kevlar seat pans. I am starting to learn why this plane earned the nickname of "flying speed brake," because the original military gear is very heavy. The map pouches, on the back of the front seats, have grenade holders sewn into them. I have been told it was a place to store smoke grenades. To me, they look like they can "offer a full selection of nonalcoholic Coca-Cola® products for your in-flight refreshment service."

I learned one more important lesson while assembling the seats. When test fitting the pilot seat in the fuselage, I climbed in to check the positioning (and to make airplane noises and mock radio calls). As I did, the door closed behind me. It was then I realized the interior door hardware and window hardware were not installed. I couldn't open the door and the window was stuck in the full closed position. I was alone in the hangar. I did some Skymaster yoga and squeezed out of the baggage door in the back. I immediately installed an interior door handle.

While I was using a wire brush on the elevator, rivet heads started popping off. Profanity poured out of me, profusely. Both ends of the elevator needed rebuilding. The crux of the issue is two steel shafts with counterweights, one at each end of the elevator. The shafts mate with an aluminum rib, creating a slow galvanic party inside.

My string of sailor speak was interrupted by a sealed package stamped "1969." In the piles of parts

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Old, rusty elevator counterweight assemblies were replaced by corrosion-protected new old stock.

lying around the hangar was a replacement kit for the elevator counterweight assemblies, complete with new aluminum rib and steel shaft, pretreated with corrosion prevention. Cessna knew this was coming. There is a fair amount of drilling and riveting to remove and replace them, but no more remanufacturing. Another situation where the surplus of surplus lying around was a huge benefit.

One big difference between the military O-2 and the civilian 337 is the USAF requirement to have the whole plane treated with zinc chromate on the inside. This worked very well, as I have found zero corrosion inside the plane, except for the elevator. The hardware, however, was not treated. This led me down one of the rabbit holes that consumed a lot of time. Inside each boom are wire fasteners that route the electronics to the tails. As I was prepping the booms for paint, I noticed every-

thing looked good except these fasteners, which looked like they were recovered from the wreck of the *Titanic*. A silly little thing, deep inside the plane, and hard to access. I spent days fishing these out, stripping, re-treating, and re-installing them. There weren't replacements and nothing substituted for them as well as the original part.

The O-2A has two spring loaded windows that open inward for airflow. It is just a window but finding the correct mounting hardware and installation sequence for the latch, spring mechanism, and hinge assembly was more difficult than I thought. Apparently, it was difficult for the Air Force maintainers, too. As I inspected the hulks in the adjacent hangar, I noticed that none of them used the same hardware and each had things mounted differently. Bouncing the not-so-

clear maintenance diagram off of the windows that worked best, I found the correct hardware and built up the vents. It was another silly, time-consuming affair. I felt a small sense of victory for figuring it out. However, when I mounted it on the plane, I found the replacement fuselage window had been cut to the wrong dimension. The hole for this vent window was too big. The test fit, when the side windows first arrived, looked good. It wasn't until the hinges, latch, and spring were added that the error was exposed. The most disappointing result was the requirement to drill out several rivets to swap Plexiglas once the new windows were cut. A new member joined the team, a mechanic whose father flew O-2s in the Air Force. It will be fun to have him on the project. We started laying down timelines for FAA inspection, and we have a more

defined goal for completion.

A lot was accomplished while living at the hangar. We cleared hurdles and gained momentum. It was good to see several of the crew working together to move the needle forward. Having ready access to the surplus parts and other airframes for reference is invaluable. There is some painting left to be done, the main sections need to be married up, and the plumbing/wiring must be completed. Actually, there is a lot more than that but it seems less formidable than it did at the start of the year.

I am glad this project is in the right space. I am confident it will fly this year, configured exactly as it was in 1971, when it reported to the 182nd TASG in greater Peoria, Illinois. I am hoping my next trip will be to mount the wings and tails. I'll keep everyone posted. Thanks for reading.  $\bullet$ 





More rusted components, but these had to be restored and reused. All photos: Jay Borella

April 2023

AS THE WHEELS OF INTERNATIONAL POLITICS relentlessly turned, I found myself literally out of a job as the US withdrew from Afghanistan in 2021. In a series of odd twists, I was finally reassigned with my then-employer to serve as a pilot for one of several wildfire management agencies in sunny southern California. Specifically, I requested to be based at the richly historic airfield in Chino.

Settling into the new position, I quickly made my way next door to the renowned Planes of Fame Air Museum, which has not only its dizzying collection of authentic relics rescued from aviation's yesteryears but a surprisingly well-stocked used bookshop, harbored unceremoniously in a shipping container tucked behind the museum's own scrapyard. My addiction to aviation history books far outweighed the oppressive summer heat and I weekly perused the ever-changing selections as the shop's one elderly curator replenished its bargain -priced supply from piles of donations. Of the many texts I found unable to resist, a genuine prize now in my library is a like-new copy of Blake W. Smith's Warplanes to Alaska.

One could be readily forgiven for not having learned much about the lend-lease operations conducted by the United States during World War II. The heroic efforts by the British in the Battle of Britain and in North Africa, and the United States' bloody struggles across the Pacific and over Europe, to name but a few examples, all rightly grabbed the leading news headlines of the day. Further in these news reels and front pages were descriptions of the staggering struggles of the Soviet Union against Nazi Germany's better equipped and better motivated war machine. Hardly ever did Hitler's Luftwaffe shine so brightly in initial air supremacy as in the initial stages of Operation Barbarossa, Germany's massive invasion of the USSR that resulted in appalling Soviet losses of machines, troops, territory, and aircraft. Already weakened by the Soviet leader Josef Stalin's repressive internal policies, the Soviet air force was simply devastated by Hitler's invasion.

Blake Smith picks up the history of a desperate Soviet Union at this time, whose struggle for survival meant substantial differences in political ideologies had to be set aside. Little different than today, the wheels of political machinery required secrecy for the fledgling offer to assist the USSR with war materiel, though such secrecy was greatly boosted by the sheer remoteness of the territory involved, especially in the comparatively spartan days of the early 1940s.

A deal was struck between Moscow and Washington, DC for the US to supply needed transport, fighter, and bomber aircraft to the USSR by way of a new air route spanning the wilderness tracts of western Canada, Alaska, and Siberia. The author lays out in detail the colossal struggles of both the Royal Canadian Air Force and the US Army Air Corps to not only carve out a usable road across the thousands of miles of unforgiving and scarcely populated landscape, but to provide the variety of usable airstrips required for the anticipated aircraft. Eventually, the ferry operation staggered into a brutal routine, with thousands of USmade, factorynew aircraft heading northwest from the staging area of Great Falls, Montana.

While a variety of aircraft were transferred to the Soviets, the vast

Warplanes

# Warplanes to Alaska

The story of a WWII military supply

lifeline to Alaska and Russia through the

Canadian wilderness.

Author: Blake W. Smith Hardcover, 256 pages Hancock House Publishers

majority was comprised of the venerable Douglas A-20 Havoc, and the small single-engine fighters the Bell P-39 Airacobra and its bigger sibling, the P-63 Kingcobra. Much derided by American pilots and historians, the Soviets truly loved their donated P-39s and P-63s, applying them to great effect in their missions, which usually took place at lower altitudes than their allies' air battles.

Smith takes the reader into the cockpits of the P-39s and P-63s throughout the book, detailing the aircraft's mechanical personalities and the quirks of their operations, especially with the fuel drop tanks required for such long ferry flights. Fans of the P-39—such as myself—will be much impressed. The obvious differences in the ages and attitudes towards flying by the freshly trained American pilots versus combat-veteran Soviet pilots is also highlighted, touching on both the cautious and cavalier. For readers like me who enjoy images to enhance the written word, half the book's content is a remarkable collection of photographs detailing the lives and operating conditions of the crews, as well as offering unprecedented views of the variety of aircraft in transit.

While German Messerschmitts and Japanese Zeroes were the well-known foes over the European and Pacific theaters, Smith explains in each detailed, often firsthand, account how the viciously fickle weather of Alaska and Canada proved to be an equally fatal enemy to the young and often inexperienced American ferry

By John Haug

This year marks the 30th anniversary of Cascade Warbirds! Back in 1993, we began our long legacy of flight and ground displays at regional air shows and of informative and entertaining meetings during the winter months. Our scholarship program began in 2007, initially to send young people to the EAA Oshkosh AirVenture youth camp. Flight training was added in 2010 and over seventy scholarships have been awarded, resulting in more than two dozen rated pilots.

Today, you are one of our nearly 250 members. We own over 150 airplanes (over 165, including our muse-um-owner members), marshal aircraft at air shows, host hangar parties, provide the great food and drinks at our parties, attend and present at our meetings, and—critically—sponsor our scholarship program.

We all deserve to celebrate! Your board is looking into options for the nice weather season. Let us know if you have ideas, keep an eye out for announcements, and plan to come join the fun, especially if we don't often see you! •





Join us at events in 2023! Photos: Dan Shoemaker





pilots drawn into this unadvertised lifeline in the global war effort.

Smith further details that effective and coordinated search and rescue efforts seem to have developed as an afterthought to the greater priority of simply getting as many aircraft as possible to Fairbanks, Alaska, where a contingent of amicable but tight-lipped Soviet staff and pilots would accept delivery. The aircraft then disappeared behind the shroud of Soviet secrecy, destined for its grinding war against Germany.

Written decades after the war's end, and after the demise of the USSR with its penchant for harsh censorship, Smith expands on recently revealed truths regarding the journey of the US aircraft after being accepted by Soviet pilots in Alaska. Harsh winter weather was no more forgiving to the Soviets across Siberia than to the Americans or Canadians. Further, the author includes the Soviets' heavy-handed policy that all of its pilots involved in ferrying/receiving US aircraft never speak a word of the capitalists' assistance in their war effort; the truth was to be wholly suppressed, at best forgotten.

Thankfully, Smith draws on scores of American and Canadian first-hand sources and accounts, as well as fewer but equally courageous Soviet sources, to bring this heroic chapter of aviation history to light. I highly recommend this powerful read. •

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# **CWB SUPPORTERS**



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# CHECK SIX



A Bell P-63 Kingcobra painted with Soviet Air Force red stars sits at Ladd Field in Fairbanks, Alaska, in 1944. From there, Soviet pilots flew this and nearly 8,000 aircraft to the Soviet Union as part of Lend-Lease.

Photo: US Air Force, https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Bell P-63 Kingcobra 42-7010.jpg

# **UPCOMING EVENTS**

## April

per issue

only

here for

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- 20 "Crash" Williams memorial fly-by Tahoma National Cemetery (Kent, WA)
- 21 Merrill Wien memorial Museum of Flight (Seattle, WA)
- "Crash" Williams memorial Evergreen Covenant Church (Mercer Island, WA)

## May

19 Oregon Int'l Air Show (Hillsboro, OR)

#### June

- 3 MATS 293 memorial fly-by Tahoma National Cemetery (Kent, WA)
- 17–18 Olympic Airshow (Olympia, WA)

#### July

- 6–9 NW Formation Flying Clinic (Bremerton, WA)
- 8 Pangborn's Festival of Flight (East Wenatchee, WA)
- 14 JBLM Airshow & Warrior Expo (JB Lewis-McChord, WA)

### **August**

- 11 Abbotsford Int'l Airshow (Abbotsford, BC)
- 19–20 Wings over Washington Airshow
  (Bremerton, WA)

#### September

- WAAAM / Hood River Fly-In (Hood River, OR)
- 29–1 Oregon Int'l Air Show (McMinnville, OR)

See cascadewarbirds.org/events for details or contact the Ops Officer.