

TAKE FIVE... for safety

Five minutes reading
could save your life!



SEE AND AVOID TRAFFIC: breaking the myths of glider flying

My FLARM, a traffic alert and collision avoidance system, suddenly warned me about conflicting traffic while I was flying my glider. I spotted a Commander 114 aircraft in straight and level cruise, close enough that I could count its rivets. This happened at 6,500 feet above ground level (AGL) and about 30 km from the nearest glider club.

It's up to all of us to see and avoid other aircraft. To do so, it's helpful to know some facts about gliders.

Myths about gliders

- Glider flights are short, slow and low
- Gliders are easy to spot
- Gliders always fly erratically
- Gliders have no electrics

Truths about gliders

Glider flights can be long, fast and at high altitude

- Glider flights regularly last several hours with some logged flights over 9 hours long
- Flights ranging 50, 100 or even 500 km away from home base are common in Canada
- Towing is usually at 2 to 3,000 feet AGL but gliders regularly get up to over 8,000 feet AGL in central and eastern Canada, and higher in western Canada
- Stalling speeds are usually 30 to 40 knots but gliders can reach speeds over 150 knots (300 km/h)

Gliders are hard to spot in the air

- A glider's typical wing span is 50 to 70 feet but their wings are very thin
- Gliders are very narrow, making them almost invisible straight on
 - Gliders briefly appear when presenting a "top" view and then disappear when circling

Gliders do fly straight and level, but spend much of their time circling

- Gliders will fly straight and level once they have the altitude to make a run
- Gliders usually circle to climb. Altitude is like fuel for gliders – the higher the glider, the further it can go. Gliders trade that altitude for distance.
- Gliders follow the same standard circuit pattern as powered (air) traffic, except that gliders descend during the downwind leg

Gliders have some electrics

- Most gliders in Canada have radios and audio variometers, enabling heads-up instrument reading
- Many gliders in Canada have moving map GPS and flight computers
- 160 gliders in Canada have FLARMs, a traffic alert and collision avoidance system (TCAS) designed for gliders

Conclusion

You'll find gliders across the country, many miles away from the Glider Operating Area noted on charts, so let's keep an eye out.

If you're interested in learning more about how gliders work, drop into a glider club (<http://sac.ca>) and take an introductory flight. You'll be welcomed and have an enjoyable time.

Fly Safe.

canada.ca/general-aviation-safety



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