

SAFARI NEWS

Wednesday 24th March

Welcome to the Safari News, the daily newsletter of the Classic Hits Around New Zealand Air Safari. This newsletter is an informal way of sharing snippets of news, gossip, rumours, jokes and anecdotes with your fellow safari participants. Personal bios, great flying stories (true or otherwise), birthdays & anniversaries – pretty much anything goes. It is also intended that the newsletter be published regularly to the website so friends and family at home can follow what we've all been up to. If you have anything you would like to share please email racedirector@ihug.co.nz or contact Anna in person or by calling or texting 021 0262 2933 or 027 856 7470.

Diary

Although the weather in Whitianga didn't look too bad yesterday morning the forecast predicted bad news in the form of a pair of cold fronts passing over the North Island. Reports from the scheduled lunch destination of New Plymouth were equally bleak, and even the Classic Hits radio presenter in Taranaki expressed his doubts about the advisability of making the trip. Unfortunately this meant that the competition safari legs were cancelled and participants were asked to make their own way direct to Tauranga. While some teams elected to reach Tauranga early before the expected weather came in, others made various excursions. A few teams stopped in for a leisurely breakfast in Pauanui, one group dropped in to Waihi Beach, and Team Gyrate were heard heading off towards Raglan in their gyrocopters. Later in the day the Tauranga Aero Club hosted an afternoon function with guest speaker John Hammond who spoke about his experiences as an Ag pilot, including his unfortunate accident. He is now operating a

successful skydiving company in the Bay of Plenty.



Warbird Cat on Safari – Day 1

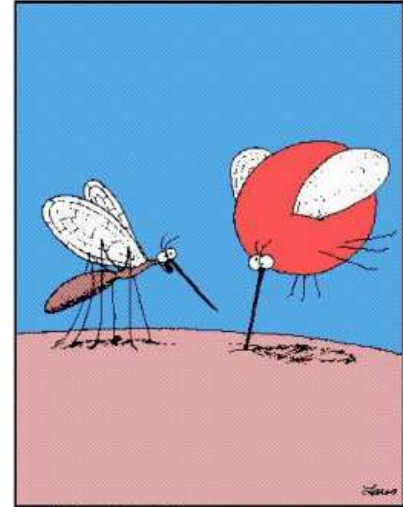
Denise Waters

Lifting off last from the busiest NZ Aerodrome, "Safari #3, ZK-PBY Catalina, the largest safari aircraft, took to the magnificent morning start skies. Fully loaded with 19 crew and gear, pilots Dee Bond and Philip Seale roused the rumbling Cat's two Pratt & Whitney 1200 hp R-1830 "Twin Wasp" motors.

Built March 1944, the Cat is actually "back on safari" as part of its long and distinguished history. From 1988-1994, it was used for tourist flights down the Nile River by The Catalina Safari Company, Harare, Zimbabwe. The Catalina Club of New Zealand, current owners and operators, are dedicated to keeping this historic and rare Warbird alive for all to enjoy. To promote this mission, the Cat is flying this Safari to participate and along the way provide local flights at each destination to raise funds for Life Flight Trust helping Cancer Kids.

Crew is made up of a wide range of aviation experience – everything from along-for-the-ride to professional pilots with multi-thousand of hours. Each lends their experience to the adventure. Other members of the Catalina Club will be joining in along the way to meet, greet and assist with local flights as the PBY lands along Safari route.

Settled on board after takeoff, the crew is free to walk about, minding only 4 in the tail section at a time. Seat partners change as the loud Cat music stalks the New Zealand jungles. The crew starts to get acquainted blending New Zealand, Australian and United States backgrounds. Panoramic views from the “blister” bubbles in the Cat’s aft section provide excellent visibility to visually monitor the Cat and gain the answers to the day’s Safari questions. Nineteen trained eyes all looking out – beware the Cat! Its prowess is disguised by its Flying Elephant “Dumbo” physical appearance. First into Whitianga, after securing the Cat and debriefing, the crew had ample time to enjoy the area and get the Cat and Crew rested for the next day’s jungle adventures.



"Pull out, Betty! Pull out! . . . You've hit an artery!"



Now pay attention, I'm only going to do this once!



For the record, I came first.