



# On The Step

Issue 12  
April 2008

## Newsletter of the Seaplane Pilots Association of Australia

### From the President

#### Mosquito Membership

There is growing interest in water flying from our ultralight cousins. In the heading I call them Mosquitoes quite deliberately to focus our attention on this important phenomena. Why Mosquito? Because the word most often associated with Mosquitoes is - annoying.

My concern is that an increasing number of ultralight seaplanes on our waterways increases the risk of upsetting the public.

Until now most seaplane operators have been SPAA members who adhere to the SPAA Code of Operations which is designed to minimize the damage to public goodwill. This awareness comes from years of training and experience.

The answer to minimizing damage to public goodwill and the consequent complaints about seaplane operations is education of the seaplane pilot ..... whether it be an ultralight or a Catalina.

Annoying the public can happen so easily and without any awareness by an uneducated newcomer to seaplane flying.

This is why it is important that ALL seaplane pilots join the SPAA, adhere to the Code of Operations and be aware of the operational procedures to minimize public annoyance. The goodwill that has taken years to build can be rapidly undone if we do not work together to safe guard our right to responsibly share the waterways.

So we welcome ALL seaplane pilots to the SPAA, especially those pilots who are taking to the waterways in their delightful little aircraft.

By being members of the SPAA, adhering to the Code of Operations and operating with care, awareness and responsibility, we will preserve our rights to operate on our waterways.

Happy, safe and responsible alightings to all.

**Rob Loneragan (VH-CRA)**

### From the Editor

#### Low Down Truths!

John Freeman in his book "**Flight at Lower Levels**" defines low level flight as flight below 1,000ft AGL. Defined this way pilots of seaplanes - particularly low performance, slow designs, spend much of their flying time at "low levels". This can be hazardous.

Land plane pilots land at airports and strips where hazards, such as wires, unusual winds and turbulence are generally known and documented, but seaplane pilots are on their own when they land in or explore waterways in unfamiliar locations.

Wires stretched across waterways pose a particular danger to the seaplane pilot.



Wires normally come in groups of 2 or 3 or more, with regularly spaced supporting poles with distinctive cross bars. They are hard to see, but usually not impossible! However now that I am a resident of South

Australia wire hazards have become an even bigger threat because SA is the home of Single Wire Earth Return (SWER) power distribution. This electricity distribution system uses only a single wire on poles that do not need the distinctive cross supports on top. And because there are not multiple wires that have to be kept apart the supporting poles can be much further apart. It all adds up to being much, much harder to see them.

John Freeman is a South Australian and his book has a particular focus on the dangers of the SWER system as well as distilling his many decades of experience as an instructor in low level flight. I will discuss his lessons in future issues.

Gear UP for a water landing # #

**Ross Vining (VH-RRZ)**

# In the Shadow of The Black Cat



Pete & Trish Stuart-Smith plan to fly their Searey Amphibian around Australia this year. Pete explains:

## WHY DO IT?

- For the adventure of flying our own seaplane, VH-PAZ, in the steps of the Catalinas,
- To see where Pete's dad, a Catalina captain, served on Australian bases during WWII and to honour him and all those who served in the RAAF Catalina squadrons during the war,
- To help tell some of Pete's dad's story
- To raise money and support for the Catalina Flying Memorial VH-CAT to be housed at Rathmines ([www.catalinaflying.org.au](http://www.catalinaflying.org.au)). Rathmines being the principal RAAF Catalina and seaplane crew training facility in WWII.

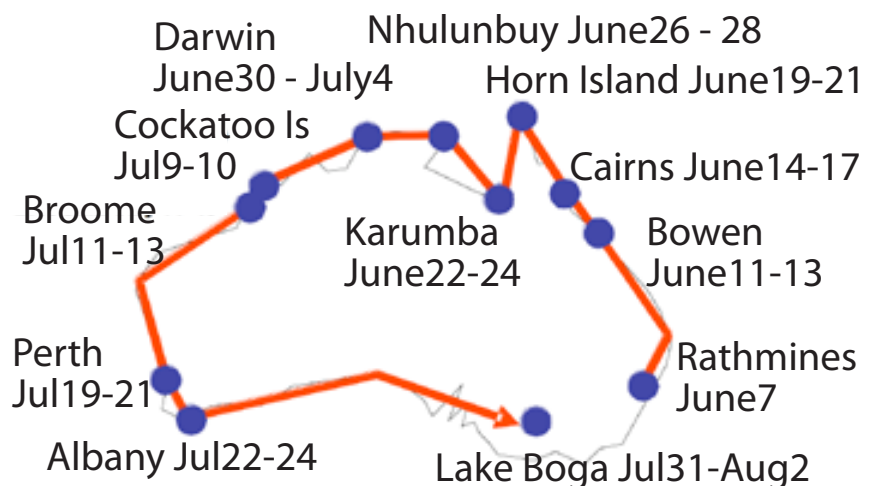
## WHAT ARE WE PLANNING TO DO?

Commencing at Rathmines and finishing at Lake Boga in August, the eight week trip will take in all of the WWII operational bases and Catalina sites of significance. Evidence for the bases still exists at many of the sites, especially at Rathmines, Bowen, Nhulunbuy (Melville Bay), Perth and Lake

Boga where substantial concrete ramps and aprons have been preserved to varying degrees. Like the 'cats' before them, these too will likely disappear with time. Rathmines, on Lake Macquarie, arguably the biggest complex, also retains some of the original buildings including the officers' mess, now used by the local bowling club. Horn and Cockatoo Islands were refuelling stops, for the cats en



*Pete's father*  
*Flt. Lt. Ian S. Smith*



route to operations in South East Asia. Getting to them will require traversing some of the wildest, and most scenic parts of the Australian coast - all at 500 ft.

The Consolidated PBY Catalina won't be just be in our imagination. Remains of one that didn't make it off the water, lie ingloriously on the mud flats of the East Arm at Darwin and bits and pieces of flying boats, destroyed in a Japanese bombing raid, are still scattered on the beaches of Broome. Better preserved will be the Museum treasures we will visit at Perth, Albany and Lake Boga.

The map shows where we will be when. We welcome your involvement at our send off at Rathmines or the finish at Lake Boga or anywhere along the way.

**Pete Stuart-Smith** (ACT Coordinator SPAA)  
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# THE COLONIAL SKIMMER & LAKE LA-4 STORY



**Compiled by Ben Hunter  
SPAA Merchandise & Marketing Coordinator**

Post WWII there was expected to be a booming personal airplane market – when it did not rapidly emerge both Grumman and Republic decided to abandon their personal airplane projects, including the amphibians, the Tadpole (Grumman) & Seabee (Republic) and focus their attention on military aircraft. But a group of five engineering and shop friends (including Thurston & Lindblad) from Grumman and Republic thought there was a market for a personal amphibian so they formed Colonial Aircraft Corporation to design and build (in their spare time!) a single engine pusher amphibian flying boat.



*Skimmer Prototype - 1948*

The first Colonial amphibian design was the C-1 Skimmer. The prototype was first flown in 1948 with a Lycoming 115 hp engine driving an Aeromatic pusher propeller.

Development continued for 7 years with many design changes including a 150 hp Lycoming engine, strengthened pylon and turtle-deck, longer floats, addition of a water rudder, a taller tail, a longer air rudder, two side-by-side seats in front, with a third optional seat mounted sideways in rear. In 1955 the Model C-1 Skimmer was approved by the FAA, and Thurston resigned from Grumman to pursue Colonial Aircraft Corporation full-time. Colonial moved from New York to Sanford, Maine, to start manufacture and marketing of the Skimmer. 23 C-1 Skimmers were built.

In 1957 the C-2 Skimmer IV was approved.

Improvements included a 180 hp engine, four seats (giving the "IV" designation), larger horizontal tail surfaces, modified wing floats and structural improvements to the engine pylon and the wings. 20 Model C-2 Skimmer IVs were built.

In 1958 Colonial employed some 275 people.

Jack F. Strayer, a Colonial distributor and a former Grumman test pilot then formed Lake Aircraft and developed the Skimmer into Lake model LA-4. This involved increased wing span, longer ailerons a stretched fuselage & and increase in MTOW plus other structural and ergonomic improvements.

About 24 Lake Amphibians were sold until production stopped in 1962 due to finance problems.

For the next decade the ownership of the company is convoluted. Various companies, such as Consolidated Aeronautics, owned the type certificate, other companies (such as Aerofab, Inc) built



*Colonial Staff circa 1956*

## The Colonial - Lake story continued

the amphibians and other companies, such as Aeromarine Development Corporation, registered and sold them. They were located at a little grass field just south of Elkhart, Indiana.

In spite of these convolutions the Lakes were successfully being sold to individuals and dealers worldwide.

In 1969 the operation moved to David Wayne Hooks Memorial Airport in Houston Texas. This superb general aviation airport, with two blacktop runways and a 2,500 foot long by 75 foot wide water filled trench, affectionately known as "the ditch" which allowed sales and training year-round.

At this point about 185 Lake LA-4-180s were produced. Their list price was \$29,950 retail!

At this time the Lake was upgraded with a 200



hp Lycoming with an optional Rajay turbocharger. This made it a true 4 place amphibian with a gross weight of 2600 pounds.

The new Buccaneer was in high demand and for the first time there was a backlog of orders.

The backlog became severe when Armand Rivard of Laconia, New Hampshire became a dealer in 1973. He offered sales, training, and maintenance and was highly successful. In 1979 he bought Lake Aircraft from "Al" Alson, and the type certificate from Consolidated Aeronautics (renamed it REVO) and moved the operation from Houston to the now-booming Kissimmee, Florida, an area teeming with fresh water lakes and tourist attractions.

Sales slowed in the early 1980s and Armand countered by developing the Lake Buccaneer EP in 1981. EP stood for extended propeller or extra performance, depending on who you asked. The standing joke among Lake employees was that finally the Lake performed like the brochures said it did. There were numerous improvements: better fitting entry hatch, nicer interior, hull strakes, extended propeller shaft, rear engine



*The SeaWolf variant was used by NATO*

cowl, wing fillets, a cargo door, higher cruise speed, lower stall speed and reduced noise level.

Further development led to the Lake Renegade in 1983. With a 250 hp engine and an extended fuselage it was now a six seater. The Renegade has a deeper "vee" hull making it capable of landing and taking off in much rougher water than previous Lakes.

In 1987 Lake delivered the first 270 Turbocharged model, the Seafury, and finally the Seawolf designed with NATO hard point mountings under the wings, among other things, and mainly sold to governments for patrol and the like.

The cost of a fully equipped Seawolf 270T reached approximately \$745,000 by the end of 2000, the Millennium Edition Renegade, \$499,990.

In 2002 Lake aircraft was purchased by Wadi Rahim, principal of LanShe Aerospace. The company was renamed Sun Lake Aircraft and manufacturing and sales moved to Fort Pierce, Florida.

The 2004 brochures listed the prices as Renegade = \$449,000 and the Seafury = \$749,000

In 2005 Armand Rivard regained control of Lake Aircraft after Rahim defaulted on payments.

The Lake Amphibian flies on.....60 years later.





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[philip@dulhunty.com](mailto:philip@dulhunty.com)

## Sunderland at Lord Howe Island

This photo of a Sunderland at Lord Howe Island is believed to be just after World War II since the aircraft appears to have a disused gun turret in the nose.

Photo is courtesy of P. Thomas, Shelfrespect Booksellers,  
 PO Box 539 Nambucca Heads NSW 2448  
[shelfrespect@hotmail.com](mailto:shelfrespect@hotmail.com)



# The Goose is dead. Long live the Super Goose!

Antilles Seaplanes (USA) is accepting deposit orders for the new "Antilles Super Goose" amphibious aircraft. Based on the legendary G-21 Goose by Grumman, the new version has been modernized to current day aviation standards to include turboprop engines, retractable wing floats, state-of-the-art avionics, interior environmental systems, and other improvements.

The Super Goose can carry 10 people + fuel and luggage and is powered by twin Pratt & Whitney Canada PT6A turboprop engines that produce a cruise speed of over 200 knots.

For more information visit [www.antillesseaplanes.com](http://www.antillesseaplanes.com)

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## You & Your Passengers Dale DeRemer

*Dale DeRemer is Professor Emeritus, Uni North Dakota - Aviation, he has taught aviation at University level for the past 20 years and has 20,000+ hour ATP and CFI.*

*Dale is known as the father of the SEAWINGS national FAA safety program for seaplane pilots and he has authored many articles and books on aviation, particularly seaplane safety. He was 1998 SPA Seaplane Pilot of the Year*

There is the story about the famous educator of physicians who made each prospective medical doctor check into the hospital for a complete physical so the medical student could endure all the indignities that are put upon the patient, drafty open-backed gown and all. No doubt this was done so the young doctor would gain an appreciation for the feelings of future patients.

And so it was for me as a seaplane pilot one day when I was offered a ride in a Caravan on floats. To make my lesson complete, fate dealt me a pilot who knew nothing about briefing passengers. The entire instruction consisted of "get in." I selected the seat in the second row directly behind the pilot.

I found my seat belt. Fortunately, I knew what to do with it. Then I looked around for the location of the personal flotation devices but didn't see them. I knew where the door was that I came in through but had no idea how to open it. It looked very strong - like I might never be able to get it open. I felt closed in. Trapped. Two other invited SPA field directors were sitting to my right. They were looking around like they weren't too sure they liked their situation, like they were expecting a little attention be given them, at least a basic safety briefing.



The company pilot's pre-departure briefing consisted of a slight turn of the head in our direction and the words "everybody ready?" as he advanced the power levers.

Now we were really feeling uneasy! The rest of the tale is a long, horror story. We never got off the water that trip but the pilot sure did scare three seasoned seaplane pilots. We couldn't get out of that airplane fast enough, back at the beach.

After that experience, we headed directly for the bar and didn't go near the water again that day. During the 15 minutes in that airplane, I had experienced apprehension, uncertainty, and discomfort that I was in that situation and finally, anger that I had been treated the way I was. In addition, I had been exposed to what I perceived as a dangerous environment.

That 15 minutes changed the way I treat passengers and students in a seaplane. Now, they get the most complete briefing I can give them. I involve them in the flight so they will feel they are a part of the crew. Passengers are told just what to expect next, very much like a CRM (crew resource management) crew briefing before each manoeuvre.

### **Preflight passenger safety briefing**

So, it is up to us as pilots to include a good safety briefing. We should, because we know:

- ▶ 50%-60% of seaplane accidents happen during takeoff
- ▶ 67% of passenger fatalities in a recent Canadian study were caused by drowning without other incapacitation
- ▶ The floatplane's ultimate stability is achieved after upset
- ▶ In order to take advantage of the good news (that upset floatplanes will usually float forever), those inside must know how to get out and what to do after egress.
- ▶ That one accident where passengers inside are found without a mark on them, sitting in their seats with seatbelts fastened, but drowned, is one accident too many. (Unfortunately, there have been a few of these).
- ▶ If we have an accident on the water, some

passengers drown but one survives to testify that we didn't give a proper passenger briefing, probably condemnation in the courtroom will be our reward.

I have discovered that there is an even better reason to give a thorough briefing: it seems that whenever I "level" with a passenger regarding those "tough-to-talk-about" safety issues, the passenger (now trained from my briefing) willingly accepts responsibility for their own egress from the cabin and mentally becomes a part of the trained crew. They seem eager to learn more and to take on more responsibility (so I give them more to occupy their thoughts - see below). After the flight, they will often say, "that was fun, I learned so much."

### Passenger involvement

It is not difficult to get passengers involved during the flight in many different ways. If we are in an amphibian, the preflight briefing includes how to visually inspect to see that the wheels are up for water landing. After the passenger practices wheel up inspection on their side of the aircraft the first time, they are usually way ahead of me, doing their inspection before I ask for it.

All passengers, including youngsters, are good at spotting other aircraft and pointing them out to me during flight. I involve them in some CRM, asking them to point to the other aircraft but not use pointing to point out anything but other aircraft. Passengers enjoy practicing the "sterile cockpit rule," too. I have heard passengers say "sterile cockpit" to another passenger who is talking about trivia during final approach. It is amazing how passengers enjoy becoming responsible members of the crew rather than just "geese" (old airline term for the bodies in the back that are just along for the ride).

### The preflight seaplane briefing

Can the passenger hear about all the "bad news" scenarios and still want to go flying with you? My experience indicates the answer is "Yes!" if the passenger is involved as a crewmember with responsibilities and is properly briefed. The passenger needs to know everything necessary to be able to get out of an inverted airplane, even with an incapacitated pilot. The passenger needs to hear that the pilot cares. If it is apparent that the person responsible for the flight cares and if the passenger is made to feel a part of the crew (with responsibilities) most of the fear is dispelled that is caused by learning about what might possibly happen.

A good briefing should be one that is specially developed by the pilot for the situation. It will be successful at improving safety and building passenger confidence. It needs to get the passenger involved. A well-done briefing will return a big helping of good feeling to the pilot, and that's reason enough to do a complete passenger briefing every time!

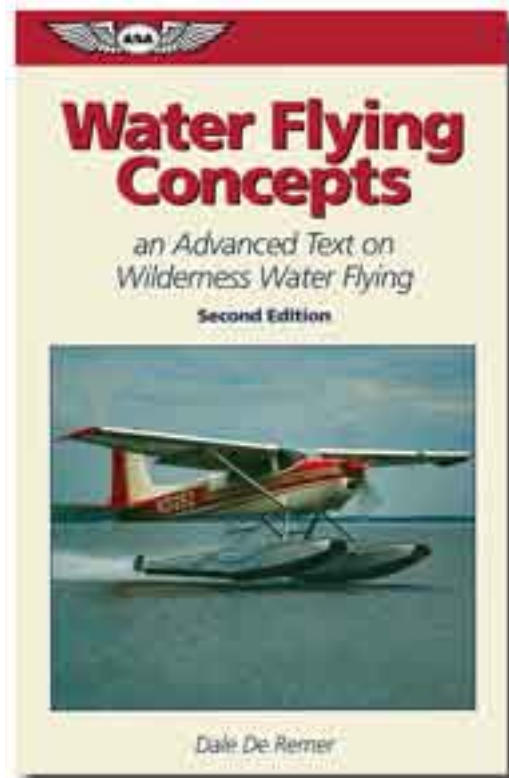
Flying friendly with passengers also means shallow banks, pre-briefing any unusual manoeuvre (getting close to obstacles, short lake takeoffs, sudden manoeuvres, etc.), selecting flight times that minimize turbulence, keeping the flight short, continuously checking on passenger comfort and state-of-mind. In short, letting the passenger know you care and making the passenger feel special is an important form of "fly friendly" as well as a strong safety statement.

### Developing the passenger briefing

Every responsible pilot develops his or her own passenger briefing checklist, to be sure that all topics are covered. The passenger briefing must be crafted so that it fits the aircraft used, the environmental conditions and the pilot's own style.

To help you develop or improve your own personal passenger briefing, I'd like to suggest a resource. The most comprehensive pilot's passenger briefing and discussion I have ever seen can be viewed at <http://www.secureav.com/seaplane-briefing.doc>. It is a fine resource to use as a guide when developing or improving your own passenger briefing. It was developed by a team of highly experienced seaplane pilots and improved by review and critique of many other seaplane pilots. I recommend it highly. And while you are on line and at that site, you might want to take a look at the Seaplane Pilots Model Code of Conduct. It is another tool you can use to improve your professionalism as a seaplane pilot.

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*Water Flying Concepts is one of Dale's very popular books on Sea Plane flying.*



# The Catalina Flying Memorial Ltd

Patrons: Sir Richard Kingsland AO CBE DFC  
Nancy Bird Walton AO OBE Hon ME Syd

Chairman: Neville Kennard



Our patron Nancy Bird-Walton has kindly donated a limited edition print of the painting by David Marshall of P G Taylor's Frigate Bird II Catalina taxiing in the open ocean around Easter Island.

A picture of this Catalina is on display at the Powerhouse Museum in Sydney. The special print was gifted to Nancy by David Marshall because of their joint interests in this remarkable man, this remarkable aircraft and this remarkable feat

The painting comes with a description of the event and the unique association with our own PBY Catalina VH-CAT.

To obtain funds to ferry and operate our own "Frigate Bird II" we are offering to sell by "Dutch" Auction this priceless painting to the highest bidder, starting today and finishing at a function at Rathmines on Saturday 7 June 08.

Place your initial bid here \$ \_\_\_\_\_ and email to [philip@dulhunty.com](mailto:philip@dulhunty.com) - or just post it to The Catalina Flying Memorial Ltd, Building 2, 35 Waterloo Rd, North Ryde 2113.

Philip Dulhunty OAM  
Chairman

## Letter to the Editor

Dear Sir,

I live on Lake Macquarie, at Coal Point (within view of the Catalina Base at Rathmines), & am offering SPAA members any assistance I can, for a donation. I can help out with accommodation, transport, fuel, etc and can look after your aircraft (jetty, beaching or mooring) while you are enjoying other pastimes in this area. I am battling Melanoma and the prognosis is not good, but hopefully my health will hold out long enough for me to fulfil my dream of getting

my licence, buying a small amphibious aircraft & doing some touring around this wonderful country. My friends, are not pilots, so don't understand my passion. I thought this would be a good way to make some more friends, gain some valuable advice and maybe collect a few dollars towards my dream. I can be contacted anytime on my mobile. Next time you are flying through, please drop by for at least a cuppa.  
Dave Lynn  
mobile 0412 630 488.

# Very Nearly Seaplanes . . .



Pretty amazing when you think about it, a one foot drop and you'll nose dive into the water.

WOW! This was pretty daring. Just one little ripple or downdraft etc., and it would all be over!

Early morning anglers are treated to the spectacle of four T6 Harvard Aircraft from The Flying Lions Aerobatic Team water-skiing across the Klipdrift Dam near Johannesburg South Africa.

Lead by Scully Levin, with wingmen Arnie Meneghelli, Stewart Lithgow and Ellis Levin, these renowned airshow display teams rehearse a sequence for the newly launched 'Aviation Action' television program on Super Sport.

Arnie Meneghelli from Academy Brushware, owner of the aircraft, had this to say, 'What we did today I believe is a world first. It

illustrates that South African air show pilots are amongst the best in the world.'

This unusual act, approved by the South African Civil Aviation Authority (CAA), and supported by Castrol Aviation, was meticulously planned and took place under the watchful eye of divers and paramedics that were on site!



**➡ Do NOT try this at home! It is not recommended.**

# SPAA AT NATFLY 2008

By Ben Hunter\*

Following Secretary Chad Boot's lead in 2006, the SPAA returned to the Recreational Aviation Australia (RA Aus) annual Fly-In 'Natfly'. This event is held every Easter long weekend at Narromine Airport in Western NSW and this year approximately 400 aircraft attended.

The RA Aus movement continues to gain popularity in Australia and increasing numbers of RA Aus registered seaplane aircraft are now in operation. Due to this increase, RA Aus met with the SPAA in late 2007 to discuss matters such as conducting safe & responsible water operations, environmental & community issues, licensing, endorsement training etc.

Through lack of understanding, knowledge and naivety by bureaucracy, the public and newcomer seaplane pilots, the operation of seaplanes on waterways around the country, often attracts unfair and unjustifiable criticism.

In order to promote and continue the education process which will minimise public criticism, the SPAA attended Natfly again this Easter. Building an awareness with RA Aus members of the importance of belonging to and supporting the SPAA was a key message of our attendance.

Adopting the SPAA Code of Operations is fundamental in keeping our waterways open to seaplanes and promoting good public relations.

SPAA Executive Committee member Ben Hunter, and partner Dianne set up shop at Natfly promoting our Membership, Policies, Code of Operation, Merchandise and other relevant information. Ben reported that these were some of the common questions fielded:

- What waterways can I operate from?
- What specific 'Marine' or Waterway licences are required?
- What types of Seaplanes can be RA Aus registered?
- How can I obtain an RA Aus float & floating hull endorsement?

The SPAA plans to continue liaison with RA Aus, encouraging water flying RA Aus pilots to join up as SPAA members in the interests of engaging in, and promoting, safe and responsible water flying operations.



*\* Ben Hunter is the SPAA committee member responsible for Merchandise & Marketing. He and his father Jim are currently building a SeaKey. Ben is a regular contributor of material to On-The-Step*

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*The Moyes Microlites Connie amphibious ultralight aircraft is an amphibious single centre float ultralight, with wing tip floats on the wings. . The pilot sits in front of the wing, in a seat on top of the float. The single lever retract system retracts the two main wheels and the tail wheel in one quick and easy motion.*