

Soaring

Lewin B. Barringer, Editor

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Soaring IN NATURE

In this issue we print our first article pertaining to bird flight. In this brief account of some of the interesting flight characteristics of the albatross we are trying to point out, in an introductory sort of way, how much we can learn from studying the aerial technique of some of the soaring birds.

Lillienthal, the great German pioneer, who did so much to hasten our conquest of the air with his detailed research and hundreds of gliding flights, first spent years in studying the mechanics of bird flight. In his book on the subject, which preceded his actual flight experiments, he made a statement to the effect that when man discovered the secret of how a bird can fly for long periods with a minimum of effort he would be able to build successful flying machines.

In recent years, following the invention of the Handley-Page slotted wing which prolonged the

stalling point of an airplane and enabled it to land more slowly, Dr. Manfred Curry, the well-known American yacht designer living in Germany, pointed out in his book on the aerodynamics of yachts and racing that the eagle has a similar wing mechanism. In the long, slow process of evolution in which certain reptiles grew wings and finally became birds, the "thumbs" of the creatures fore-legs turned into small auxiliary wings, which can be raised at will to increase the lift of the wings when soaring or landing. This is well shown on the illustration of the eagle on our cover.

On several occasions we have followed buzzards, hawks, and eagles into thermals which they have been able to detect far more easily than we. On one occasion we were even able to climb up past a buzzard with the Bowlus-duPont "Albatross". However, he soon showed us that his far superior maneuverability and flying technique more than made up for his lower sinking speed.

It is our sincere belief that by careful, detailed study of the design of the wings of these soaring birds as well as their use of them we will be able greatly to develop the art of soaring flight. After all, it seems to be reasonable that we can learn much from our feathered friends who have literally millions of years of experience behind them.

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