



# FLIGHTLINE

APRIL 11, 2025 | VOL 151

MISSION KEYHOLDER APPLICATIONS DELAYED  
PARTING WORDS FROM BEN AND EVAN  
HIKE & FLY THE BAY WITH BEN WALKER

PHOTO FROM ENES MENTESE

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# WOR NEWS



## MISSION KEYHOLDER APPLICATIONS DELAYED

Please note that Mission keyholder applications have been delayed due to ongoing discussions with the park regarding an update to our use agreement.

## PARTING WORDS FROM BEN AND EVAN

I joined the WOR board four years ago hoping to move the club from an organization that was surviving to one that was strong enough to plan years ahead and provide long term security to our flying sites. We have reached that goal with the club being in a strong position financially to manage rising costs of insurance and site use permits, as well as automating many processes so the club requires much less effort to run than in the past. This was possible because of our excellent, skilled volunteers, and a membership that has been wonderfully supportive. The board can guide the club, but without the membership making it something we all want to be part of we wouldn't have succeeded.

When I started flying 10 years ago I was mostly alone on the hill figuring things out with a couple other new pilots. Watching the club nearly double in size the last few years has been great, but even better is that I almost never see that new pilot out alone anymore because we have gone from a bunch of pilots to a true community that mentors and encourages everyone to join us. Thank you all for building that community, and to everyone who has added their efforts (both officially and unofficially) to keeping free flight thriving in the Bay Area.

-Ben Wedlock

Dear pilots,

When I decided to run for club Secretary in early 2020, things were very different than they are today. The pandemic was raging, and the club's executive board was in disarray after the sudden departure of its president. Strong leadership was needed to help keep the club running, and to work with our partners at our respective park agencies to keep flying activities open in the midst of uncertainty and constantly-changing health ordinances across multiple levels of government. With antiquated bylaws, processes, and an old website in place, effectively conducting club business was impossible in-person, and exceedingly difficult online, I decided to step in and help the existing board run its first online election, and to run for Secretary in order to help turn things around and set the club up for future success. How things have changed in 5 years!

During my time as Secretary, the club has:

- Implemented online elections
- Rebuilt its website and built an effective member management system (including "virtual stickers"!)
- Updated its articles of incorporation to formally recognize paragliding as part of the club's purpose.
- Updated its bylaws to permit online meetings.
- Taken over managing sites from BAPA and the Windy Hill Skyriders (The Stables and Windy Hill) without having to raise membership dues, saving members of multiple clubs money.
- Comprehensively revised its site procedures and improved access for newer pilots at Mission and Ed Levin.
- Built up a well-funded and invested reserve for future expenditures and insurance fee increases.
- Moved to annual online general club meetings, significantly improving member access and participation
- And much more behind the scenes.

I am proud to have played a leading role in modernizing the club, and setting it up for future success. I wish the very best to our new club officers, and to our existing officers assuming new roles on the board.

Safe flights,  
Evan



# BAY AREA HIKE AND FLY

-photos and words from Ben Walker

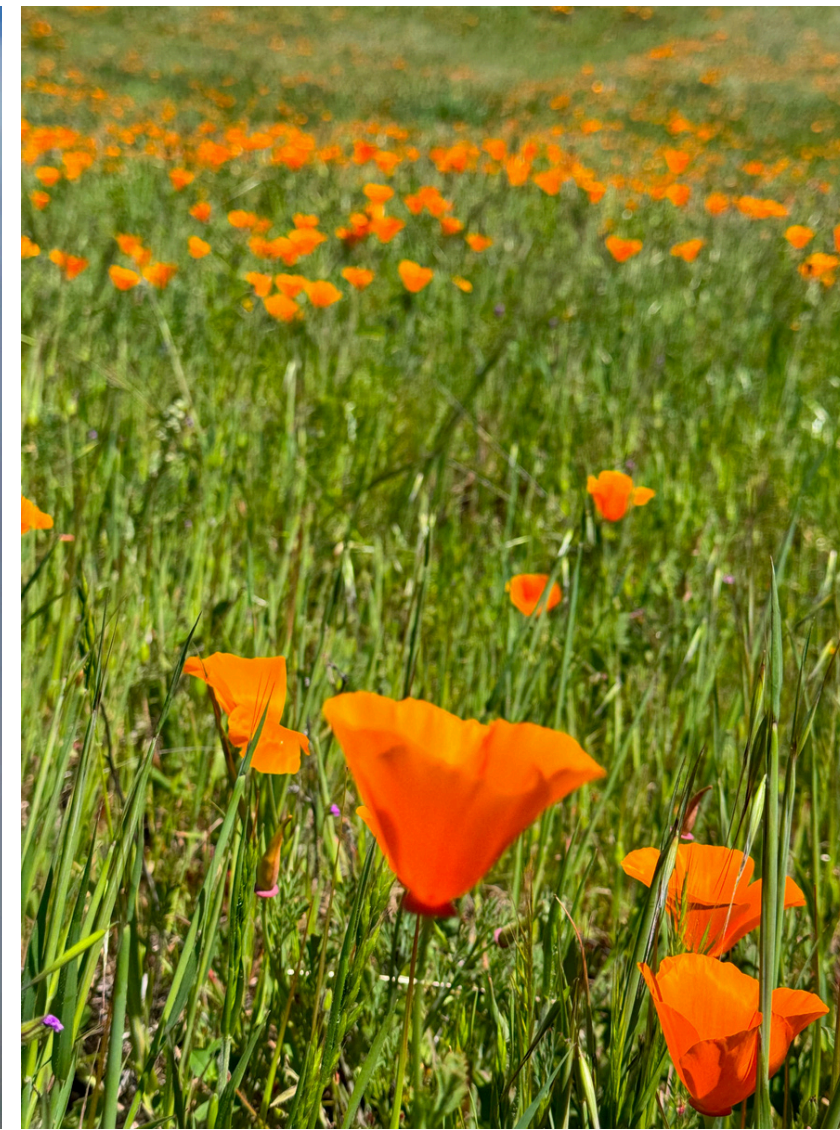


*spring morning at Mission*

For some, it's the Super Bowl, World Cup or Olympics. For me, it's the RedBull X-Alps. I've spent untold hours staring at the tiny glider icons of Maurer, Pinot and Durogati inching across the Live Tracking screen. I've read every article, watched every news clip, and obsessed over every detail of that race since the first edition. To me, hike and fly racing is the pinnacle of sport and athleticism.

I always dreamed of competing, but due to work, cost, family, and a woeful lack of talent, the X-Alps seemed out of reach. There was a moment of self-delusion when I applied to compete in the ill-fated X-West concept that RedBull announced around 2010. Tragically, my dreams of hike and fly racing were crushed when I got a call back informing me the X-West had been scrapped after a test flight for a leg of the route ended with a landing in a replanted clear cut a few hundred yards from the nearest logging road. Apparently the pilot spent most of the day trying to extricate himself from the densely packed six foot tall pine trees. There were also fears that, unlike in the Alps, the Western U.S. is filled with animals that might eat you.





*poppy bloom at Ed Levin, hiking and flying (Ed) and flying (Mission) through the clouds*

My next opportunity to compete in hike and fly racing didn't materialize until 2021, when Gavin McClurg announced the XRedRocks. Gavin was a friend of a friend, so with a few good words spoken in his direction, my aforementioned woeful lack of talent was overlooked and Gavin let me in.

I had 4 months to turn myself into a hike and fly athlete with enough talent to avoid embarrassment. My goal was to stay safe and, if possible, avoid finishing last.

Fortunately, the Bay Area is an excellent venue for hike and fly race training. The same ocean-induced inversion that makes our XC flying inconsistent also keeps the winds calm and the air smooth meaning it's flyable nearly every day of the year. This combination of factors means that to fly a lot, you have to hike a lot. It also encourages a flying style that takes advantage of every tiny bit of lift: this is extremely helpful in racing, where even slow flying is quicker than fast hiking.



In my preparation for the first XRedRocks, I quickly tired of just hiking up and flying down. I also realized my ability to fly efficiently had atrophied significantly since moving to the Bay Area. To develop my flying while continuing the physical training, and to make the training more fun, I designed a few hike and fly tasks.

The first task I created was the X-EdMission. This task was inspired by the beautiful and seldom-used dirt road that connects Mission Peak to the top of Ed Levin. The basic idea behind the X-EdMission is to hike Mission and fly to the LZ at Ed, then hike Ed and fly to the LZ at Mission (you can also do it in the opposite order). If conditions don't allow the flight from one park to the other, you have to hike across the top. This task is fun, puts to use most of the skills needed in hike and fly racing, and is fairly accessible for anyone who has the energy to hike to both launches. Many of the hike and fly athletes in the Bay Area have completed this task, and some have done it many times.



*a beautiful summer morning at Mission*



I also wanted to branch out from the Ed Levin and Mission Parks to other areas, so I developed an exciting and fairly tough task called X-Diablo, which uses a variety of the official LZs and launches to circumnavigate Mt. Diablo. This task typically requires hiking Diablo twice and can be done even when there is no lift.

When the time for the first edition of the XRedRocks finally arrived, the training paid off. I was able to compete safely, felt well-prepared, and avoided finishing last. The race itself was incredible and I also really loved the training. When I started training, every hike was brutal and I looked forward to the flying, but with time, the hiking became almost as magical as time in the air. On my many training hikes I've seen bobcats, coyotes, deer and wild boar. I've seen the sun rise over a cloud-filled Bay. I've watched west and east winds converge at the summit of Ed as clouds caught in the mix seemed to boil around me. Despite the fact that our flying venues are on the edge of a massive metropolis, they can be beautiful and wild.



*Global Rescue XRedRocks 2024, racing near the 18,000 ceiling over the Tushar mountains. That ceiling became an issue for a few of us who were penalized harshly for creeping a few feet above the ceiling due to using barometric altitude rather than GPS. Even so, this flight was one of the most beautiful I've experienced, and a day I will always remember.*



The air we fly through is never static, even when the forecast predicts zero lift and nil wind. I once launched from Mission on a day that was 100% overcast with no forecasted lift. I flew south from launch with the plan to turn back north toward the Mission LZ. Weirdly, while I was not going up, I was also not sinking. The air was glass-smooth and on a whim I decided to see if I could glide all the way to Ed (about 20:1). I didn't get a single beep on my vario the whole flight, but was able to make it to the Ed LZ with altitude to spare. In my training, I've had opportunities to thermal up the sides of clouds, fly through cloud canyons, find odd convergence lines, ridge soar with eagles, and hike and fly with many of you. All of this has combined to make the preparation for the race incredible.

I've now competed in all 4 editions of the XRedRocks. The race keeps getting better. As more people in the Bay Area have started training and competing in hike and fly races, it makes the training even more fun, so I look forward to hiking, flying, and racing with more of you this year.

For anyone looking for more information, here are a few resources to help you get started:

- Telegram groups
  - Bay Area Hike and Fly
  - USA Hike and Fly
- [www.xredrocks.com](http://www.xredrocks.com)
- [www.usahikeandfly.com](http://www.usahikeandfly.com)



*nearing the Ed Levin launch*