

Bald Eagles

Now is a good time for forming a program that attracts older individuals to take up flying. There is a large group that has retired, or are soon to be retired. They often start a second career or participate in a new sport. Now they have time, and usually the money, to pursue such endeavors. The golf courses are full of such people. Motorcycle, four wheeler and snowmobile clubs are also attracting them. You would be surprised with how many snowmobilers who take off their helmets have a little gray in their hair.

A program called Young Eagles sponsors youngsters interested in flying. This is a very important and noble cause. How many eventually become sport or career pilots is difficult to compute. To be realistic, parents may be more concerned that their children have a college degree than a pilot's license. The average college graduate cannot afford flying lessons. They are usually paying back a college loan or interested in making a living. About his time, cupid enters the picture, they get married and have children on their own. The cycle has repeated.

The new sport pilot license and light sport aircraft makes an ideal situation to attract the newly retired to becoming pilots. Now they can fulfill that childhood dream. Most will have many years to be part of general aviation. The price of new manufactured light sport aircraft will often lead them to building or buying experimental airplanes. They become potential EAA members.

As an EAA chapter it would be to our advantage to encourage the retired to aviation. We should start a movement to give free aircraft rides to this group. Instead of calling them "Young Eagles" call them "Bald Eagles". Give them a good flight with hands-on experience. Then refer them to the nearest flight school for lessons.

What is EAA all about? To me it is building and flying airplanes just for the knowledge and fun of it. I would say the light sport pilot fits this category extremely well.

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