Product Review

Seagull Models Space Walker 120 by Mark Smith.

Wingspan: 2100mm, Length: 1490mm, Weight: 5kg, Engine: 120 - 150 4 stroke.

There are a few aircraft designs that are timeless. The Piper Cub, Cessna 150, DH Tiger Moth and the Stearman biplane to name just a few. They sit patiently, their bums on the ground and their noses proudly in the air and just say "Hey, want some fun? You'll have to look outside though. No glass cockpit in here! To this list I add the subject of this review, The Spacewalker.

In it's traditional colour scheme it exudes the image of a warm summer evening on a grass airfield, its Lycoming engine just ticking over. Two open cockpits to give pilot and passenger the feel of old fashioned aviation combine with big floaty wings that enable it to land in any smooth farmers field on the hunt for joyriders.

Given its old fashioned looks, The Spacewalker was actually designed in the 80's by Jesse Anglin in North Carolina, who said he was trying to re-create a classic 1930's sport aeroplane. Pilots who have flown the fullsize can't help thinking of it as one of those rare instances where modelling becomes reality as they ponder whether they should be using the flight controls or a transmitter. Kits for the full-size are still available, as are plans. So come with me as I assemble this rather large version of a classic that is sure to spark lots of comment when you turn up with it at your field.

One of the beautifully built wing panels.

ASSEMBLY:

As with all of the Seagull models I've reviewed the quality of the build is superb. Laser cut frames mate together with precision a scratch builder can only dream of, then the whole thing is covered in Oro-cover- (Profilm) iron on film.

This won't be a blow by blow description of building the model, but rather a look at the features, with a few of my own tips thrown in. The assembly manual certainly leaves nothing to chance and is well worth following.

We start by hinging the ailerons. These use the now traditional fibre hinges that utilize CA glue to wick into the joint making a super strong hinge. I always put a pin in both sides to add strength. A belt and braces approach. The elevator and rudder follow suit.

Next step is to fit the engine mount. This is a two piece nylon affair that requires you to drill the fire-wall after first working out the spacing required for your engine. I'm using the new OS 110 F/S so it was a simple matter of measuring the space between the mounting lugs and making a paper template.

Locktite holds bolts where they should.

Blind nuts go on the other side of the fire-wall and a dab of thread locker keeps it all together. The instructions show the engine being mounted vertically, but this can lead to the muffler wanted to push its way out of the lovely cowl on engines with the exhaust more to the side than the back (OS for example.}

A simple solution is to mount the engine horizontally. Have a look at the photos to see the other method. I did mine as per the instructions and just ran the exhaust out a small hole in the side with no muffler. Noise levels are still lower than a 10 cc 2 stroke with a fine pitched prop!

No need to go into the assembly of the fuel tank as it's covered in the manual, except to say its of very good quality. I've never been a fan of tanks being in contact with the airframe without some form of buffer to help avoid vibration induced chaffing with the resulting failure of the tank. I put some soft plastic tube cut in half on both sides and the bottom of the former

The Space Walker will take a wide variety of engine sizes. Space the two piece nylon engine mount for your engine then drill the fire-wall.

the tank goes through to give it a bit of soft support.

Similarly the undercarriage is a straight forward affair, consisting of two aluminium legs that bolt onto pre-drilled and tapped holes at the forward end of the fuselage. A landing gear fairing fits over the top of the aluminium and the wheels and spats complete the picture. Again it would be a good idea to use a bit of thread lock on all metal bolts.

The engine makes its grand entrance now and it is attached to the mount after first having the mounting holes drilled. There are many-many ways of doing this. Personally I use a very fine paint brush and fill in the mounting hole. Once that dries it's easy to find the centre, punch it and drill it on the drill press. One modification I did make that I do on all my models these days was to simply glue and screw a mini servo on the fire wall and attach it straight to the throttle. Makes for a much more direct link and I've yet to have a servo fail in what is probably a tough environment.

The cowling requires a touch of trimming to get the things that need to hang outside in their proper place. This is covered very well in the manual so I won't repeat what's written. The only thing I'll add is that I use masking tape over the area to be cut out as it makes it easier to mark and it reduces the chance of getting rough edges where you cut.

Since my engine is vertical I had to cut a rectangular hole underneath for the head to protrude. I also cut a small half circle on the bottom of the rear of the cowl to allow the hot air somewhere to go. You'd be surprised how many engine problems can be traced back to overly cowled engines.

Some nice dummy engine mouldings complete the picture.

Time for the servo's The whole cockpit section lifts off leaving a cavernous interior that would easily hold two sets of radio if redundancy is your thing! For mine I'll stick to my three servos, receiver and battery. They like to have lots of room in case they decide they don't get along! I always drill and screw the mounts for the servos, take the screws out and put a touch of cyano in to harden up the wood. Makes it all a bit more secure. The same with any wood where self tappers live.

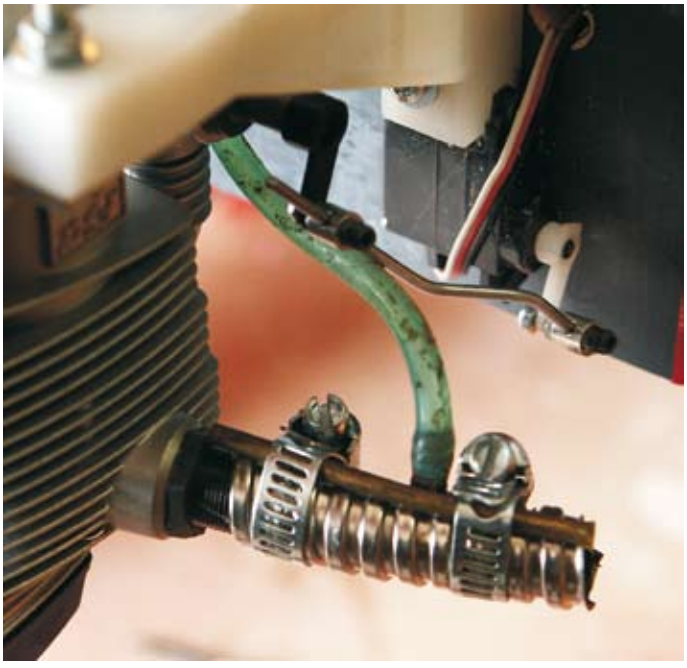
At this point I'd again like to touch on the quality of build inside the body. Perfectly clean cuts, ample glue and a covering job that I'd take a year to do.

The tail feathers are now joined in holy matrimony with the body in true ARF style. Trim the film away, mix some epoxy, make sure everything is centred and leave for half an hour. Repeat for the rudder. The control horns follow the new style of being a bolt, two washers and a spin on horn for the control rod. After years of drilling little tiny holes and fighting with little tiny screws these are a real step forward. One hole, bolt it in, touch of thread lock and finish. Takes less time to do it than it does to write about it. The control rods are pre-installed so linking everything up is a doddle. The hardware pack also comes with a beautifully made tail wheel that is installed at this time.

Gee where do we go from here? Oh that's right WINGS!!!!…Pretty necessary unless you want a really great looking air car to blast around the street. Again fantastic quality with very very little to do. Cyano the fibre hinges, add the servos and the control horns. The wings join to the fuz with a an aluminum joiner that would double as trapeze handle. It passes thirty three centimetres into each wing making an embarrassing wing fold while pulling that tight loop unlikely. Four plastic bolts hold them onto the body.

Anyway all this work is for nothing if the next part of the review is a failure!

Side mounting is an easy option.



My version of the exhaust outlet, simple and it only makes a small hole in the cowl. Suprisingly it's still quiet.

Simple and efficient control horns. Why didn't they think of this years ago?

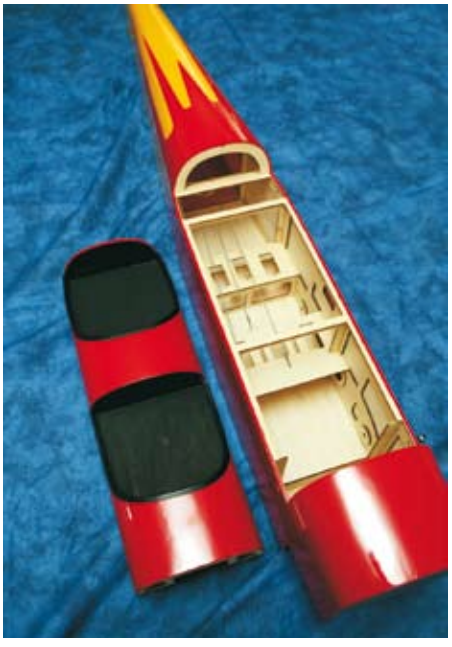
FLYING.

All models exude a certain feeling, based on their appearance. The Spacewalker is no exception. It just screams, "Fly me". So I did!

The OS 110 started and settled in to a steady idle. I'd run a tank through at home

with the needle rich, then one gradually leaning and enriching at various throttle settings. From the outset it ran like a swiss clock. Controls checked, range tested with the engine running and it was time to blast off.

What's a plane without pilots? The spats cowl and flyers.



The cavernous interior and cockpit cover.

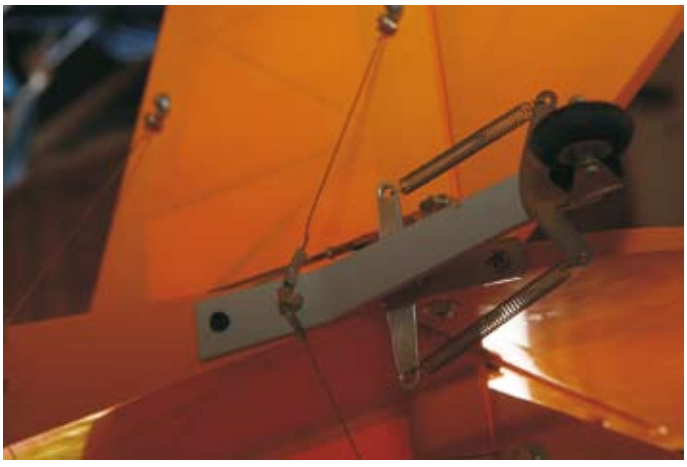
Steady application of throttle saw a gentle swing to the right, easily countered by rudder and before I had full power she was climbing gently away. Advancing the throttle all the way saw a very unscale like climb and increase in speed. Trim was pretty well spot on, so I climbed to height to do the first test I always do on a new model.. stall. Power off, nose up and as the speed bled away she gently nosed over with a touch of a left wing drop at an incredibly slow speed. Definitely a slow lander.

Next was the basic aeros.. Loops from straight and level were nice and round on the brand new OS 110. Aileron rolls needed a bit more speed and tended to go a bit barelly. Stall turns nice and even. All in all a sweet flying model. Half throttle allowed to speed to be kept scale like, the joy of this kind of model is the low slow fly-bys keeping it all looking real. Landing was trainer easy. Line up, bleed speed back and hold off. She touches down very slowly.

So all in all a great model. This would suit the bloke who has just got his bronze wings and is looking for a bigger model to enjoy. Having said that it is gentle enough to be used as a trainer on the OS 110 F/S. Definitely a keeper for my stable.

The Seagull Space Walker 120 is distributed to hobby shops by Model Engines Australia tel 03 8793 5555 www.modelengines.com.au

Sprung tailwheel assembly.



Looks great flies great.