

TITLE: Glider Operations Near "MUGZY" on the "Wilkes Barre 4 Arrival"

DATE: June 18, 2013

This Crew Communication (CC) letter is being issued by the Executive Jet Management Safety Services Office in accordance with the Executive Jet Management Safety Management System Manual Section 8 for communication to all flight crew personnel about critical safety related information received through the EJM ASAP Safety Reporting Program.

Information has been received through an Aviation Safety Action Program (ASAP) Report warning of glider operations in the vicinity and altitude of the "MUGZY" non-compulsory reporting point on the "Wilkes Barre 4 Arrival."

The crew member submitting the report has given their permission to publish the de-identified narrative which reads (unedited):

On arrival to KTEB on the WILKES BARRE 4 STAR and approx 2 min prior to reaching MUGZY at 6000 MSL and 250 KIAS, we overheard a GV preceding us on this arrival transmit to TRACON that "we just came very, very close to a glider at MUGZY at 6000 feet". They were then given a normal vector towards the airport. As we approached MUGZY, the PF pointed out a glider at our 11 o'clock and same altitude. I also spotted the aircraft (white, low wing and probably single seat) in a right hand orbit. We passed behind it (S of its position) at the above listed approx distance. Passing MUGZY we were given a normal radar vector to the east towards the KTEB Rwy 19 final. I acknowledged this vector and reported the glider encounter. A few seconds later I noticed another glider to our right approx the same horizontal distance and about 1000 feet below us. We passed this aircraft N of its position. I also reported this aircraft to the very busy controller who responded with "we can't see them". Evasive action was not required. We then continued the approach and landing at KTEB.

Both the PF and I have been flying into KTEB for 20-30 years. The PF was even based there for a few years. We both agreed that we were totally unaware of glider ops in this area. We also both agreed that had we been given the same vector 10-15 seconds earlier, the outcome of this event may have been very different.

I researched the pubs and the only mention I could find was a symbol on the VFR Sectional indicating glider ops in this area. We of course always operate under IFR and don't use this chart. There is also no mention of high speed IFR traffic in this area depicted on this chart, even though V226 coincides with this arrival routing. A similar arrival route is just south of this one for traffic inbound to KEWR.

I researched the pubs for airports in this area that might have glider traffic and found that 1N7 (Blairstown, NJ) has over 50 gliders based there. This airport is approx 5 NM SSW of MUGZY. I was able to speak with one of the locally based glider pilots. He stated that many nearby airports also have glider ops, and while they are probably unfamiliar with MUGZY or the STAR, (MUGZY is only depicted on the STAR) they should be aware of the need to avoid loitering in this area. He stated however that sometimes they may get "stuck" at this altitude.

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He also stated this area transitions several popular glider courses. He stated that few of the gliders are transponder equipped, but if so they should be squawking 1202 for ATC purposes. Of course when it's busy, TRACON is likely and understandably filtering out VFR targets they are not working. He offered to share this experience with his fellow glider pilots and also provided me with a CTAF they use for air-to-air SA in this area. (123.3)

We will be vigilant for this additional "see and avoid" hazard and will encourage our company to disseminate this info to all aircrews. Hopefully they can also influence changes to both the IFR and VFR charts for this area as well. Due to ATC and TCAS inability to detect these aircraft and the normal procedure of high speed IFR traffic operating near and through VFR altitudes in this area, it would seem useful to add a note about this activity on the STAR. (There is room on the chart). Additionally, a note about the nearby STAR's with routing and traffic type descriptions could be added to the VFR charts as well. Also helpful might be a NOTAM and a caution statement on the ATIS.

I happened upon the crew of the GV that preceded us because I overheard them talking about it at the FBO. They were quite concerned not only about their encounter, but by the lack of info about this activity. They stated they were experienced at KTEB, but had also never been previously aware of glider ops in this area. We all know the airspace and charts are busy in this area, but this seems to be an activity that few may be aware of yet all have a very definite need to be.

End of Report Narrative

Recommendations:

1. Review the charts on page 3 of this communication letter to identify the areas of concern on the "Wilkes Barre 4 Arrival." Note that the VFR Sectional Chart indicates the glider warning areas.
2. Use caution world-wide during glider operating season, typically late spring and summer and early fall.

Please direct any questions to Fred Calvert, EJM Director of Safety at 1-513-979-6669, e-mail fcalvert@ejmjets.com or Steve Jackson, Assistance Chief Pilot at 1-513-979-6060, e-mail sjackson@ejmjets.com

END

