

presented and discussed. Training facilitator and former world champion, John Coutts, gave deeper insight in storm flying, showing why South Africans call him "the storm guru".

There were a number of well-equipped gliders to choose from: a Nimbus 4D, a Janus C, two Duo Discuses, two JS1s, two JS3s and an ASG32 Mi. John Coutts set daily tasks of between 300 and 600 km after a detailed weather briefing, sending young pilots in the two seaters with experienced pilots.

"We started around lunchtime and always did a regatta start, so that we could have a direct comparison of where, who and why some pilots were faster than the others. As a non-flight instructor and pure competition pilot who flies mostly single seaters, it was astonishing to see the benefit of flying in a two seater and to pass on knowledge to less experienced pilots. We most often made decisions, like selecting the left or right cloud street, just based on your gut feel. If you have to explain this decision, you have to evaluate and analyse your gut feelings. It often becomes much clearer to yourself," Katrin Senne explains. Pilots switched between single and two seaters to allow students the opportunity to fly with as many different champions as possible. Discussions on board were about which is the next cloud to take, left or right cloud street, how to fly cloud streets efficiently, which speed to fly at, MC setting, which is the best way to fly into the turn point or AAT sector, thermal speeds and bank angle, final approach optimisation and many other topics.

Not all the gliders were equipped with sustainers and the weather was not always homogeneous. An outlanding was a real possibility on some days, over terrain with very little open spots and airfields that were far, far apart! The cloud bases were not the typical South African standard, making flying very interesting – even too interesting on some days for most of the pilots' liking. Except for the 4km tarred runway at Tswalu, finding an outlanding spot in the nature reserve seems impossible from the air. The area is covered with trees, and bushes with no visible open spaces. However, amazingly the crew of the Duo Discus managed an absolutely scratch-free outlanding, 8 kms from the airfield in the deep, red Kalahari sand. The game drivers helped "track the glider down" making mincemeat of the retrieve. There was clearly a good reason that evening to celebrate the excitement with more than one not gin and tonic! All champions had the opportunity to test fly a JS1 or JS3. Those who hadn't experi-

enced these amazing South African gems before climbed the gliders with big grins on their faces. Even Ventus 3 pilot Wolfgang Janowitsch and EB29R pilot Felipe Levin were very excited about the handling and performance of the JS3. Felipe complained, laughingly, that "half of the wing was missing", but truly enjoyed the superb handling the JS3 has to offer.

Every day new culinary delights from the kitchen surprised the guests, presented at ever-changing locations. At times, there was a cozy meal around the pool, then in the "boma" around the open fire or under a large pergola on a long table. But the absolute highlight of the week was after a game drive till sunset, a dinner in the open air on a sand dune with candles and lamps under the most beautiful, sparkling starry sky that you can imagine. Pure romance! It doesn't get any better.

"Tswalu – It's Heaven on Earth" will always be remembered by those privileged to experience it, a unique and eventful week – much too short in the end – packed with impressions that you won't be able to forget. "Even the weighing scale back home will not forget the week so quickly. Every pilot surely managed to increase his wing loading. And on the last evening some participants ended up in the pool in full gear, wanted or unwanted. How could we end such an event otherwise?"

A big thank you is due to the helpers on the ground, Carol Clifford, Martin Lessle and the tow pilots, Rowan Hill, Riaan Denner and Laurens Goudriaan.

In times of COVID-19 coronavirus and the worldwide shutdown, it is difficult to write about these impressive and unique experiences we had at the Helli Lasch Challenge 2020. Since this amazing week, the world has tumbled upside-down and is in a state of shock, a bad dream that lies over all life. We can work all together and follow the world best practices to slow down the spread of the COVID-19 Coronavirus. We can only hope and that this danger can soon be contained and that everyone can return to normal life, in a new era of life "after COVID-19". As the first cases of the Coronavirus reached South Africa, the Oppenheimer family donated R1 billion to assist businesses. We can only thank the Oppenheimer family for their contributions to the South African people and to the gliding community.

Let us be confident and pray and hope for the best for all our gliding friends and all people in the world.



A BANQUET EVERY NIGHT



SCHLEICHER ASH-30
"ALONG WAY FROM HOME"

John Coutts, a former Kiwi Pilot, now a permanent resident of South Africa, enjoys Tswalu immeasurably



A TYPICAL SOUTH AFRICAN

SOARING SKY

THE WORD 'TSWALU' IS A TSWANA
WORD MEANING

'NEW BEGINNING'



ACCOMMODATION FIT FOR 'KINGS'