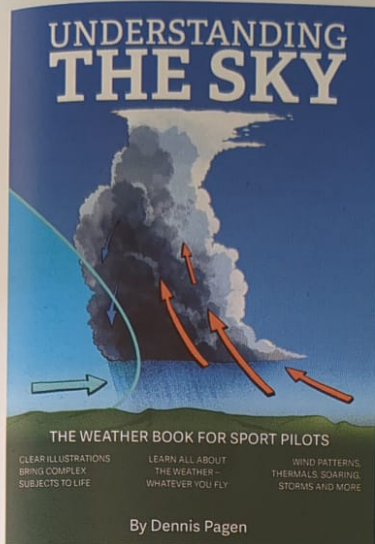


Understanding the Sky

BY DENNIS PAGEN



Dennis Pagen has been flying, and writing about hang gliding (and later paragliding), since the dawn of time. A clutch of his books over the '70s and '80s were pretty much the only books about hang gliding that were useful to pilots, each illustrated in his trademark hand-drawn style. Chief among these was *Understanding the Sky* (1992), at the time pretty much the only weather book aimed directly at free fliers. It was 2001 before Dennis felt able to write *The Art of Paragliding*, but when it comes to weather it doesn't matter which free flight discipline you follow.

XC Mag have had the bright idea of reproducing this book with new illustrations by Steve Ham. Of all the things we need to know about flying, the study of weather doesn't really go out of date, so Dennis's book is as useful now as it was 30 years ago. And useful it certainly is.

Covering every topic, from first principles to the behaviour of cloud streets, the book is very clearly written, and divided into user-friendly bite-sized sections. It's pitched at a level that allows the reader to start with first principles, and go back and study the complex stuff later when they've had a chance to balance Dennis's theory with what they experience in the air.

Let's be clear here. The study of weather – how to take advantage of it to further our flying, how to interpret it to save wasted days or know when to set a 200km goal, and how to read it to save your skin and land immediately – is a lifetime's work. A book like this is the perfect partner to that endeavour, without any stuff you really don't need to know.

Steve's Ham's illustrations (hundreds of 'em!), often recognisably taken from the original but with colour and less, er, idiosyncratic, are superb, and the overall design is spacious. The text is easily absorbed, even if some of the more arcane theory takes a bit of understanding. That's because the weather picture and what's driving it can be incredibly complex.

Anyone beginning their flying career needs to start to take this information on board. And anyone who regularly knocks off 100 and 200km flights (OK Richard, Carl and Nev, 300km) either really knows this stuff – or is following someone who does. If you seek to understand flying weather from the free flier's unique point of view, and to use it to your advantage, this is the book you need. [JS]

Understanding the Sky, 175 x 250mm, 316 pages, ISBN: 978-1-8380173-7-8, is available at xcmag.com/shop and all good paragliding shops, or from <https://xcmag.com/shop>.



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