



# Servo Chatter



## January 2026 Issue

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# President's Message

*By Steve Smith*



Hello Tomcats,

Happy New Year's to all,

What an incredible way to start the year in the San Francisco Bay Area, with sunny mild days. The amount of members enjoying these usually dry conditions to fly their R/C model aircraft is amazing. Weekends at the field have brought a record number of pilots enjoying this hobby flying R/C model aircraft. Even the public is out, as we have experienced many bike path trail goers stop by the field, have lunch with family and friends and even some having interest in trying their hand at the transmitter sticks of an R/C model aircraft. The SCCMAS offers a free R/C model aircraft training program. Even if you haven't purchased a R/C model, the SCCMAS supplies the R/C model and offers "Introductory Pilot" program that allows the public to try flying a R/C model with an instructor or any member that has the AMA "Introductory Pilot" certification. After their first attempt at flight, many newcomers return with an interest to continue the journey to learn to fly R/C model aircraft. This includes fixed wing aircraft, helicopters and recreational drones. More information about our training program is available at [www.sccmas.org](http://www.sccmas.org).

Reflecting back on 2025, the amount of the new people interested in the hobby and people returning back to the hobby continues to grow. We have seen a steady stream of youth and families interested in learning to fly R/C model aircraft, with a majority reaching sign-off for solo flight. Congratulations to all new R/C pilots that received solo flight status in 2025. This would not be possible without our flight training and solo flight sign-off volunteers.

I would like to acknowledge the efforts of Karl Allmendinger (Training lead), Dean Sala, Lynsel Miller, Mike West, Krishnan Natarajan and others for training our future R/C model aircraft pilots.

As part of our community outreach, in 2025 the SCCMAS had the pleasure to host a field trip for the 5th and 6th grade students from Miramonte Christian School. This was an action packed day of talks about the hobby, the R/C equipment used, demonstrations and flying R/C model aircraft from glow engine trainers, EDF jets, electrics and 40% gas models. By mid-day every student and staff was able to fly one of several planes. This was an amazing time for the 5th and 6th grade students. Looking to 2026, the SCCMAS will host another school field trip this spring and we will have a presence at other community events promoting the R/C hobby.

See you at the field,  
Steve

# From the Editor's Desk

Newsletter Editor - Liam O'Connor

Greetings Tomcats -

Welcome to the January 2026 issue of Servo Chatter!

As I write this column, the winter months are upon us, and the Holidays are in the rearview mirror.. While there have been a few cold and rainy days, overall, we are still enjoying excellent flying conditions. It really is a privilege to live in the Santa Clara County area, where we do not have to worry about snow, ice, blizzards, and various other cold weather events that would require cancelling plans for a day at the flying field.

It is nice to see that things have been very busy at the field over the past few months! We had our August 2025 club meeting at the field, along with show & tell where various members shared their latest creations. There was a great turnout, a very informative meeting, another delicious lunch, and plenty of Tomcats camaraderie.

It has also been great to see so many new members, both young and old, continuing to join our Club and learn to fly. I would like to extend a special thanks to Karl Allmendinger and all of our other volunteer flight instructors for making this possible.

I would also like to remind our members that if you have anything you would like to share in our newsletter, please send it to the email address below.



We are always on the lookout for stories, articles, building tips, photos, etc. that we can include in Servo Chatter.

I hope all of you will enjoy this issue, which includes key information from SCCMAS leadership and volunteers, a recap of our quarterly club meeting, a summary of upcoming events, plenty of photos of our recent activities at the flying field, an excellent construction article with numerous Top Tips by SCCMAS member, Andy Keates, and a Landing Tutorial by SCCMAS member, Dave Stubbs.

Until our next issue, I wish all of you a fantastic winter season full of flying, fun, and happy landings.

Liam

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## *Tomcats Reminder:*

*–All Tomcats Members must lock the main entrance gate behind them each time they enter and leave the SCCMAS Flying Field.*

**Cover Photo:** New Pilot, Valerius Pitargue (10 yrs), celebrating completion of his solo test flight.



## Lead Flight Instructor's News

By Karl Allmendinger

### Congratulations New Pilots!

I would like to congratulate the following SCCMAS members that completed their flight training:

- Ray Razon
- Christian Razon
- Owen Horning
- Kyle Greiner
- Peng (Alvin) Zhang
- Ethan Zhang
- Pao-Sheng Cheng

For anyone who is interested in flying a model airplane, but does not have a plane yet, please contact me and I would be happy to take you up on a buddy box flight on my club trainer. Just email me at: [karl.allmend@sbcglobal.net](mailto:karl.allmend@sbcglobal.net)

We also now have a number of additional instructors who are available to help with flight instruction. If you are a new member who needs help, please check with them for their availability. You can find their names and contact information on our website in the training section.

Thanks,  
Karl Allmendinger



# SCCMAS Officers and Volunteers



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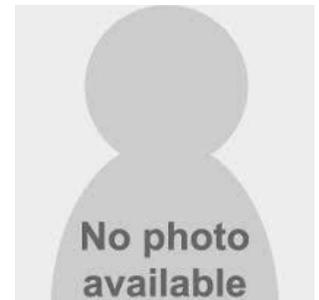
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# Construction Article

By SCCMAS Member, Andy Keates

## Top Tips

All of us figure out building techniques. Here are a few things I did could be useful to you. I hope to read your tips in ServoChatter!

### Cleaning Paint Spray Heads.

When using aerosol paint, clean the spray head with compressed air. Use a short length of small fuel tubing to connect a compressed air can to the spray head and blow it clean. This is far better than holding the spray can upside down and blowing out paint until the spray provides clean air to the nozzle



### Getting a Ringed Piston Back in the Cylinder.

When trying to get a ringed piston back into the cylinder, hold the ring in place with a zip tie (or two). The zip tie will hold it in place until the cylinder pushes it off the ring as the piston enters the cylinder. Cut off the zip tie when it's slid off the bottom of the piston.

### Checking Ignition Sparks.

Solder a piece of copper to a nut that matches the thread of your spark plug and add a croc clip to connect to the fins on the cylinder head. It makes it easy to test the spark and makes it easy to pull the plug out of the socket after you've tested it.



# Construction Article (con't)

## Broken Canopy?

Make an outline in balsa, fill it in with a block of foam, which can easily be cut and sanded to the shape of the canopy. Cover it in kitchen shrink-wrap film, to act as a release agent. Layer glass fiber and resin over that, pull it off the cling film, and there you have it. Sand smooth and paint. It's not clear, but it's stronger than the original by far!



## Propeller Organizer

Put some cardboard dividers into an old plastic file organizer and you have a great propeller organizer. If the organizers are oversize, they are also great for organizing sandpaper, which is larger than regular 8.5" x 11".



# Landing Tutorial

*By SCCMAS Member, Dave Stubbs*

A pilot takes off and has an exemplary flight with smooth, carving turns and multiple, perfectly-executed aerobatic maneuvers. On final approach, the plane bounces multiple times down the runway. All in attendance give out a collective sigh, with the same thought, "Too bad..."

This has happened to all of us; some far more than others. Smooth landings don't necessarily come with experience, but they DO come from understanding what causes poor ones and acting to mitigate them.

I'm unquestionably the most mouthy at the field either complimenting pilots or teasing them with, "I liked your third landing, best..." Not everyone actually cares, or appears to care, when a landing doesn't go well. I'm certainly no expert but I do try my best on every landing to be as flawless as I can in their execution. This write-up is generated to help those that genuinely wish to improve. It covers all manner of model airplanes: light, heavy, taildraggers, tricycle-gear, flaps and no flaps.

"Take offs are optional. Landings are mandatory". That's a saying we've all heard over the ages, but BAD landings are NOT mandatory. A great landing is the icing on the cake, even if the flight started with a poor takeoff and wasn't particularly inspiring after that. It's the last part of a flight that stays with us. I've had "thumpers" on the last planned flight of the day and immediately went back up to perform a (hopefully) GOOD landing, since I didn't want to end the day on a bad note.

A good landing starts with the approach on the downwind leg. This is where the pilot places the plane at a proper altitude and distance from the runway, into a slight descent that continues through the turn to crosswind and onto the final. A proper altitude is one where the glide slope ends near first third of the runway's length. At Tomcats, this happens to be when the model is some 100 feet from the runway, and even (or slightly above) the top of the far ridge. When performed properly, the continuous descent with small throttle setting changes to compensate for wind, greatly limits the risk of stalling. How many planes have you seen stall in a descent with little to no up elevator input? A plane just doesn't want to stall going "downhill" unless hit with a gust.

The prop can act as an airbrake, a neutral speed contributor, or an accelerant. As the prop spins, if it creates thrust greater than the drag of a horizontally traveling airplane, it accelerates until the two forces are equal. Slowing the prop down below the speed at which thrust equals the aircraft's drag will impart its own contribution to braking the model. And a windmilling prop can also apply a braking force. But much depends upon the width and pitch of the blades, plus the swept area as to how much drag is generated at various rpms. An aerodynamicist could put you to sleep with all the math involved. Suffice it to say that it's up to the pilot to discern what throttle setting gives a particular plane the best glide slope and speed for a good landing. Practice makes near perfect... Nothing, after all, is ever PERFECT...

# Landing Tutorial (Con't)

Flaps simultaneously create lift and drag, allowing a plane to land at a slower airspeed than without having them deployed. The desired result is a lowered ground speed and roll out. Head winds can determine what setting to land on. Strong winds don't require flaps on many planes, while zero wind really wants them on a heavy/fast airframe.

On a zero wind day, with a plane that has flaps, I will drop to half flaps on my downwind leg and go to full on the final. This gives me a higher airspeed up to the final with a lessened chance of a stall, should I not apply sufficient throttle or have an insufficient descent rate to be adequately above the stall speed.

DO NOT make unduly sharp, highly banked turns in the pattern. A plane slows remarkably in a sharp turn due to increased drag. Carve your turns gently to limit the chance of a stall. If an abrupt turn is needed to avoid a midair, power up. Just about every plane prefers a little throttle all the way through touchdown. This is to overcome the drag from potentially slowing the plane too much on final, and particularly during the flare just prior to touchdown. If the elevator is too heavily pulled back at any time, the plane will slow its descent, or rise (balloon), and airspeed will drop. Apply a little throttle to regain much needed airspeed. This will lengthen the distance to the touchdown but a safer procedure than pushing down on the elevator, which can dump the lift for a much increased descent rate. Then, you are chasing your tail in a potential porpoising approach. Often, it's

best to just power away and try again, especially when running out of runway. Try to land the plane directly in front of you since it gives the best visual cues on angle of attack, altitude, and airspeed.

Keeping the prop powered has a second and equally important function: prop wash. The elevator is only as effective as the air hitting it. This is most apparent with flaps, which require more throttle to overcome drag. This increased airflow from the prop flows past the elevator, increasing its effectiveness. An elevator with little air pressure may not have enough force to control the plane's angle of attack. This can cause it to get into an undesirable angle of attack, causing the plane to descend too fast. Without adequate altitude to recover (regain airspeed), the model can unceremoniously smack in.

The landing flare is often rushed by pilots, applied too early (more than a foot off the runway), when the plane has too much energy (airspeed) and with too much throw causing the plane to rise (balloon) or float (hang). Apply the elevator gradually. The flare is to slow the descent to zero, with the plane bleeding off excess airspeed as it approaches a stall. Too much or too little can be met with any number of bouncing scenarios. A perfect flare is one where the wheels gently kiss the runway and no bounce. There is no excess airspeed to get airborne again, even in a nose high attitude. This takes copious practice. Often, it's not the most experienced pilots that make great landings, but the ones working hardest to do so.

# Landing Tutorial (Con't)

Tricycle-gear airplanes are the easiest to land because the mains are behind the CG. Of course, if you pound it in, that can slam the nose down, to then rebound skyward, taking the plane with it. No good. The perfect landing is one where the main wheels kiss terra firma and back pressure is sufficient to hold the nose off until airspeed diminishes and it drops slowly. Me? I'm happy if all three wheels touch simultaneously. Holding the nose off is relatively difficult with the average plane since the CG must typically be well aft; few having mastered this "art form". <Applause-applause>.

A taildragger requires far more finesse'. And it depends upon the plane as to whether it prefers to be flown right to the ground, flared slightly, or flared a lot so the tailwheel contacts at the same time as the mains. I have several planes that will bounce (guaranteed) unless it's a three- pointer. The trick is to come in low over the field and ever so gently, increasingly applying up elevator to disallow the plane from climbing as the angle of attack increases slowly, until just prior to touchdown, applying a fair amount of additional elevator to lower the tail. When done properly, the plane will pivot about the center of lift and the tail just lowers an inch or two to meet the runway at the same time as the mains. It's a real accomplishment, looks awesome, and fun to perform well. Patience for the airspeed to bleed off is key. Practice, practice, practice...

If you have a very light plane with a lot of frontal area, proper throttle management is crucial since once the throttle is chopped, the plane can go into a

steep(er) descent to reach the proper airspeed to stay airborne. Think of the propeller as pulling the plane to the ground in a controlled descent. Cut it and all bets are off. These planes need adequate power all the way through the touchdown and some even like a bit on the rollout.

If you bounce, be prepared to add a touch of throttle (NOT A LOT) and the plane will keep flying, merely extending the landing. Not adding any throttle places you at risk of dribbling down the runway. Often, a gas turbine jet, flown by an inexperienced pilot, will get into the dreaded 4-bounce-to-a-crunch landing, where each successive bounce is more severe with the angle of attack increasing until the (typically) fourth one, when the plane has slowed to the point that it has become a ballistic missile and crashes down, inevitably ripping out the landing gear. I've seen this SO MANY times. You know it's not going to end well after the first bounce...

To challenge myself on a day when feeling particularly bold, I'll make my approaches dead stick since airspeed and flare timing are critical. Remember, some throttle cures a lot of ills on a landing approach. And when I'm flying a 3D ship, I'll execute a ridiculously high final approach (400 feet) in a steep power off slip, releasing opposing rudder and aileron inputs just five to ten feet off the end of the runway, trying my best not to balloon so there is adequate energy (airspeed) for a gentle landing without applying necessary throttle. THAT is my metric for being in proper form. I struggled mightily with it at first, but now, after countless attempts

# Landing Tutorial (Con't)

with specific models, it is a real joy to perform well and sometimes, I succeed....

The last input I'd like to mention is the use of rudder on final. Alignment to the runway with banking turns is "okay" until a very short distance off the ground. Use the rudder in these instances since it limits the chance of a wingtip contacting the runway and is actually more efficient and safer. Ailerons create drag and that is not something you want near stall speed. A wing can drop precipitously. And a plane slows in a turn, no matter how slight. Rudder use will not decrease the wing stall speed and will more effectively point the plane if it needs less than about 10 degrees of yaw correction. Keep it simple.

Once the plane is on the ground and rolling to a stop, rudder becomes ineffective on tail draggers. If you find yourself heading toward an immovable object, somewhere other than Tomcats, like a bordering fence or one of the older pilots retrieving their plane off the runway, apply full rudder in the direction you wish to go and "burp" full throttle. This is a rapid and short application of full throttle to jerk the plane away from hitting something. Yes, it will increase the velocity going towards the object, but only for a VERY short time. It will far more likely turn a LOT faster than holding full rudder and praying to the modeling god...

So, there you have it. This is not meant as a lecture but a sharing of what I've learned over decades, observing far more skilled pilots performing proper landings with all sorts of model airplanes and

watching MANY bad to horrific landings; some by my own hand... There will be pilots (you know who you are) that will critique this write-up for accuracy, using free body diagrams. Treat this as loose rules of thumb for beginning-to-intermediate pilots. Expert pilots can't be told anything...

Frequently wrong, but never in doubt,

Dave



# SCCMAS Pilot Projects

**Below:** Lynsel Miller's 1/4 Scale Hurricane, 100cc Quadra Mag Engine, built from Pactical Scale Plans from England. It was a 28 year on and off project for Lynsel, and it is finally complete. What a beauty!.



**Above:** Lynsel fabricated the landing gear for the Hurricane, and it is air up, spring down. Lynsel machined a very beefy trunnion for the gear, which was needed since the model weights 69 lbs. He also machined his own 4 spoke wheel covers, while the struts came from Likes Line back east.

## SCCMAS Pilot Projects (con't)



**Above:** Sharam Shirazi's Tamjets 1/7.75 Scale F-18, powered by a Kingtech K210 Turbine. About 45 lbs all up weight, and guided by Spektrum radio gear. Sharam painstakingly repainted the jet in a "reverse" Blue Angels color scheme.

# SCCMAS Members Meeting, August 24, 2025



# SCCMAS: Scenes from the Field (con't)



# SCCMAS: Members Meeting (Show & Tell)



**Above:** Frank shows off his new pattern plane with counter rotating propellers; **Below:** Lynsel's latest project, a ¼ scale Bell P-39 Airacobra, powered by a McKay 75cc with a rear carb, exhaust sourced from the U.K. The plane was built from a glass and foam core kit made by Consolidated Models (which is no longer available). Landing gear is by Robart.





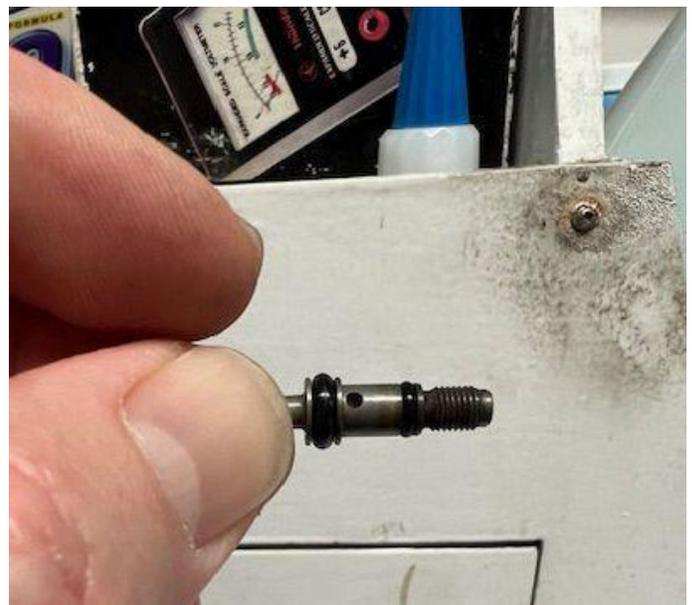
# Glow Engine Repair

By SCCMAS Member, Liam O'Connor

I wanted to briefly share my experience repairing an O.S. .95AX engine that powers my Great Planes Escapade. The engine ran flawlessly for years, but recently started having problems. After idling for 30 to 60 seconds, the engine would die as I attempted to increase the throttle. While I could get the engine to run consistently at higher RPM, I found that this required the high end needle to be at a very rich setting to keep the engine running. Over the course of several weeks, I tried every engine tuning method I have learned over the past 25 years (with lots of help and advice from my fellow SCCMAS Tomcats), I also replaced glow plugs, replumbed the fuel tank, replaced all fuel lines, etc., but nothing seemed to work.

A fellow SCCMAS member suspected that I had an air leak somewhere in the engine that was causing the fuel mixture to lean out at various rpms, which made tuning impossible, and suggested that I replace all rubber O-Rings in the engine. I replaced the O-Rings on the high end needle valve, at the base of the carburetor, and at the rear cover plate on the back of the engine. Frustratingly, none of this solved my problem. I then realized that there were a few O-Rings that I overlooked - two on the low end needle valve. The low end needle valve was a bit tricky to remove, as it required removal of the throttle barrel assembly and screwing the low end needle all the way *into* the carburetor body to remove it.

Once I inspected this, as you will see from the before and after photos below, it was obvious that the smaller of the two O-Rings was flattened out, dried out, and cracked. I replaced both O-Rings. To my delight, this appears to have fully solved the problem, the engine runs great, and tuning adjustments are effective once again. I look forward to many more flights with this engine in my Escapade!



**Before:** with the low end needle removed, I could see that smaller of the 2 O-Rings had perished, letting air sneak by.

**After:** both O-Rings replaced on low end needle valve.

## Glow Engine Repair (con't)



**Above:** O.S. 95AX after carburetor was reassembled and reinstalled; **Below:** after the engine repair, the Great Planes Escapade is ready to take to the skies again!



# SCCMAS: Scenes from the Field



**Above:** Taqi with his CARF Rebel Max

# SCCMAS: Scenes from the Field (con't)



**Above:** field repairs! SCCMAS member Ben removes a fallen tree branch that temporarily prevented access to our flying field. Thanks Ben!!; **Below left:** field upgrades! The new wash basin is a welcome addition, used often by SCCMAS members and our public bike path visitors.

## SCCMAS: Scenes from the Field (con't)



**Above:** new pilot, Owen Horning, successfully completed his flight training and logged his first solo flight. Owen's flight training was provided by head SCCMAS Flight Instructor, Karl Allmendinger.

# A Mom's Eye View

*By SCCMAS Member, Natalie Horning*

Who knew that gifting our son Owen an Apprentice R/C model airplane would unlock the Bay Area's best kept secret, SCCMAS. We had a shiny new R/C plane, an enthusiastic teen, and no place to fly. It was a Google search that luckily led us to the SCCMAS community. After sending a note to Flight Instructor Karl Allmendinger, (our now cherished friend), Owen started the process for R/C take-off and landing clearance. It was an unforgettable first day out at the field as we watched seasoned pilots fill the air with jets, iconic warbirds, and aerobatic 3D planes. We were hooked!

The shared passion for planes at Santa Clara Skypark is contagious. Our R/C plane collection has started to multiply. Is there such a thing as too many? Owen surpassed the initial Apprentice, has moved on to a Valient and recently celebrated a maiden voyage with a new Spitfire. As Owen's mom I have been inspired to also become a member and am in the preliminary stages of learning to maneuver a special little trainer plane. Owen's dad is with us every time as head of our trusty pit crew. Whether it is securing the center of gravity, pre-flight safety checks, setting the trim or learning wind patterns, we never leave Skypark without a smile and having learned something new. A couple of seasons have passed and SCCMAS remains our favorite place to spend time with friends and fun planes!

Thank you to all SCCMAS members. You are an amazing group of people!



**Above:** Owen Horning with his Apprentice R/C Airplane

## SCCMAS: Scenes from the Field (con't)

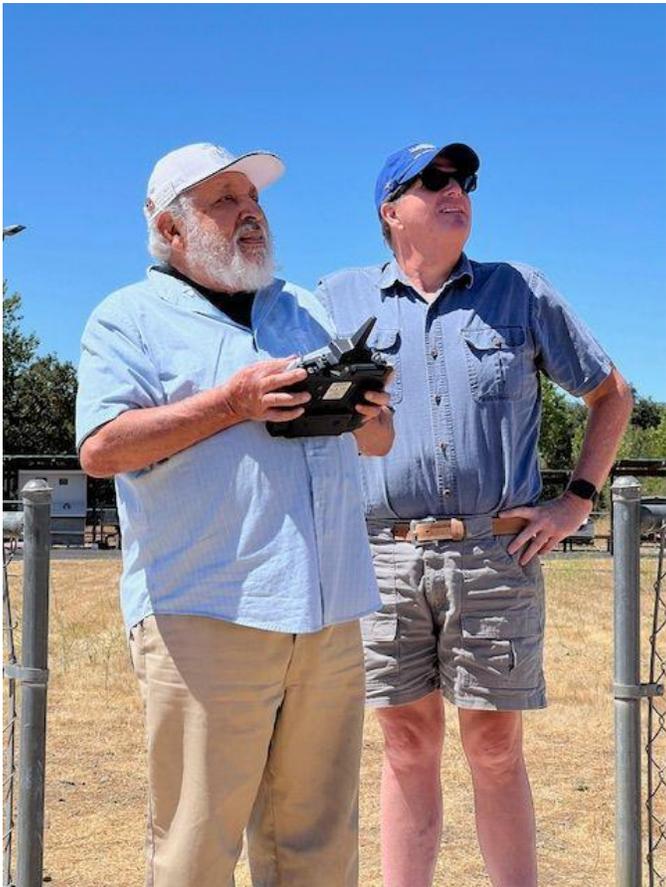


**Above:** Liam logged flight #100 on his CARF Joker (Kingtech K-85 Turbine for power, guided by Futaba radio gear)

# SCCMAS: Scenes from the Field (con't)



# SCCMAS: Scenes from the Field (con't)



# SCCMAS: Scenes from the Field (con't)



**Above and Right:** Photographs taken after the successful maiden flight of Liam's CARF Rebel Hot. (Kingtech K-60 Turbine for power, guided by Futaba radio gear). Thanks to Sia, Keyon, and Alex for helping to prepare the jet for the first flight.



## SCCMAS: Scenes from the Field (con't)



# Scenes from November 2025 Warbird Event at Modesto Vets RC Club



**Above and Right:**  
Darryl Rolla's Hawker  
Sea Fury (Chris  
Luvara photos)



# Scenes from Modesto Vets Warbird Event (con't)



**Above and Following Pages:** Lynsel's 1/4 Scale Hurricane (Chris Luvara photos)

# Scenes from Modesto Vets Warbird Event (con't)



(Chris Luvara photo)

# Scenes from Modesto Vets Warbird Event (con't)



(Chris Luvara photo)

# Scenes from Modesto Vets Warbird Event (con't)



# Scenes from Modesto Vets Warbird Event (con't)



**Above:** Daryl's Hawker Sea Fury

# Scenes from Modesto Vets Warbird Event (con't)





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