

EAA's Attic



A boat? A biplane? A glider? Yep.

Aircraft designer William L. Skliar, in the May 1961 *EAA Sport Aviation*, described this prototype (N6498D) as a “boat-towed, two-winged, primary-class, water-ski seaplane glider.” It’s officially named the Explorer PG-1 Aqua Glider and nicknamed *Bayou Bird* for the saltwater bayous in Florida it flew in and over.

Skliar, then a pilot at Eglin Air Force Base, designed the glider as a Boy Scouts of America (Explorers) project in 1958-59. It took them eight months, or 1,000 hours, to complete.

Not surprisingly the 260-pound Aqua Glider appealed to both water and aviation enthusiasts, especially after sailing through *Mechanix Illustrated*, *Water Skier*, *Popular Science*, and

Private Pilot magazines. Homebuilders liked the simple, low-cost, and small design and plunked down \$20 for plans through Skliar’s Explorer Aircraft Co.

In 1969 *Bayou Bird* sprouted wheels when Skliar converted it to a landplane shortly after a transfer to Edwards Air Force Base in the California desert. It almost flew without a tow when he unsuccessfully attempted a power conversion using dual go-kart pusher engines.

Bayou Bird retired to EAA in 1970 and was exhibited for many years. It now shares a cozy spot in EAA’s Attic, next to another rare bird—a 1930 Peel Glider Boat.

—Kathleen L. Witman