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2007 NHN&WR letter/story #08

**Seagulls**

A beautiful morning here in North Hero. We’ve just come inside from our morning coffee out on the deck, ... clear, sunny, brisk breeze from the north northwest. The Black Tip Seagulls were having a grand time. Coming from the south southwest, completely motionless, they were soaring over the cabin almost into the wind. Gazing in awe at their graceful, effortless flight one can not help but think, *"How do they do that?"*

Well, ... you can Say, *"Who cares, I’ll just enjoy watching them",* and stop reading this month’s letter.

Or, ... follow along for a curious person’s attempt to explain this wonder. (Any aeronautical engineers out there?)

One obvious force we are dealing with here is gravity. Were it the only one the seagulls, being heavier than air, would plummet directly to the ground, kerplunk.

A second force is the wind. Why aren’t the seagulls being blown in the opposite direction? Well, like a sailboat a seagull has a rudder, it’s called a tail.

Then there is a mysterious third force involved. It is called ‘Lift’. A phenomena of nature is that nature abhors a vacuum. A bird’s wing will cut a swath through the air while extended. The divided air will flow across the wing’s top and along the bottom. The wing itself is designed so that the distance across the top is greater than the distance along the bottom. The divided air must come together at the back of the wing at the same time to avoid a vacuum. So, the air across the top, with further to go, must travel faster than the air across the bottom. Traveling faster it becomes thinner. The slower, denser bottom air ‘Lifts’ the wing up into the thinner air. The faster the wind the better the soaring. This is why aircraft carriers turn into the wind to launch airplanes.

Net result of these forces is a beautiful bird over-soaring a log cabin.. The most amazing thing of all is, *"Who explained all this to the Black Tipped Seagulls?"* Hmmmn, think we will stop right here, not too far to evolution vs creation, a dicussion we find best to avoid.

Lucile’s take on all this?

*"Good Grief, why don’t you just sit out on the deck, ... enjoy your coffee ... and enjoy the view!"*

From windy North Hero,

Lucile, Bailey & Ken.