

>realise what it is to do 15 hours at 200km/h. To do 14 at 170km/h or more is crazy enough!"

For someone claiming the longest glider flight ever, Klaus seems remarkably relaxed about the status symbols other pilots cling to. He isn't sure how many 1,000km flights he's done – "it must be about 15, three of them in France" – and has never claimed Gold or Diamond. He once flew 1,416km O/R across five countries in a Nimbus 3 – to Austria from his base at Serres in the French Alps – without realising it was a two-seater world record. He does, though,

have Silver, which he needs for national competitions in Germany. He also holds, with Sidonie, the free O/R Open Class world record: 1,412.22km flown in the same Stemme on December 29, 1999.

"Of course, records are very nice: I'm a gliding professional so my reputation matters. But I enjoy my flying; it's not only records, records, records.

"I am really fascinated by the wind. It's so much fun to battle with such very strong forces. You know you are a little nothing, but you use them. My passion is mountain flying, because in the flatlands if there are

no thermals the day is finished. In the mountains you will always find something – a little thermal in the middle of the valley at the day's end or a weak wave.

"What I want now is to learn how to fly in this fantastic region. Exploring a new region is a lot of fun. And if there is a record day, I'm ready to go." He has goals in mind: a 2,000km flight in one direction to win the \$3,000 prize offered by wave pioneer Joachim Küttner – perhaps from the south to use the southerly component often found in winds over the Andes ("I think it's possible"); a pre-declared O/R to beat Tom

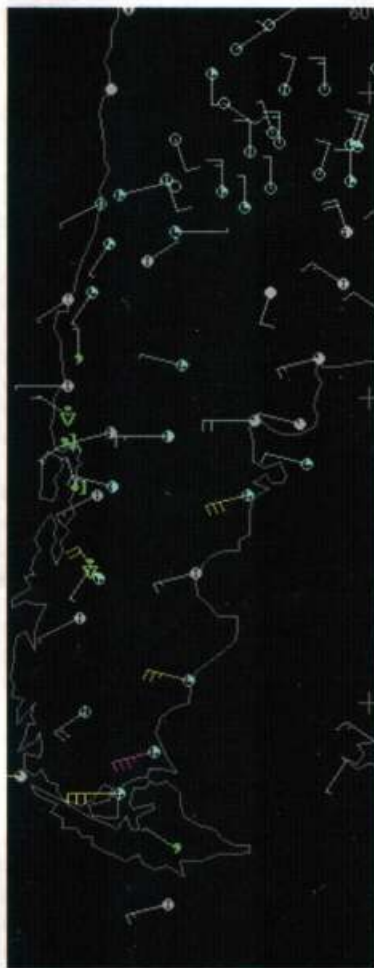


Figure 3, above: weather over Argentina at 12.00hrs on November 26 (René Heise)

Above: the region of Klaus Ohlmann's flight along the Andes, from San Martín to Malargüe. He believes that 1,000km over the flatlands in thermals is also perfectly possible. "In Argentina, you can fly every day," he adds (Map: Steve Longland)