Keowee Sailing Club sees influx of Flying

'They tend to stay'

Scot sailboats



COURTESY OF SANDY EUSTIS

Local racers Sandy and Keith Eustis lead a trio of visiting sailors at a recent Keowee Sailing Club Flying Scot regatta.



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Bob Graves, Flying Scot fleet captain at the Keowee Sailing Club, readies the sails on his boat Tuesday in Seneca.



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Sandy Eustis, a longtime Flying Scot competitor, talks about racing at the Keowee Sailing Club's dry lot Tuesday in Seneca.

BY ERIC SPROTT
THE JOURNAL

SENECA — A veteran competitive sailor, Glenn Katz remembers a time in his formative days when he was skeptical about a certain type of sailboat he associated with a particular demographic.

That boat was the Flying Scot, a relatively small vessel that doesn't take a large crew to sail, and whose fiberglass body makes for generally low maintenance and a generally stable ride, particularly for those with older bones.

"I used to considered it the old person's boat, and I wasn't interested much in it then, and there wasn't a fleet of them where I was at," said Katz, who's on the race committee at the Keowee Sailing Club.

But like many in the area — and the local sailing club in particular — Katz is now a firm believer in the boat, which has recently exploded in popularity. That growing prevalence comes as no surprise to Sandy Eustis, another veteran club member who's been sailing Flying Scots competitively across the country for more than 30 years.

"When Flying Scots appear at any club, they tend to stay because they're built very sturdily, they're relatively comfortable and relatively safe and stable for a small boat," he said. "They hold their value pretty well, and they have molded-in seats, which makes for great picnic sailors."

When Eustis, Sam Secrest and David Smith got their charter to form Fleet 193 of the Flying Scot Sailing Association — in the Dixie Lakes Fleet — at the club in 2008, they were the only Flying Scot owners at the club. The club now sports 15 boats, of which seven to 10 race regularly as a fleet on Lake Keowee, as well as regionally and nationally.

In addition to regular races every other week that take roughly an hour to complete, the club's annual regatta in May regularly draws 25 boats from five states, while its spring and fall regattas also bring in numerous boats from various classes.

Katz said there are three new boats at the club this year alone as its popularity continues to grow.

"We race at a high speed of about 5 mph, but when we're close to each other, that's when it becomes entertaining and interesting," he said. "You get to talk and yell at each other, and in our fleet as it has grown in the last few years, we've been trying to get our slower sailors to catch up with the intermediate, which is causing us all to catch up with the fast guys like Sandy, so while we have seven boats out there scattered all across the lake, now we're all together in a club racing all the way around the course generally.

"I think that has caused a lot of people to say, 'They're having a lot of fun,' so people are getting off their bigger boats."

The Flying Scot, of which more than 5,700 have been produced since 1957, doesn't take on much water during capsize and takes just two to three people to race, though there's room for about four people.

Good for family trips, or single-handed fun, the boats cost between $16,000-$20,000 depending on racing gear, while middle-aged boats are available for $5,000-$8,000 and older models go for between $2,500 and $12,500.

"Relative to boats our size, and bigger boats, that's a real bargain," captain Jim Hackett said.

"It becomes a good boat you can still sail up in your 80s because it's not as physically demanding as some of the other boats," Katz added. "Tactically it's still demanding, but you can sit in it when you're older, or even handicapped, and you can still sail competitively and enjoy it."

The club, which boasts more than 200 members, has a few spots open, and the annual $600 dues can be worked off halfway by volunteering for various events at the club, as work credits are available.

And as for the view when sailing Flying Scots on Lake Keowee, Eustis said it's hard to beat.

"I've raced Flying Scots for over 30 years all over the country," he said. "I've been to probably 25 or 30 different sailing clubs or yacht clubs with active Flying Scot classes, and I firmly believe that the view of the mountains and out over our lake with the islands and whatnot is the single prettiest view that I know at any small lake venue anywhere in the country I've been."

For more information on the club — which formed in the 1970s and has been at its location off Rochester Highway since the 1980s — visit keoweesailingclub.com or call (864) 882-9613.

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