

# 2021 NORTHERN ILLINOIS AIRSHOW: BIGGEST AND BEST IN NORTHEASTERN ILLINOIS

By Larry E. Nazimek

The 2021 Northern Illinois Airshow (AKA Wings over Waukegan) was, without question, the biggest and best airshow in northeastern Illinois. (The Chicago Air and Water Show was again canceled, with only a Blue Angels performance as a substitute.) For this airshow, fans can walk up to the planes, something they cannot do at many of the major city shows.

The airshow took place on Sept. 11, 2021, the 20th Anniversary of the terrorist attacks on the U.S. Consequently, the flying portion of the airshow began with a paratrooper carrying the U.S. Flag for the National Anthem, encircled by the Aerostars, immediately followed by a jumper with a 9-11-2001 Flag and a missing man formation.

A major source of aging aircraft is the Warbird Heritage Foundation, based at the Waukegan Airport. Flybys are arranged by various groupings. A TBM

Avenger and AD-1 Skyraider performed with ground pyrotechnics. The Military Propeller Trainer Aircraft Parade included the T-6G Texan, T-28A Trojan, L-19A Bird Dog, and the DHC-1 Chipmunk. Their Jet Parade included the F-86F Sabrejet, L-39C Albatross, L-29 Delphin, T-33A Shooting Star, T-2B Buckeye, and T-37 Tweet (painted like an A-37), and A-4B Skyhawk. The FG-1D Corsair and P-51D Mustang performed together, and the Corsair later flew with the A-4B Skyhawk as the Navy's Legacy Flight.

In between the flybys were highly skilled aerobatic performances with Mike Vaknin in his Extra 300, Galen Killam in his RV Acro, and Bob Richards in a Pitts S-1SS.

The Dragon's Fyre Jet Truck, a jet-powered pickup truck, driven by Dave Modder thrilled spectators as it raced down the runway.

No large-scale airshow would be complete without formation teams, and this show was no different. The Phillips



Larry Nazimek and Nieuport 28 remake.  
(Courtesy Larry E Nazimek)



L-39 Hoppers on Ramp 2.  
(Larry E Nazimek)

66 Aerostars performed precision aerobatics in three Extra 300s. The Hoppers, a flight of four L-39 Albatrosses, flew with the precision and professionalism of any military formation team, making many in the crowd wonder if they were an armed forces team.

From the show's organizers, to the performers, to the fans, this airshow proudly and safely stood up to the COVID-19 Pandemic. We would not let it dominate our lives.



A-1 Skyraider pyrotechnics.  
(Larry E Nazimek)