Otto Lilienthal Encyclopedia Article

Otto Lilienthal

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Contents

Otto Lilienthal Encyclopedia Article.....1

Contents.....2

Otto Lilienthal.....3

Otto Lilienthal

1848-1896

German aviation pioneer who built and flew experimental gliders. Beginning in 1891, Lilienthal used data gathered from the observation of bird flight to design his first contraption. Two years later, he carried out controlled glides to a distance of approximately 750 feet from a hill outside Berlin. He died when his glider stalled in midair and crashed. Although not all of his data was accurate, it inspired the Wright brothers to proceed with their own glider experiments.