Steve R. Ptacek Encyclopedia Article

Steve R. Ptacek

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1953?-

American aviator who piloted the first solar-powered airplane, the *Solar Challenger,* in 1981. Ptacek's plane, designed and built by Paul MacCready, was based on MacCready's previous designs for the first human-powered airplanes to fly a figure-8 course (winning the Kremer Prize) and to cross the English Channel. The *Solar Challenger* weighed about 210 pounds (95 kg) and was powered by over 16,000 solar cells. On his record-breaking flight, Ptacek flew 160 miles (257 km) at an average speed of nearly 30 mph (48 kph) at an altitude of 11,000 feet (3,350 m).