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Hobbyist UAS pilot launches new drone



In this still shot, hobbyist UAS pilot Jeff M. Hardison is seen during the first launch of the new version of the Dragonfly on Saturday morning (July 8). This is a view from the machine flying at about seven feet above the ground and about four feet away from the UAS operator.

Story, Photo and (pending) Video

By Jeff M. Hardison © July 8, 2017 at 11:17 a.m.

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LEVY COUNTY – A Levy County man launched a new drone (unmanned aerial system) Saturday morning (July 8), completing a mission that included making photographs and a video.

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*** This is a video of some flight time and then the smooth landing of The Dragonfly.**

It was smooth filming and this marked the first soft landing by the pilot in several years.

“The first flight was a success,” hobbyist UAS pilot Jeff M. Hardison said after the mission on Saturday. “In all of my former flights, my landings were never the softest or smoothest. I sort of dropped the machine out of the sky.

“With the new drone,” he continued, “I can ease it around obstacles and it resists wind much better than the older drone that I have. I can take off and land with more grace.”



This is a view of sunrise taken from above a field in Levy County on Saturday (July 8) from below 400 feet high.

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There were several hurdles to overcome for this to happen. The new drone has more requirements for a successful launch, flight and landing. Much of the work was for the initial launch. Future flights should not require the same groundwork to be laid.

“The software to fly the machine required me to name the drone,” Hardison said. “I named it (The) ‘Dragonfly’ because I am carrying that name forward for this machine that is part of my hobby.”

Hardison said he likes several aspects of the new machine, including that it has a governor to stop it from going higher than 400 feet above the ground. The hobbyist pilot said he abides by Federal Aviation Administration rules.

“I keep it below the mandatory maximum altitude,” Hardison said. “And I take great care to not cause any issues with people, animals or aircraft of any type.”



This is a view of a field in Levy County, where the hay farmers have said it is OK to fly and photograph.

“Both versions of The Dragonfly I own now have the same FAA numeric designations,” Hardison said, “because that is the rule. This latest

drone is number 10 in a line of radio-controlled aircraft I have flown. The first several drones crashed too hard for recovery. My go-to old drone is still flight-worthy, although it is nowhere near as spiffy as my latest version.”