

Accident

Aircraft Type and Registration:	Skyranger Swift 912(1), G-CJXF	
No & Type of Engines:	1 Rotax 912UL piston engine	
Year of Manufacture:	2017 (Serial no: BMAA/HB/696)	
Date & Time (UTC):	25 September 2023 at 1012 hrs	
Location:	1 nm south of Dunstable, Bedfordshire	
Type of Flight:	Private	
Persons on Board:	Crew - 1	Passengers - None
Injuries:	Crew - None	Passengers - N/A
Nature of Damage:	Propeller damage and minor damage to fabric skin	
Commander's Licence:	Private Pilot's Licence	
Commander's Age:	56 years	
Commander's Flying Experience:	535 hours (of which 460 were on type) Last 90 days - 18 hours Last 28 days - 6 hours	
Information Source:	Aircraft Accident Report Form submitted by the pilot and further enquiries by the AAIB	

Synopsis

The aircraft struck a bird shortly after takeoff which resulted in a loss of engine power. The pilot realised he was not going to clear the treeline ahead but maintained controlled flight until impact with hedges.

History of the flight

The pilot was taking off from a large field approximately 1 nm south of Dunstable. Shortly after becoming airborne he saw a heron flying on an intercepting course. He was expecting the bird to change course but when it became obvious they were about to collide, the pilot banked the aircraft to the left to avoid it. He estimated that the heron missed the aircraft's windscreen by 100 mm, but as the heron passed over the windscreen he heard another bird hit the propeller. The engine coughed for a few seconds but continued to run. However, he realised the loss of power meant he was not going to clear the trees ahead. He turned slightly to the right to avoid the tallest trees and focused on maintaining airspeed. Just prior to contact with bushes he switched off the engine. The aircraft settled into the hedgerow. The pilot was not injured and was able to exit the aircraft via a ladder.

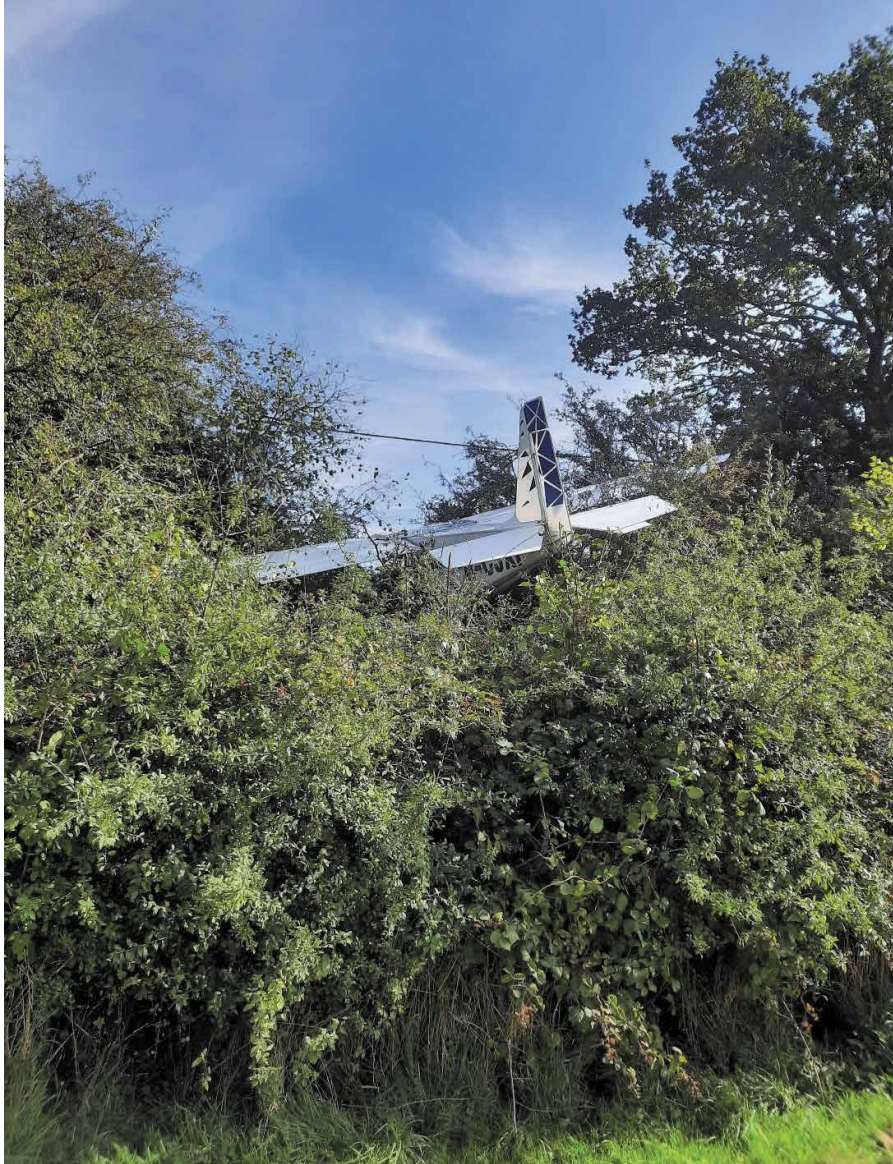


Figure 1
G-CJXF after the accident

Other information

After the accident the pilot found the remains of a pigeon in the field and blood on the propeller.

The pilot reported that he had been trained to brief himself on his actions in the event of an engine failure before every takeoff and he had done so on this occasion, planning to turn to the right if necessary, knowing there was a large field in that direction.

Several days after the accident the pilot discovered that a fountain in an adjacent pond was on a timer and it had switched on at approximately the same time he had been taking off. He believed the noise from the fountain had scared the birds and caused them to take flight just as he was taking off.

He reported that he was investigating installing a bird scarer which he could operate remotely before taking off or landing at the field.

Bird avoidance

The CAA has published a safety sense leaflet titled '[Bird Avoidance](#)'¹ which contains advice for pilots to avoid bird strikes.

Conclusion

The aircraft collided with a bird shortly after takeoff, resulting in a loss of power. When the pilot realised he was not going to clear the tree line ahead, he maintained airspeed, steered the aircraft away from the tallest trees, switched off the engine and flew the aircraft in controlled flight into the hedges.

It is likely that pre-planning and rehearsing his actions in the event of an engine failure helped the pilot to resolve the emergency with minimal damage and no injuries.

Footnote

¹ Accessed November 2023.