



Aviation Investigation Final Report

Location:	Benton, Tennessee	Accident Number:	ERA23LA115
Date & Time:	January 20, 2023, 13:40 Local	Registration:	N1NZ
Aircraft:	EIRIAVION OY PIK-20D	Aircraft Damage:	Substantial
Defining Event:	Controlled flight into terr/obj (CFIT)	Injuries:	1 Minor
Flight Conducted Under:	Part 91: General aviation - Personal		

Analysis

The glider pilot reported that the day was a “good ridge day” and about 45 minutes into the flight he saw two large birds flying in a thermal. He attempted to enter the same thermal that the birds were in, turning towards a mountain ridge, the same direction the birds were circling. The pilot was carried out of the thermal and entered an area of sinking air which resulted in the glider impacting the ridge. The impact resulted in substantial damage to the wings and fuselage. The pilot reported that there were no preaccident mechanical malfunctions or failures with the glider that would have precluded normal operation.

Probable Cause and Findings

The National Transportation Safety Board determines the probable cause(s) of this accident to be:

The pilot’s decision to turn toward a mountain ridge in a thermal, which resulted in a collision with terrain.

Findings

Personnel issues	Decision making/judgment - Pilot
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Factual Information

History of Flight

Maneuvering	Controlled flight into terr/obj (CFIT) (Defining event)
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Pilot Information

Certificate:	Airline transport; Flight engineer; Flight instructor	Age:	64, Male
Airplane Rating(s):	Single-engine land; Multi-engine land	Seat Occupied:	Single
Other Aircraft Rating(s):	Glider	Restraint Used:	4-point
Instrument Rating(s):	Airplane	Second Pilot Present:	No
Instructor Rating(s):	Glider	Toxicology Performed:	
Medical Certification:	Class 2 Waiver time limited special	Last FAA Medical Exam:	January 10, 2023
Occupational Pilot:	No	Last Flight Review or Equivalent:	June 23, 2021
Flight Time:	26300 hours (Total, all aircraft), 75 hours (Total, this make and model), 15000 hours (Pilot In Command, all aircraft), 10 hours (Last 90 days, all aircraft), 1 hours (Last 30 days, all aircraft)		

Aircraft and Owner/Operator Information

Aircraft Make:	EIRIAVION OY	Registration:	N1NZ
Model/Series:	PIK-20D	Aircraft Category:	Glider
Year of Manufacture:	1978	Amateur Built:	
Airworthiness Certificate:	Normal	Serial Number:	20607
Landing Gear Type:	Retractable - Tailwheel; Ski/wheel	Seats:	1
Date/Type of Last Inspection:	May 27, 2022 Annual	Certified Max Gross Wt.:	1102 lbs
Time Since Last Inspection:		Engines:	0 None
Airframe Total Time:	2172.3 Hrs as of last inspection	Engine Manufacturer:	None
ELT:	Not installed	Engine Model/Series:	
Registered Owner:	On file	Rated Power:	
Operator:	On file	Operating Certificate(s) Held:	None

Meteorological Information and Flight Plan

Conditions at Accident Site:	Visual (VMC)	Condition of Light:	Day
Observation Facility, Elevation:	MMI,874 ft msl	Distance from Accident Site:	7 Nautical Miles
Observation Time:	14:15 Local	Direction from Accident Site:	336°
Lowest Cloud Condition:	Clear	Visibility	10 miles
Lowest Ceiling:	None	Visibility (RVR):	
Wind Speed/Gusts:	/	Turbulence Type Forecast/Actual:	None / None
Wind Direction:		Turbulence Severity Forecast/Actual:	N/A / N/A
Altimeter Setting:	30.14 inches Hg	Temperature/Dew Point:	10°C / -2°C
Precipitation and Obscuration:	No Obscuration; No Precipitation		
Departure Point:	Benton, TN (92A)	Type of Flight Plan Filed:	None
Destination:	Benton, TN (92A)	Type of Clearance:	None
Departure Time:	13:00 Local	Type of Airspace:	Class G

Wreckage and Impact Information

Crew Injuries:	1 Minor	Aircraft Damage:	Substantial
Passenger Injuries:	N/A	Aircraft Fire:	None
Ground Injuries:	N/A	Aircraft Explosion:	None
Total Injuries:	1 Minor	Latitude, Longitude:	35.187601,-84.559258(est)

Administrative Information

Investigator In Charge (IIC):	Kemner, Heidi
Additional Participating Persons:	Phoebe Barber; FAA/FSDO; Nashville, TN
Original Publish Date:	June 15, 2023
Last Revision Date:	
Investigation Class:	Class 4
Note:	The NTSB did not travel to the scene of this accident.
Investigation Docket:	https://data.nts.gov/Docket?ProjectID=106616

The National Transportation Safety Board (NTSB) is an independent federal agency charged by Congress with investigating every civil aviation accident in the United States and significant events in other modes of transportation—railroad, transit, highway, marine, pipeline, and commercial space. We determine the probable causes of the accidents and events we investigate, and issue safety recommendations aimed at preventing future occurrences. In addition, we conduct transportation safety research studies and offer information and other assistance to family members and survivors for each accident or event we investigate. We also serve as the appellate authority for enforcement actions involving aviation and mariner certificates issued by the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) and US Coast Guard, and we adjudicate appeals of civil penalty actions taken by the FAA.

The NTSB does not assign fault or blame for an accident or incident; rather, as specified by NTSB regulation, “accident/incident investigations are fact-finding proceedings with no formal issues and no adverse parties ... and are not conducted for the purpose of determining the rights or liabilities of any person” (Title 49 *Code of Federal Regulations* section 831.4). Assignment of fault or legal liability is not relevant to the NTSB’s statutory mission to improve transportation safety by investigating accidents and incidents and issuing safety recommendations. In addition, statutory language prohibits the admission into evidence or use of any part of an NTSB report related to an accident in a civil action for damages resulting from a matter mentioned in the report (Title 49 *United States Code* section 1154(b)). A factual report that may be admissible under 49 *United States Code* section 1154(b) is available [here](#).