



LIMITED OCCURRENCE INVESTIGATION REPORT – FINAL

Reference Number	CA/2/3/10635						
Classification	Accident		Date	9 February 2026		Time	0755Z
Type of Operation	Private (Part 94)						
Location							
Place of Departure	Hluhluwe Airfield, KwaZulu-Natal Province		Place of Intended Landing	Hluhluwe Airfield, KwaZulu-Natal Province			
Place of Occurrence	Phinda Game Reserve, KwaZulu-Natal Province						
GPS Co-ordinates	Latitude	27°52'32.7" S	Longitude	32°13'56.9" E	Elevation	338ft	
Aircraft Information							
Registration	ZU-TGG						
Make; Model; S/N	Bat Hawk (Serial Number: 0143)						
Damage to Aircraft	Substantial			Total Aircraft Hours	119.0		
Pilot-in-command							
Licence Type	National Pilot Licence (NPL)		Gender	Male		Age	52
Licence Valid	Yes	Total Hours	151		Total Hours on Type	151	
Total Hours 30 Days	12		Total Flying on Type Past 90 Days	20			
People On-board	1+1	Injuries	2	Fatalities	0	Other (on ground)	0
What Happened							
<p>On Monday morning, 9 February 2026, a pilot and a passenger on-board a Bat Hawk aircraft registered ZU-TGG took off on a private flight from Hluhluwe Airfield (FAHL) in KwaZulu-Natal province to Phinda Game Reserve with the intention to land at the same airfield. The flight was conducted under visual meteorological conditions (VMC) and under the provisions of Part 94 of the Civil Aviation Regulations (CAR) 2011, as amended.</p> <p>The pilot stated that they were sightseeing in the vicinity of Phinda Game Reserve during which they spotted wild animals near a dam. He then decreased the engine power and descended to a lower altitude for a closer view of the game. The aircraft's height was approximately 10 metres (m) above ground level (AGL). After viewing the game, the pilot applied maximum engine power to climb, but the aircraft impacted the unmarked powerlines approximately 14m AGL and he lost control of the aircraft which subsequently impacted the ground. The passenger sustained serious injuries and was airlifted to a nearby hospital; the pilot had minor injuries and was transported to a hospital for observation. The aircraft was substantially damaged.</p> <p>The accident occurred during daylight at Global Positioning System (GPS) co-ordinates determined to be 27°52'32.7" South 32°13'56.9" East, at an elevation of 338 feet (ft).</p>							

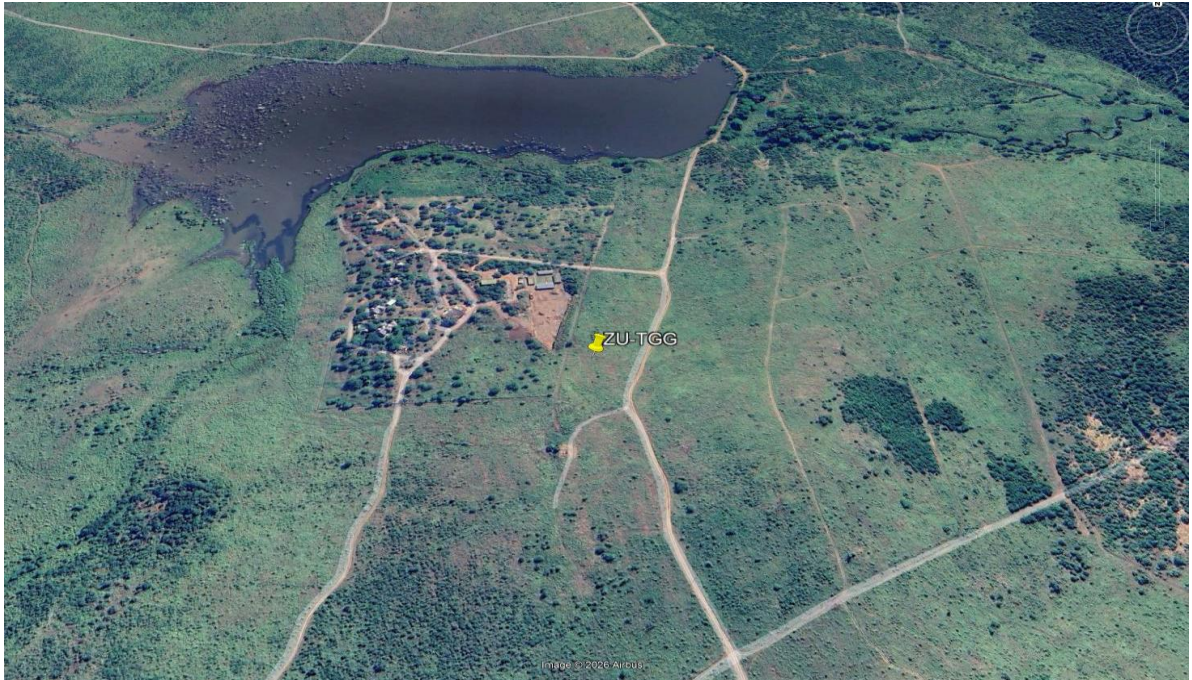


Figure 1: An aerial view of Phinda Game Reserve and the approximate accident site (yellow pin).
(Source: Google Earth)



Figure 2: The front view of the aircraft at the accident site.



Figure 3: The severed powerlines.

Aerodromes (Source: ICAO Annex 14, Volume I, Chapter 6.1.10)

“Overhead wires, cables, etc., crossing a river, valley or highway should be marked and their supporting towers marked and lighted if an aeronautical study indicates that the wires or cables could constitute a hazard to aircraft.”

Powerlines constitute a potential aviation hazard and may require marking or notification to aviation authorities due to the risk they pose to aircraft, particularly during low-level operations.

Safety Implications:

1. Powerlines are difficult to detect from the air, especially in low sun, against vegetation backgrounds, or when aircraft are operated at low altitude and reduced airspeeds.
2. Low-level sightseeing flights increase the risk of wire strikes which are a well-documented hazard in wildlife monitoring, surveillance and other low-level flight operations.

Therefore, overhead powerlines present a significant hazard to aircraft operating at low level. In accordance with the ICAO Annex 14, such obstacles should be appropriately marked and assessed

through an aeronautical study. This is particularly important because powerlines are often difficult for pilots to detect from the air, and low-level operations increase the risk of wire-strike accidents.

Post-accident examination of the aircraft indicated that the engine was delivering a substantial amount of power at the time of the crash. Investigation did not find any indication of mechanical or systems failure of the aircraft prior to the accident.

Findings

1. The pilot had a National Pilot Licence (NPL) that was initially issued by the Regulator (SACAA) on 21 June 2025 with an expiry date of 20 June 2026.
2. The pilot had a Class 4 aviation medical certificate that was issued on 11 February 2025 with an expiry date of 28 February 2027. The pilot had a restriction to wear suitable corrective lenses.
3. The pilot had a total of 151 flying hours accumulated on the aircraft type. The aircraft type was endorsed in his licence.
4. The aircraft was registered on 20 February 2025 with the current owner.
5. The last annual inspection of the aircraft was conducted and certified on 24 September 2025 at 95.3 total airframe hours after which a Certificate of Release to Service (CRS) was issued with an expiry date of 30 September 2026 or at 195 hours, whichever comes first. The aircraft had accrued 23.7 hours since the last inspection.
6. The aircraft had an Authority-to-Fly (ATF) Certificate that was initially issued by the Regulator on 5 March 2026 with an expiry date of 4 March 2026. The aircraft was considered airworthy prior to the accident flight.
7. The pilot flew the aircraft approximately 10m AGL during a wildlife sightseeing flight which reduced his ability to detect obstacles. During climb, the aircraft impacted the unmarked powerlines about 14m AGL. The low-level manoeuvring and a likely reduced situational awareness contributed to this accident.

Probable Cause(s)

The aircraft impacted powerlines whilst being operated at low level; consequently, control was lost which rendered ground impact inevitable.

Contributing Factor(s)

- Decision to operate the aircraft at low altitude (approximately 10m AGL).
- Reduced obstacle detection capability at low level.

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Presence of unmarked powerlines in the area of operation. • Likely reduced situational awareness of obstacles during low-level manoeuvring.
Safety Action(s)
None.
Safety Message and/or Safety Recommendation/s
None.
About this Report
<p><i>The decision to conduct a limited investigation is based on factors including whether the cause is known and the evidence supporting the cause is clear, the level of safety benefit likely to be obtained from an investigation and that will determine the scope of an investigation. For this occurrence, a limited investigation has been conducted, and the Accident and Incident Investigations Division (AIID) has relied on the information submitted by the affected person/s and organisation/s to compile this limited report. The report has been compiled using information supplied in the initial notification, as well as from follow-up desk top enquiries to bring awareness of potential safety issues to the industry in respect of this occurrence, as well as possible safety action/s that the industry might want to consider in preventing a recurrence of a similar occurrence.</i></p> <p><i>All times given in this report are Co-ordinated Universal Time (UTC) and will be denoted by (Z). South African Standard Time is UTC plus 2 hours.</i></p>
Purpose
<p><i>In terms of Regulation 12.03.1 of the Civil Aviation Regulations (CAR) 2011 and ICAO Annex 13, this report was compiled in the interest of the promotion of aviation safety and the reduction of the risk of aviation accidents or incidents and not to apportion blame or liability.</i></p>
Disclaimer
<p><i>This report is produced without prejudice to the rights of the AIID, which are reserved.</i></p>

This report is issued by:

**Accident and Incident Investigations Division
South African Civil Aviation Authority
Republic of South Africa**