

PRELIMINARY ACCIDENT REPORT

Accident and Incident Investigations Division

Accident
- Preliminary Report -
AIID Ref No: CA18/2/3/10641



Figure 1: A file picture of the Savannah S aircraft.

(Source: <https://www.icpaviazione.it/en/aircraft/savannah/savannah-s/>)

Description:

On Thursday, 26 February 2026, a pilot and a passenger on-board a Savannah S aircraft registered ZU-JBR departed on a private flight from Hluhluwe Aerodrome (FAHL) in KwaZulu-Natal province with the intention to land back at FAHL. The flight was intended for surveillance of wildlife overhead Thanda Private Game Reserve.

After approximately 48 minutes into the flight, the aircraft engine lost power, and the pilot troubleshooted the engine to restore power, but without success. He then decided to execute a forced landing. During the forced landing on a bush-type terrain, the aircraft impacted some trees and, later, stopped approximately 10 metres (m) from the road and the perimeter fence of the game reserve. The two occupants sustained serious injuries and were transported to a hospital in Richards Bay. The aircraft was substantially damaged during the accident sequence.

Occurrence Details

Reference Number : CA18/2/3/10641
Occurrence Category : Accident (Category 2)
Type of Operation : Private (Part 94)
Name of Operator : Project Rhino Alliance NPC
Aircraft Registration : ZU-JBR
Aircraft Make and Model : Savannah S
Nationality : South African
Place : On the borders of Thanda Game Reserve
Date and Time : 26 February 2026 at 0518Z
Injuries : Serious
Damage : Substantial

Purpose of the Investigation

In terms of Regulation 12.03.1 of the Civil Aviation Regulations (CAR) 2011, 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.

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.

Investigation Process

The Accident and Incident Investigations Division (AIID) was notified of the occurrence involving a Savannah S aircraft at the borders of Thanda Private Game Reserve on 26 February 2026 at 0518Z. The occurrence was classified as an accident according to the CAR 2011 Part 12 and the International Civil Aviation Organisation (ICAO) STD Annex 13 definitions.

The AIID has appointed an investigator-in-charge to conduct a full investigation. The investigator was dispatched to the site. Notifications were sent to the State of Registry, Operator, and Design and Manufacturer in accordance with the CAR 2011 Part 12 and the ICAO Annex 13 Chapter 4. The States did not appoint an accredited representative and/or advisor. The AIID will lead the investigation and issue the final report of this accident in accordance with the CAR 2011 Part 12 and the ICAO Annex 13.

The information contained in this preliminary report is derived from the information gathered during the on-going investigation into the occurrence. Later, an interim or final report may contain altered information in case new evidence is found during the on-going investigation that requires changes to the information depicted in this report.

The AIID reports are made available to the public at:

<https://www.caa.co.za/industry-information/accidents-and-incidents/accidents-and-incidents-archive/>

Notes:

1. *Whenever the following words are mentioned in this report, they shall mean the following:*

Accident — this investigated accident

Aircraft — the Savannah S aircraft involved in this accident

Investigation — the investigation into the circumstances of this accident

Pilot — the pilot involved in this accident

Report — this accident report

2. *Photos and figures used in this report were taken from different sources and may have been adjusted from the original for the sole purpose of improving clarity of the report. Modifications to images used in this report were limited to cropping, magnification, file compression; or enhancement of colour, brightness, contrast; or addition of text boxes, arrows, or lines.*

Disclaimer

This report is produced without prejudice to the rights of the South African Civil Aviation Authority (SACAA), which are reserved.

Table of Contents

Purpose of the Investigation	2
Investigation Process.....	2
Disclaimer	3
Contents Page	4
Abbreviations	5
1. FACTUAL INFORMATION	6
1.1. History of Flight.....	6
1.2. Injuries to Persons	7
1.3. Damage to Aircraft.....	7
1.4. Other Damage	8
1.5. Personnel Information.....	8
1.6. Aircraft Information	9
1.7. Meteorological Information	11
1.8. Aids to Navigation	11
1.9. Communication.....	11
1.10. Aerodrome Information	12
1.11. Flight Recorders	12
1.12. Wreckage and Impact Information.....	12
1.13. Medical and Pathological Information.....	12
1.14. Fire.....	13
1.15. Survival Aspects	13
1.16. Tests and Research.....	13
1.17. Organisational and Management Information	13
1.18. Additional Information	13
1.19. Useful or Effective Investigation Techniques	13
2. FINDINGS	13
3. ON-GOING INVESTIGATION.....	14
4. SAFETY RECOMMENDATION/S.....	14
5. APPENDICES	15

Abbreviation	Description
°	Degrees
°C	Degrees Celsius
A/C	Aircraft
ACCID	Accident
AIID	Accident and Incident Investigations Division
AP	Authorised Person
ATF	Authority-to-Fly
CAA	Civil Aviation Authority
CAR	Civil Aviation Regulations
CAVOK	Ceiling and Visibility OK
C of R	Certificate of Registration
CRS	Certificate of Release to Service
FAHL	Hluhluwe Aerodrome
FARB	Richards Bay Airport
Ft	Feet
GPS	Global Positioning System
hPa	Hectopascal
IIC	Investigator-in-Charge
Kt	Knots
L	Litres
M	Metres
METAR	Meteorological Aerodrome Report
MHz	Megahertz
Nm	Nautical Mile
POH	Pilot's Operating Handbook
SACAA	South African Civil Aviation Authority
SAWS	South African Weather Service
TBO	Time Between Overhaul
UTC	Co-ordinated Universal Time
VHF	Very High Frequency
VMC	Visual Meteorological Conditions
QNH	Altitude Above Mean Sea Level
Z	Zulu (Term for Universal Co-ordinated Time - Zero Hours Greenwich)

1. FACTUAL INFORMATION

1.1. History of Flight

- 1.1.1. On Thursday, 26 February 2026, a pilot and a passenger on-board a Savannah S aircraft registered ZU-JBR took off on a private flight (wildlife surveillance flight) from Hluhluwe Aerodrome (FAHL) in KwaZulu-Natal province to Thanda Private Game Reserve in the same province with the intention to land back at FAHL. The flight was conducted under visual meteorological conditions (VMC) by day and under the provisions of Part 137 of the Civil Aviation Regulations (CAR) 2011, as amended.
- 1.1.2. The pilot reported that no anomalies were identified during the pre-flight inspection; the aircraft had a total of 150 litres (L) of Mogas in the fuel tanks. Good weather conditions prevailed at the time of take-off from FAHL at 0430Z. After take-off, the aircraft routed west towards Thanda Private Game Reserve. During the wildlife search operation, the pilot conducted a low-level flight along the fence line, south of the game reserve. Parallel to the fence line, the pilot noticed a rising terrain, and he pulled back the control column to climb and clear it (terrain).
- 1.1.3. After approximately 48 minutes into the flight, the pilot lost engine power. He then troubleshooted the engine to restore power, but without success. Thus, he decided to execute a forced landing. During landing on a bush-type terrain, the aircraft impacted some trees before it stopped approximately 10 metres (m) from the road and the perimeter fence. The two occupants sustained serious injuries and were transported to a hospital in Richards Bay. The aircraft was substantially damaged during the accident sequence.
- 1.1.4. The accident occurred on the borders of Thanda Private Game Reserve, approximately 12 nautical miles (nm) north-west of FAHL at Global Positioning System (GPS) co-ordinates determined to be 27°53'54" South 024°44'19" East, at an elevation of 1 608 feet (ft).

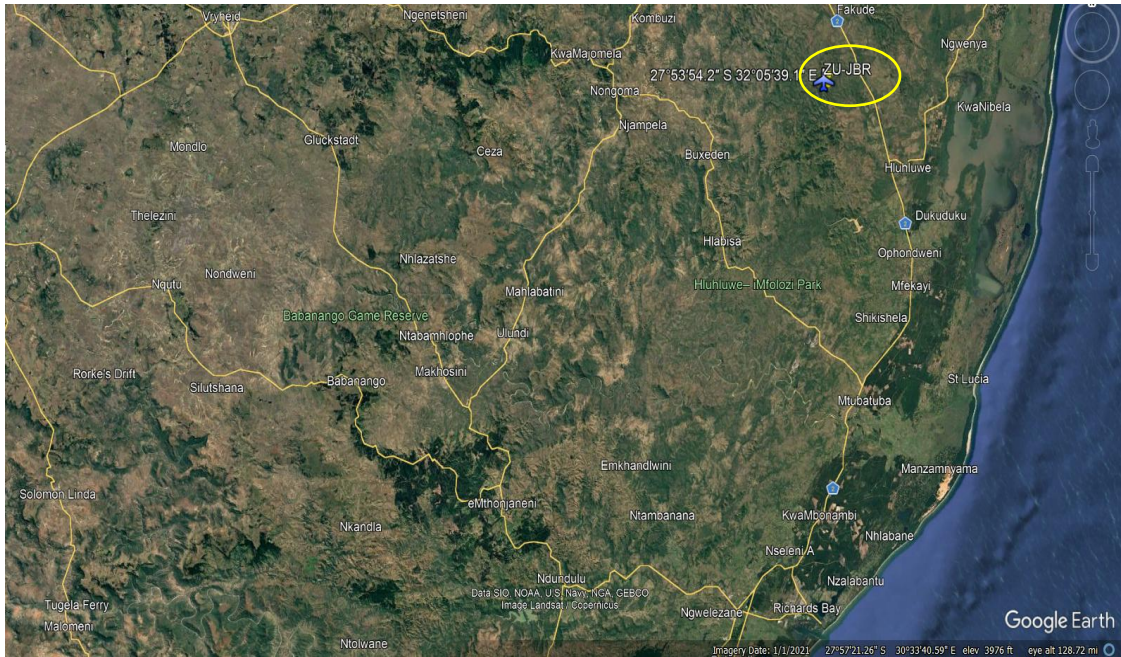


Figure 2: An aerial view of the approximate accident site (yellow circle). (Source: Google Earth)

1.2. Injuries to Persons

1.2.1. The pilot and the passenger were seriously injured; they were taken to the hospital after the accident.

Injuries	Pilot	Crew	Pass.	Total On-board	Other
Fatal	-	-	-	-	-
Serious	1	-	1	2	-
Minor	-	-	-	-	-
None	-	-	-	-	-
Total	1	-	1	2	-

Note: Other means people on the ground.

1.3. Damage to Aircraft

1.3.1. The aircraft was substantially damaged during the accident sequence.

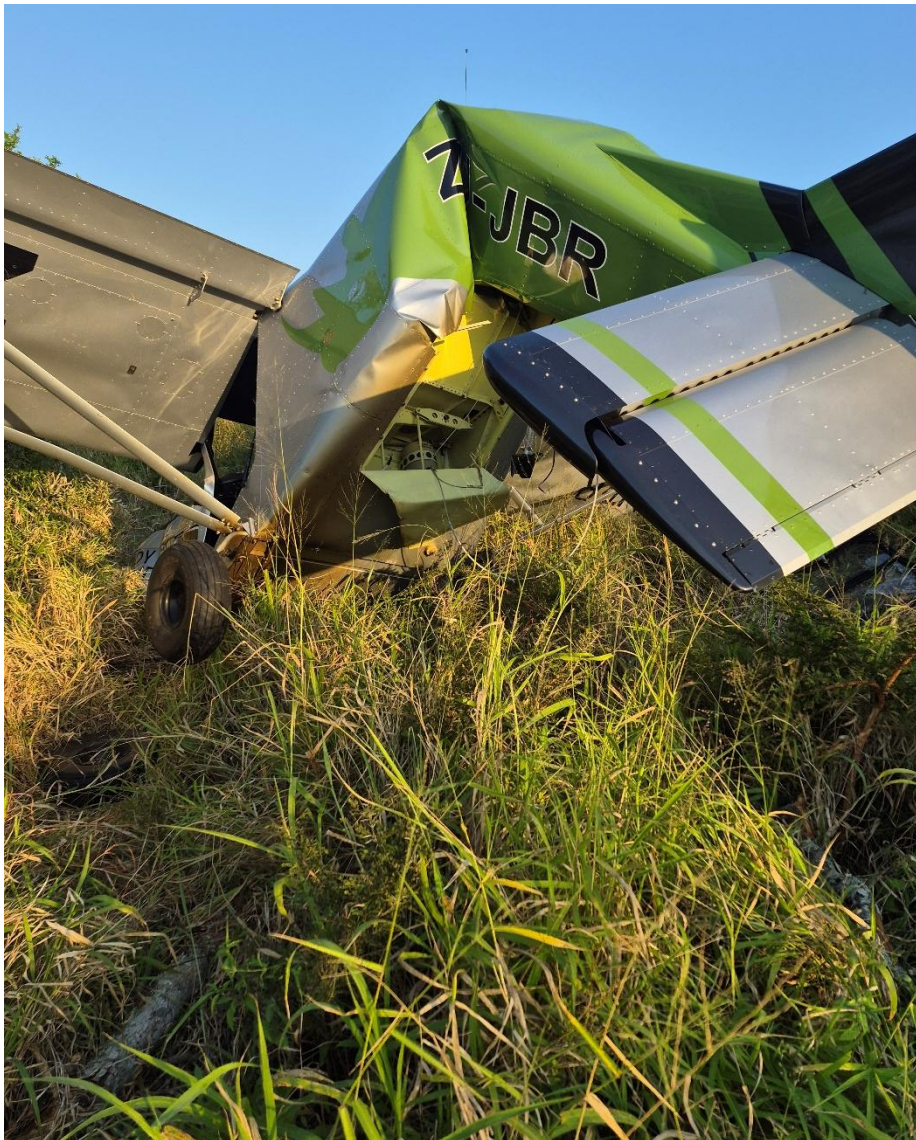


Figure 3: The aircraft at the accident site.

1.4. Other Damage

1.4.1. None.

1.5. Personnel Information

Nationality	South African	Gender	Male	Age	30
Licence Type	Private Pilot Licence (PPL)				
Licence Valid	Yes	Type Endorsed	Yes		
Ratings	Night rating				
Medical Expiry Date	31 March 2026				
Restrictions	None				
Previous Accidents	None				

Note: Previous accidents refer to past accidents the pilot was involved in, when relevant to this accident.

Flying Experience:

Total Hours	350.7
Total Past 24 Hours	3.0
Total Past 7 Days	9.5
Total Past 90 Days	56.9
Total on Type Past 90 Days	56.9
Total on Type	158.5

1.5.1. The pilot had a Private Pilot Licence (PPL) that was initially issued by the Regulator (SACAA) on 30 April 2019 in accordance with (IAW) Part 61 of the CAR 2011. The licence was reissued on 30 July 2024 with an expiry date of 31 July 2026. The aircraft type was endorsed in his licence.

1.5.2. The pilot had a Class 2 aviation medical certificate that was issued on 24 March 2021 with an expiry date of 31 March 2026. The pilot had no medical restrictions.

1.6. Aircraft Information

1.6.1 Aircraft Description (Source: Pilot's Operating Handbook)

The Savannah S is a single engine, all-metal, high-wing, two-seat aeroplane with a fixed tricycle undercarriage. The aircraft was powered by a Rotax 912 ULS engine. It features a four-cylinder, four-stroke, horizontally opposed, spark ignition engine. The 'ULS' designation indicates that the engine is a non-certified aircraft engine with a maximum engine power output of 73.5 kilowatts (kW) (98.6 Horsepower). A clockwise-rotating (when viewed from the cockpit) three-blade E-Prop ground-adjustable propeller was fitted which was driven via a reduction gearbox.

1.6.2. *Ignition System*

The engine's spark ignition system is independent of the aircraft electrical system and incorporated two ignition units for redundancy. Each engine cylinder has two spark plugs energised by a different ignition unit, thereby, ensuring engine operation in the event of a failure in one ignition system.

1.6.3. *Fuel and Induction System*

The engine is equipped with two float-type carburettors to supply the appropriate fuel/air mixture to the cylinders during operation. The left carburettor supplies cylinders No. 2 and No. 4, while the right carburettor supplies cylinders No. 1 and No. 3. Each carburettor is fitted with an individual air filter.

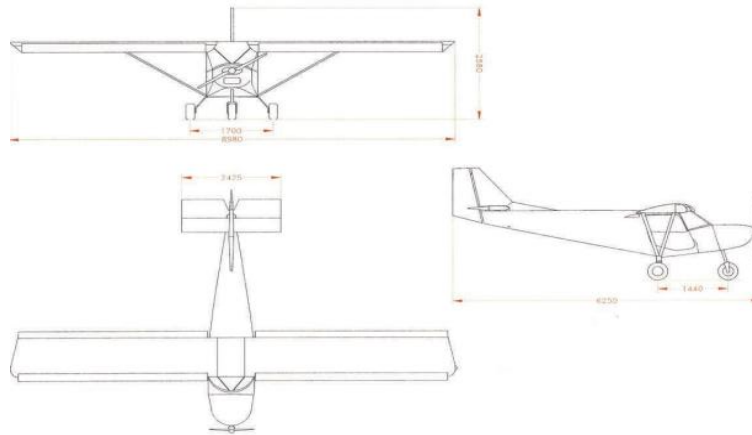


Diagram 1: The Savannah S exterior dimensions. (Source: POH)

Airframe:

Manufacturer/Model	Savannah Aircraft Africa/Savannah S	
Serial Number	23-03-54-0944	
Year of Manufacture	2024	
Total Airframe Hours (At Time of Accident)	374.1	
Last Annual Inspection (Date & Hours)	4 February 2026	350.0
Hours Since Last Inspection	24.1	
CRS Issue Date	4 December 2025	
ATF (Issue Date & Expiry Date)	22 December 2025	14 January 2027
C of R (Issue Date) (Present Owner)	6 December 2024	
Type of Fuel Used	Mogas	
Operating Category	Part 94	
Previous Accidents	None.	

Note: Previous accidents refer to past accidents the aircraft was involved in, when relevant to this accident.

Engine:

Manufacturer/Model	Bombardier - Rotax GMBH / 912 ULS
Serial Number	10004090
Hours Since New	374.1
Hours Since Overhaul	Time Between Overhaul (TBO) interval is 2 000 hours. TBO not reached

Propeller:

Manufacturer/Model	E Prop/Unknown
Serial Number	253920 / 253921 / 253922
Hours Since New	374.1
Hours Since Overhaul	TBO not reached

1.6.4. The aircraft had a Certificate of Release to Service (CRS) that was issued on 4 December 2025 with an expiry date of 4 December 2026 or at 397.6 hours, whichever occurs first.

1.7. Meteorological Information

1.7.1. The weather information below was obtained from the Meteorological Aerodrome Report (METAR) that was issued by the South African Weather Service (SAWS), recorded at FARB on 26 February 2026 at 0500Z. The accident site was approximately 50 nautical miles (nm) south-east of FARB.

FARB 260500Z 32001KT CAVOK 23/21 Q1016=

Wind Direction	320°	Wind Speed	01 kt	Visibility	10 km
Temperature	23°C	Cloud Cover	CAVOK	Cloud Base	CAVOK
Dew Point	21°C	QNH	1016 hPa		

1.8. Aids to Navigation

1.8.1. The aircraft was equipped with standard navigational equipment as approved by the Regulator. There were no records indicating that the navigational equipment was unserviceable prior to the flight.

1.9. Communication

1.9.1. The aircraft was equipped with a standard communication system as approved by the Regulator. There were no recorded defects with the communication system prior to the flight.

1.10. Aerodrome Information

1.10.1. The accident occurred on the borders of Thanda Private Game Reserve, approximately 12nm north-west of FAHL at GPS co-ordinates determined to be 27°53'54" South 024°44'19" East, at an elevation of 1 608 ft.

1.11. Flight Recorders

1.11.1. The aircraft was neither equipped with a flight data recorder (FDR) or a cockpit voice recorder (CVR), nor was it required by regulation to be fitted to the aircraft type.

1.12. Wreckage and Impact Information

1.12.1. The aircraft impacted some thorn trees during glide; it crash-landed hard with the nose gear first and came to rest facing a south-easterly direction. As a result, the nose gear separated from the aircraft. The aircraft sustained damage to the propeller blades, bottom engine cowling, empennage and fuselage during the accident sequence.

1.12.2. The fuel tanks still contained fuel at the accident site although the quantity could not be determined. There were no noted pre-impact anomalies; all fractures were consistent with impact forces. All airframe components and controls were accounted for post-accident.



Figure 4: The final resting position of the aircraft after the accident.

1.13. Medical and Pathological Information

1.13.1. Not applicable.

1.14. Fire

1.14.1. There was no evidence of a pre- or post-impact fire.

1.15. Survival Aspects

1.15.1. The accident was considered survivable because the cockpit area had absorbed most of the impact forces; moreover, the pilot and the passenger were properly harnessed to their seats.

1.16. Tests and Research

1.16.1. To be discussed on the final report.

1.17. Organisational and Management Information

1.17.1. The aircraft was operated under the provisions of Part 94 of the Civil Aviation Regulations (CAR) 2011, as amended.

1.17.2. The last 50-hour inspection of the aircraft was conducted on 4 December 2025 at 350.0 hours.

1.17.3. The aircraft was maintained by an approved person (AP) with an AP Certificate that was issued by the Regulator on 25 July 2024 and expiring on 24 July 2026.

1.18. Additional Information

1.18.1. None.

1.19. Useful or Effective Investigation Techniques

1.19.1. None.

2. FINDINGS

2.1. General

From the available evidence, the following preliminary findings were made with respect to this accident. These shall not be read as apportioning blame or liability to any organisation or individual.

To serve the objective of this investigation, the following sections are included in the conclusions heading:

- **Findings** — are statements of all significant conditions, events, or circumstances in this accident. The findings are significant steps in this accident sequence, but they are not always causal or indicate deficiencies.

2.2. Findings

2.2.1 The pilot had a Private Pilot Licence (PPL) that was initially issued on 30 April 2019 in accordance with (IAW) Part 61 of the CAR 2011. The licence was revalidated on 30 July 2024 with an expiry date of 31 July 2026.

2.2.2 The pilot had a Class 2 aviation medical certificate that was issued on 24 March 2021 with an expiry date of 31 March 2026 and with no medical restrictions.

2.2.3 The aircraft was issued a Certificate of Registration on 6 December 2024 under the current owner.

2.2.4 The aircraft Authority-to-Fly (ATF) Certificate was initially issued on 15 January 2025. The ATF Certificate was renewed on 22 December 2025 with an expiry date of 14 January 2027.

2.2.5 The aircraft was maintained by an approved person (AP) with an AP Certificate that was issued by the Regulator on 25 July 2024 and expiring on 24 July 2026.

2.2.6 The last 50-hour inspection of the aircraft was conducted on 4 December 2025 at 350.0 hours. The Certificate of Release to Service (CRS) was issued on 4 December 2025 with an expiry date of 4 December 2026 or at 397.6 hours, whichever occurs first. The aircraft was flown a further 24.1 hours after the last inspection.

3. ON-GOING INVESTIGATION

3.1. The AIID investigation is on-going, and the investigator will investigate other aspects of this accident which may or may not have safety implications.

4. SAFETY RECOMMENDATIONS

4.1. General

The safety recommendations listed in this report are proposed according to paragraph 6.8 of Annex 13 to the Convention on International Civil Aviation and are based on the

conclusions listed in heading 3 of this report. The AIID expects that all safety issues identified by the investigation are addressed by the receiving States and organisations.

4.2. Safety Recommendation/s

4.2.1. None.

5. APPENDICES

5.1. None.

This report is issued by:

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