

Aaron McCarter
Aviation Accident Investigator
Eastern Region

Date: March 31, 2026, at 1030

Subject: ERA26LA142; Bird strike

Contact: Instructor, [REDACTED] at [REDACTED] and [REDACTED]¹

NTSB Investigator (McCarter) called the pilot and left a message asking for a return call or text message so that we could discuss the accident.

The instructor ([REDACTED]) returned the call about 10 minutes later and we briefly discussed the circumstances of the accident. She stated that she observed a large black bird on their flight path; it was an instructional flight. She was unable to identify the type of bird, but mentioned it was very large.

She immediately took over the controls and turned to the right in order to maneuver out of the bird's path, but the bird appeared to dive and impact the left wing. The instructional flight had departed Sanford Airport (SFB), and they were enroute back to Melbourne (MLB). They were about 10 nautical miles southeast of the airport at about 1,000 ft mean sea level when they encountered the bird.

McCarter described the damage and explained why it was considered an accident; there was structural damage and it likely adversely affected the aircraft's performance. He also gave praise to the pilot for her handling of the situation and making a safe landing. Briefly discussed the pilot's professional flying career; she is planning a career with the airlines in the near future.

¹ The NTSB IIC (McCarter) completed the record of conversation and e-mailed it to the pilot [REDACTED] on March 31, 2026, at 1215. Asked that she review and provide edit or comment as to the accuracy of this MOR. The instructor responded on April 1, 2026, at 1019 and stated "No comment based on our phone conversation yesterday. Thank you!"

The pilot stated that she would work with the operator and get the 6120-accident report completed and submitted. [END]