



## RECORD OF CONVERSATION

Instructor Statement

**Lynn Spencer**  
**Air Safety Investigator**  
**Eastern Region Aviation**

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Date: November 3, 2021  
Person Contacted: Chris Criswell, Flight Instructor  
Contact # [REDACTED]  
NTSB Accident Number: ERA22LA044

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### **Narrative:**

The following is a summary of a conversation that occurred with the individual named above:

Mr. Criswell was contacted by phone on November 3, 2021, at 0900 EDT. He was called at [REDACTED]. He provided an email address of [REDACTED].

Mr. Chiswell stated that he works for the FAA, in the Office of Airports, and the mitigation of bird strikes is one of their focus areas. He stated that he has a lot of experience flying gyroplanes with open cockpit and he knows that at the end of the day you must “fly the airplane.”

He reported that they were at about 100 ft above ground level after takeoff and he had just instructed his student to lower the nose and pitch for 70 kts and they were looking out to the front. He caught sight of the three birds on his left side, and he banked the airplane right. The trailing bird “came up so fast. It seemed like the bird turned into us.” It was a Comorant. He instinctively turned to look left as the bird impacted the windscreen and he was hit on the right side of his face. His headset and the deceased bird ended up in the back seat. He had “a ton of blood” in his lap and there was about “3 seconds of blur.” He yelled at his student to get off the controls because he was locking up on them.

They always do a pre-takeoff brief which includes what they will do if they lose engine power on takeoff, and as a result, he turned left toward the creek. He noted that his airspeed was good and that the airplane was not descending and thought, “We are flying, we're on a tight downwind” and he decided to return to the departure runway rather than attempt a landing in the creek. With his headset in the back of the airplane and his student with his headset still on, his student could not hear anything he was yelling to him, so he yelled at him to take his headset off. He stated that he was most concerned with getting the airplane down. He wanted his student to try to shield more glass from coming into the cockpit at them.

He turned the airplane toward the right a bit to give them more room, and then turned base, and then final. When the airplane turned final, the open windscreen was “sucking up all this air” as the winds were gusting to 20 kts. He had to use full power to maintain airspeed on final because they were catching so much air. He stated that perhaps

he should have cracked the door but if he did know if that might change the aerodynamics, so he decided not to. They landed with full power. He did not know if his face was cut or if all the blood was from the bird. They taxied off the runway and called 911. He was transported to the hospital for stitches in the right side of his face near his eye. He noted that he was not wearing sunglasses and that, in the future, he will have eye protection on at all times.

He reported, "It was very violent: Noise, glass, airflow, blood . . . It took a lot to focus on flying the airplane."

I asked him if he would consider writing an article for AOPA or hosting a talk at the airport or FAA where he can share this experience. He agreed that there are messages to be shared: 1) fly the airplane 2) be prepared for a very challenging situation - it is a violent impact ...glass, loud, wind 3) He stated that his student posted on an online student pilot community forum and that he added additional content to the discussion. He mentioned that the FAA Administrator hosts a "Steve Talk" and perhaps he will do that, or a seminar at the airport. I asked him to keep me informed.