



National Transportation Safety Board Aviation Accident Final Report

Location:	Tunbridge, VT	Accident Number:	GAA18CA283
Date & Time:	05/13/2018, 1536 EDT	Registration:	N9915J
Aircraft:	SCHWEIZER SGS123	Aircraft Damage:	Substantial
Defining Event:	Loss of lift	Injuries:	1 None
Flight Conducted Under:	Part 91: General Aviation - Personal		

Analysis

The solo student glider pilot reported that, during the return flight to the airport, he was unable to maintain enough lift and did not have enough altitude to cross a section of forest between his location and the airport. After he selected a field for landing, during the base leg turn, he determined that he did not have enough altitude to clear a line of trees at the threshold of the field. He then continued straight ahead, parallel to the line of trees, and impacted the ground in a small clearing.

The glider sustained substantial damage to the left wing and empennage.

The pilot reported that there were no preaccident mechanical failures or malfunctions 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 student glider's inability to maintain altitude due to a loss of thermal lift, which resulted in an off-airport landing.

Findings

Aircraft	Altitude - Attain/maintain not possible (Cause)
Environmental issues	Thermal lifting - Effect on operation (Cause)

Factual Information

History of Flight

Enroute	Loss of lift (Defining event)
Landing	Off-field or emergency landing Collision with terr/obj (non-CFIT)

Pilot Information

Certificate:	Student	Age:	78, Male
Airplane Rating(s):	None	Seat Occupied:	Single
Other Aircraft Rating(s):	None	Restraint Used:	3-point
Instrument Rating(s):	None	Second Pilot Present:	No
Instructor Rating(s):	None	Toxicology Performed:	No
Medical Certification:	None	Last FAA Medical Exam:	
Occupational Pilot:	No	Last Flight Review or Equivalent:	
Flight Time:	(Estimated) 114 hours (Total, all aircraft), 5 hours (Last 90 days, all aircraft), 5 hours (Last 30 days, all aircraft)		

Aircraft and Owner/Operator Information

Aircraft Make:	SCHWEIZER	Registration:	N9915J
Model/Series:	SGS123 H15	Aircraft Category:	Glider
Year of Manufacture:	1966	Amateur Built:	No
Airworthiness Certificate:	Normal	Serial Number:	71
Landing Gear Type:	Other Launch/Recovery System; Skid; Tailwheel	Seats:	1
Date/Type of Last Inspection:	06/22/2017, Annual	Certified Max Gross Wt.:	750 lbs
Time Since Last Inspection:		Engines:	0 None
Airframe Total Time:	1035 Hours at time of accident	Engine Manufacturer:	
ELT:	Not installed	Engine Model/Series:	
Registered Owner:	POST MILLS SOARING CLUB INC	Rated Power:	
Operator:	POST MILLS SOARING CLUB INC	Operating Certificate(s) Held:	None
Operator Does Business As:	POST MILLS SOARING CLUB	Operator Designator Code:	

Meteorological Information and Flight Plan

Conditions at Accident Site:	Visual Conditions	Condition of Light:	Day
Observation Facility, Elevation:	KLEB, 570 ft msl	Distance from Accident Site:	17 Nautical Miles
Observation Time:	1953 UTC	Direction from Accident Site:	160°
Lowest Cloud Condition:	Clear	Visibility	10 Miles
Lowest Ceiling:	None	Visibility (RVR):	
Wind Speed/Gusts:	9 knots / 18 knots	Turbulence Type Forecast/Actual:	None / Terrain-Induced
Wind Direction:	190°	Turbulence Severity Forecast/Actual:	N/A / Light
Altimeter Setting:	30.02 inches Hg	Temperature/Dew Point:	22° C / 2° C
Precipitation and Obscuration:	No Obscuration; No Precipitation		
Departure Point:	Post Mills, VT (2B9)	Type of Flight Plan Filed:	None
Destination:	Post Mills, VT (2B9)	Type of Clearance:	None
Departure Time:	1359 EDT	Type of Airspace:	Class G

Wreckage and Impact Information

Crew Injuries:	1 None	Aircraft Damage:	Substantial
Passenger Injuries:	N/A	Aircraft Fire:	None
Ground Injuries:	N/A	Aircraft Explosion:	None
Total Injuries:	1 None	Latitude, Longitude:	43.895833, -72.440000 (est)

Administrative Information

Investigator In Charge (IIC):	Eric A Swenson	Report Date:	10/24/2018
Additional Participating Persons:	Dennis P Tremblay; FAA; Portland, ME		
Publish Date:	10/24/2018		
Note:	This accident report documents the factual circumstances of this accident as described to the NTSB.		
Investigation Docket:	http://dms.ntsb.gov/pubdms/search/dockList.cfm?mKey=97269		

The National Transportation Safety Board (NTSB), established in 1967, is an independent federal agency mandated by Congress through the Independent Safety Board Act of 1974 to investigate transportation accidents, determine the probable causes of the accidents, issue safety recommendations, study transportation safety issues, and evaluate the safety effectiveness of government agencies involved in transportation. The NTSB makes public its actions and decisions through accident reports, safety studies, special investigation reports, safety recommendations, and statistical reviews.

The Independent Safety Board Act, as codified at 49 U.S.C. Section 1154(b), precludes the admission into evidence or use of any part of an NTSB report related to an incident or accident in a civil action for damages resulting from a matter mentioned in the report. A factual report that may be admissible under 49 U.S.C. § 1154(b) is available [here](#).