

THE SOUTHERN

The Student Voice of Florida Southern College since 1918

Vol. 142
No. 7

www.fscsouthern.com

Florida Southern's Community Newspaper - Lakeland, Fla.

March 14, 2025

After high-profile crashes, people are wary over air travel

Sammy Jo Heaver
Staff Writer

As students travel for spring break, Junior Journeys and visit home, many are wary of the multitude of aviation accidents that have made breaking news in the U.S.

According to the National Transportation Safety Board, there have been 94 aviation accidents in 2025 so far. Americans are understandably concerned about these accidents; videos of the high-profile mid-air collision in Washington, D.C. and the plane flipping over after landing in poor weather in Toronto have made waves online.

Are these viral videos a fair representation of flight safety in 2025? The D.C. collision is the first high-profile commercial aviation crash in 15 years. Additionally, the Toronto flight had no reported deaths.

The Poynter Institute's fact-checking by Politifact found that "the National Transportation Safety Board has recorded more than 1,100 aviation accidents and incidents each year."

President Donald Trump made a White

House briefing in response to the D.C. accident Jan. 30, a day after the incident. Despite his briefing's efforts to console the American people, his administration has already begun firing several hundred Federal Aviation Administration employees only a few weeks later, an act that follows his elimination of the Aviation Security Advisory Committee (a panel that has been Congress mandated since the late 1980s in response to the PanAm 103 bombing over Lockerbie, Scotland). The Professional Aviation Safety Specialists, a union that represents FAA workers, has said around 132 workers have been let go with many laying claims of unlawful termination.

Elizabeth Schwarz is Lakeland Linder Airport's Administrative Assistant. Her job is to keep the airport directors organized, work special events, and serve as a liaison for tenants of the airport and the people who run it.

She notes that communication is key in her line of work and that workers must keep an open mind and think rationally to deal with situations effectively.

She advised that the best response to unpredictable circumstances would be "to focus on what's in front of you rather than



Photo courtesy YYZBrennan via Wikimedia Commons

The DeltaCRJ900 crash in Toronto. No casualties were reported.

anything that could happen." This goes for both airport employees and passengers

Schwarz didn't express concern for Lakeland Linder in reference to the recent government decisions, highlighting that smaller airport staff tends to be more versatile and problems are often easier to deal with. She also mentioned that smaller airlines, such as Avelo, are helping airports like Linder gain more customers.

Schwarz gives good advice to those who worry about flying in response to recent

events: "There's a lot more car accidents than there are plane accidents," she states

Schwarz often prefers flying over other forms of travel due to its convenience and safety, stating that "it's still so safe to fly."

Most aviation experts seem inclined to agree with Schwarz, in that flying still seems to be one of the safest modes of travel, despite accidents that may be judged harshly in the public eye. The statistics also agree with her, as car crashes are much more likely to occur than plane accidents.

Bird snatchers caught after stealing two black swans

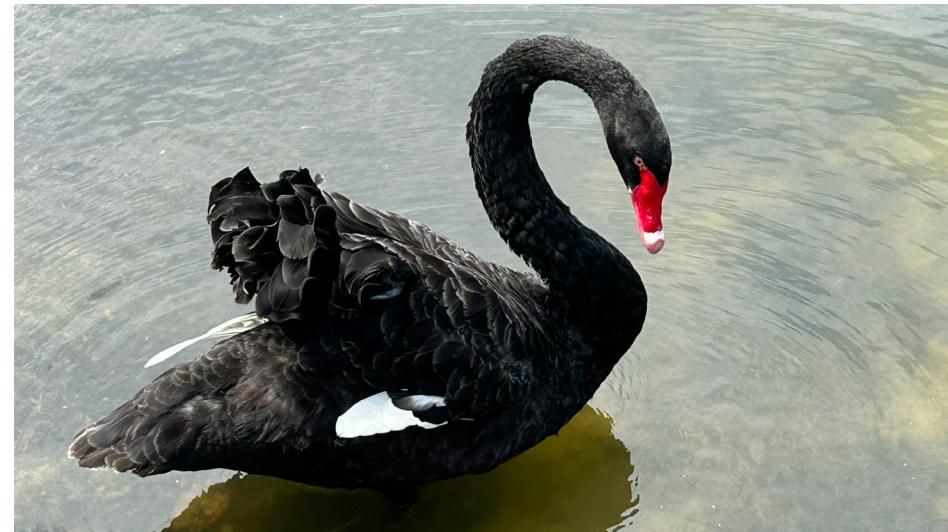


Photo courtesy of Anna Bialkowski

A black swan ruffles its feathers and swims at Lake Morton.

Joseph Stanziani
Staff Writer

On Feb. 12, two black swans Sterling and Luna and six of their eggs were stolen from their home in Highland Village Mobile Home Park in Lakeland. Security cameras around the area, analyzed by detectives, showed two unknown suspects carrying nets with them to grab the swans and the eggs.

"Now these birds are very expensive," Brian Bruchey said, a Public Information Officer at the Polk County Sheriff's Office. "I believe one was valued at about \$3,000

and the other was a bit over \$3,000 and the eggs were about \$150 each. These swans were the property of Highland Village, there were some caretakers there and they reported the birds missing."

Polk County Sheriff's Office later went to social media to post about the kidnapping in hopes someone would have a lead or tip to where the missing birds and eggs went. This ended up working, as later the sheriff's office received a crucial tip about the location of the missing birds and eggs.

"We actually got a pretty decent tip thanks mainly in part to the media carrying the story," Bruchey said. "There was a tip that

actually identified at least one of the two men and they were known to apparently do this in other places, stealing birds and other animals. The two suspects were from Homestead, Florida."

The suspects were identified as 29-year-old Alfredo Casanova and 27-year-old Jordan Montoya.

"The investigation basically turned up that this is something these guys have been accused of doing before," Bruchey said. "They steal animals and try to resell them and somebody down in Cutler Bay, down the Miami area, they had the swans and the eggs because one of the suspects had apparently tried to sell the birds to them."

The individual in which the suspects gave the swans and the eggs to was CJ Webber, a swan connoisseur.

"Someone reached out to me about needing to talk to me in person and they asked if I would do a favor and they would like to relinquish five black swans," Webber said to 7News Miami. "They were regretful for taking them and I said 'I'll do this but in return please stay away from my family and promise that you'll never take swans out of Florida again.'"

The Polk County Sheriff's Office deputies later came by to retrieve the missing swans and eggs to return them to the rightful home.

However, this was not Webber's first time dealing with swan thieves in Lakeland.

"Unfortunately, last year I had some

poachers come up and try to take the whole family [of swans] and they came very close to it," Webber said. "I found out who they were and once this happened, everyone was like 'Look at this CJ.'"

The two suspects are charged with grand theft and burglary for the kidnapping of the two swans and their eggs. However, concerns about the well-being of the swans, and their eggs, have risen since they have been returned.

"Their feathers are damaged," Becca Zakostrzecy, a resident of Highland Village Mobile Home Park, said in an LkldNow article. "They've already kicked out one of the eggs ... I don't have much hope for the eggs."

The community can only hope now that the swans can get readjusted back to their original home.



Photo courtesy of Wikimedia Commons

Two swans gather around cygnet and nest.



Women's Basketball season ends

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Town Hall addresses concerns

The Board of Directors and President Martin answer student questions at Town Hall.

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Politics connects with music

What role does politics play in pop culture and music throughout generations?

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Lights, camera, roll credits

Movies are seeing a decline in production and writing quality, leaving audiences bored.

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How has cringe culture impacted our generation on social media?

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Junior journey a year later

Student reflects on her time in Spain over fall break a year after her travels.

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Bye, bye, beard ban!

After a 50 year beard ban, New York Yankees now allow for groomed facial hair.

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