

Man who ran over deer with pickup truck headed to jail

Written by BILL SCHANEN IV and MICHAEL LoCICERO

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Driver spooked, then sped up to hit and kill animal near Port beach

A 29-year-old man was ordered to serve 90 days in jail last week for intentionally hitting and killing a deer with his pickup truck near Port Washington's south beach in April.

Michael A. Cox of West Bend was sentenced in Ozaukee County Circuit Court Dec. 11 after he pleaded guilty to one misdemeanor count of illegal hunting.

Cox was also ordered to pay a \$1,000 fine and is prohibited from applying for Department of Natural Resources licenses, such as those required for hunting and fishing, for three years.

Judge Sandy Williams said she couldn't recall a time that a case like this has been prosecuted.

"Most people won't engage in this type of behavior," Williams said. "I still don't know what you were thinking. There was a pretty big uproar over this."

According to the criminal complaint:

Cox flagged down a police officer at 5:26 a.m. Saturday, April 27, to report that he had accidentally hit a deer on South Beach Road just south of the We Energies power plant while he was on his way to go fishing in the harbor.

Cox told the officer he wanted to claim the dead deer.

But while speaking to Cox, the officer received a call from a dispatcher who said a We Energies employee reported a different version of events.

That employee told police he saw the red Dodge Ram pickup truck driven by Cox accelerate and hit the deer intentionally. And if authorities needed proof, the employee said, the entire incident was caught on power plant surveillance video.

The video confirmed that report, as well as the account of another We Energies employee who told authorities he saw Cox driving north on South Wisconsin Street, then stop at the intersection with South Beach Road where a number of deer were gathered.

The employee said Cox appeared to be trying to spook the deer by flashing the truck's headlights and making whistling noises. The deer ran east on South Beach Road and Cox followed, accelerating to a high rate of speed before hitting one of the animals.

Despite the accounts of witnesses and the video, a passenger in Cox's truck told police Cox

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did not intentionally hit the deer.

Cox, however, admitted to spooking the deer and said that as the animals ran away, he “gunned” his truck and hit one of them.

He told authorities, “It was more intentional than not,” the complaint states.

During last week’s sentencing, Assistant District Attorney Jeffrey Sisley asked Williams to sentence Cox to 120 days in jail, saying it is “kind of scary that someone aims their truck at a deer and runs it down.”

Acknowledging Cox has previous convictions for crimes ranging from possession of drug paraphernalia to burglary, his lawyer, public defender Wilfred de Junco, asked for a 60-day jail sentence.

Cox apologized for his crime, calling it a “stupid mistake” and a “spur of the moment thing.”