

Driver pleads not guilty to running down deer

Written by BILL SCHANEN IV
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Man who police say was seen on video intentionally killing animal faces charge

A 29-year-old man who police say was caught by video surveillance cameras intentionally running down a deer with his pickup truck near Port Washington's south beach pleaded not guilty Tuesday to killing a deer without a licence.

Michael A. Cox of West Bend was charged in Ozaukee County Circuit Court with the misdemeanor in April after video cameras at the We Energies power plant recorded the incident.

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 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, the complaint states.

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

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

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