

# Hunter sent to prison for abuse to animals, the Astorian, Oct 15, 2008 Updated Dec 6, 2018

*Caution - this story contains a disturbing account of cruelty.*

CATHLAMET, Wash. - "You really are an aberration," Wahkiakum Superior Court Judge Michael Sullivan told Mick Gordon after sentencing him to an exceptional sentence of 13 months in prison Monday for first-degree animal cruelty to his hunting dog.

Besides the animal cruelty charge, Gordon, 37, was charged with third-degree malicious mischief, second-degree criminal trespass and hunting black bear, cougar, bobcat or lynx with the aid of dogs in Wahkiakum County. Gordon pleaded guilty to the four counts this summer and was released after posting bail.

Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife Deputy Chief Mike Cenci called Gordon a "serial poacher."

Gordon, from Longview, Wash., is a registered nurse who has had his license suspended because of the charges.

"Look at what you've done," Judge Sullivan continued. "You care for the elderly, the frail and the weak and you went on a highly organized-crime spree. I don't know how you put it together. How many other animals have you tortured? To create cruelty and to continue to torture, you don't deserve the mercy of the court. There is no more loyal animal than a dog. You are nowhere near the norm. Your actions were terrible and you deserve to go to prison."

Sullivan also ordered mental health counseling for Gordon and, if it's not completed, it would be considered a probation violation.

About 20 people from Longview-area animal rescue organizations, including Rescued Paws and the Cowlitz County Humane Society, packed the small courtroom Monday and presented Sullivan with a stack of petitions requesting an exceptional sentence for Gordon.

Wahkiakum County Deputy Prosecuting Attorney Jerry Wetle told the court that Gordon originally was facing 10 counts, six of which were dropped in a plea agreement.

Gordon was sentenced to 45 days on the malicious mischief charge and 30 days on the criminal trespass charge, to be served concurrently with the 13-month sentence; 365 days on the hunting-with-dogs count, with 305 days suspended and revocation of his hunting license for five years.

Wetle outlined the animal-cruelty charges for the court Monday. He said on Jan. 20, 2007, Gordon and his hunting buddies, dubbed the "Kill 'Em All Boyz," and their dogs, treed a raccoon. Gordon's dog, Copper, ran away. When the dog returned, Wetle said Gordon put a shock collar on him and continually shocked him, at the same time kicking him. According to witnesses, Gordon said, "I should just put a bullet in your brain."

Gordon continued shocking the dog, who had porcupine quills in his muzzle and throat, and became enraged. Witnesses said the dog was so badly injured it could barely walk and they were afraid he would kill him. They said he put another shock collar around the dog's genitals and said, "Watch this. I'll fry his balls." At this point, the dog was rolling in circles and Gordon continued to shock and kick him, then threw him in the back of his truck, saying, "I'll leave the quills in and I hope he dies."

Wetle said witnesses tried to remove the quills, and Gordon had taped the dog's jaws so he wouldn't bite, then just gave up on him. They urged Gordon to take the dog to a veterinarian but he said he didn't want to spend the money. One of the witnesses offered to buy the dog from

Gordon, but he said no.

Gordon contacted a Longview veterinarian on Jan. 31, 11 days after the incident. Wetle said he walked into the vet's office with the dog, who was in respiratory distress. The vet said the dog's airway had to be cleared and estimated the cost at \$865. She said Gordon was very condescending and walked out with no discussion about other options such as euthanasia or a sliding fee scale. He said Gordon told people the vet had said it would cost \$3,000 to treat Copper. "The dog died because we don't have any money," Gordon said.

Because of the charges, Gordon, who was a registered nurse, had his license suspended in June by the Washington Department of Health. According to the DOH Web site, "The license of a Longview registered nurse has been immediately suspended on allegations of illegal hunting and animal cruelty, and because of comments he made that raised questions about his character and conduct."

Gordon's attorney, Thad Scudder, told Sullivan that typical sentences for animal cruelty over the past three years had averaged a little more than three months in jail and asked that he consider a lesser sentence. Animal cruelty cases "always get huge publicity," he said, "more than assault of a child. It always tugs at the heartstrings." He said Gordon has no criminal history and had worked as an EMT, paramedic and registered nurse.

"He's a father, his kids are in sports in Longview. This has been hard on him. There's been a lot of news coverage. Since his nursing license was suspended, he's been working in maintenance at a hotel, his significant other is pregnant. There are a lot of good things in his life. What is the proper punishment? There will be consequences for his family for a long time."

"This case is more egregious," Wetle said, and asked for the exceptional sentence.

WDFW Lt. Ed Bolz then described the agency's seven-month undercover operation to expose Gordon, using a confidential informant who gave up all his vacation time without pay during the investigation. The informant had tried to purchase a dog from Gordon in 2006, Bolz said, and had hunted with him the first time in Wahkiakum County, where a lock on a gate was broken. He said Gordon bragged about a lock-breaking device he had invented and wanted to patent, saying he could lock in the people who were chasing him. He said Gordon had described taking the dog to the vet and had continued to use Copper to hunt, knowing about his injuries. He said Gordon, in front of his 13-year-old son, cheered every time a law-enforcement officer was reported killed. The informant said he considered Gordon a danger to the public and to those around him.

After Bolz's testimony Kimberly Sullivan of Rescued Paws told Sullivan she was "speaking for the voiceless dog and its merciless torture. I ask for an exceptional sentence."

Rick Johnson with the Cowlitz County Humane Society said he "rescues animals on a daily basis. They're all loyal to their owners. Gordon broke that trust." He pointed out that the humane society would have euthanized Copper for \$150. He also asked for an exceptional sentence and that Gordon never be allowed to have another dog.

At the end, Gordon told the court he was "sorry for the pain and suffering of my family. To the people of Cowlitz County, I tried to be a good citizen. I'm deeply sorry for what I've done."

Cenci said he was pleased with the sentence. He said the charges were the tip of an iceberg, though. "There are so many things he did and wasn't charged with, this wasn't even a full picture of the life of Mickey Gordon. We can't be everywhere and our staffing continues to thin. Our officers don't get credit for the work they put forth. We rely on people to use good ethics. You don't know what bad people are capable of. This guy epitomizes what a poacher is." He said the gang "went everywhere" including Jefferson County and possibly Oregon and Idaho. "They killed a lot of wildlife illegally," he said.

He said three of Gordon's hunting friends, Bryan Hall, Joe Dills and Adam Lee, all of Longview, have been charged and sentenced in the case. Gordon was issued a five-year no-contact order with the confidential informant.

Tammy Conklin, the Cowlitz County officer who handled the case, said Lee pleaded guilty Nov. 5 to unlawful hunting with a revoked license, a felony, and was sentenced to 30 days of work release and a fine of \$1,850 in Lewis County. Hall was charged Nov. 21 with second-degree criminal trespass, third-degree malicious mischief and unlawful hunting of bobcat, bear and cougar with dogs and was sentenced to 60 days in Wahkiakum County Jail, a \$1,500 fine and \$57 for the broken lock. Dills pleaded guilty in January in Wahkiakum County to second-degree criminal trespass, third-degree malicious mischief and unlawful hunting with dogs in a closed season and served 50 days in jail and was fined a total of \$2,890. None of the three can be in the field or accompany anyone hunting for two years. In Cowlitz County, Conklin said Dills also pleaded guilty to two counts of unlawfully hunting bobcat with dogs and received a sentence of 10 days on a highway work crew, an additional five days in Cowlitz County Jail and a fine of \$143.

Photo courtesy of the Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife

Brian Hall, Mick Gordon and Adam Lee, all defendants in a poaching investigation in Pacific and Wahkiakum counties and other areas of Western Washington, pose with trophy elk.

