

Wolfeboro man charged in cat deaths

- [Daymond Steer](#), Conway Daily Sun
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Brendan Elwell, 25, of Wolfeboro is seen in his booking mugshot. (POLICE PHOTO)

OSSIPEE — A Wolfeboro man has been charged with animal cruelty for allegedly killing four kittens and leaving their remains near a walking path.

The Carroll County Attorney's Office and Wolfeboro Police Department on June 30 announced the arrest of Brendan Elwell, 25, of Wolfeboro for charges related to animal cruelty.

On June 25, Wolfeboro police arrested Elwell in connection with several mutilated cats found last summer. On June 28, Elwell was charged with four felony counts of cruelty to animals by Superior Court complaint. Elwell is being held in Carroll County Jail on preventative detention awaiting further investigation and indictment.

The criminal complaints against Elwell are identical aside from the dates. There were two complaints dated July 22, 2020, and one each on Aug. 8, 2020, and Sept. 7, 2020.

They read: "The defendant, Brandon Elwell used a knife to cut up and dismember a small kitten then transported some of the remains to the public Bridge Falls Path and intentionally placed the remaining parts of the dead kitten near the path."

The half-mile multi-use trail connects to a regional network of trails. The path runs along the shore of Back Bay in between the Railroad Depot downtown to Wolfeboro Falls.

Elwell waived arraignment on June 28 and entered not guilty pleas through his court-appointed attorney, Michael Zaino of Hampton.

The initial report of the dead kittens was made by a juvenile. Some remains were found behind some boulders between the Glendon Street Municipal Parking lot and Willow Street. The other kittens were discovered between the Glendon Street Parking lot and Center Street.

A probable cause statement filed by Staff Sgt. Guy Maloney of Wolfeboro police said a game camera in the area showed a man standing by the boulders at 2:22 a.m. on Sept. 7, 2020.

On April 21 of this year, police received a call from a Wisconsin man named Jeffrey Smith who grew up with Elwell in the Plainfield, Conn., area. Smith said Elwell had called and he initially didn't pick up the phone but called him back.

"Mr. Smith said when Mr. Elwell answered, Mr. Elwell was laughing and crying on the other end of the phone and stated he was becoming psychotic," said Maloney. "Mr. Elwell disclosed he had killed, skinned and dismembered kittens."

Elwell allegedly told Smith he got the kittens on Craigslist.

"Mr. Elwell stated he was the person who placed them in the park and that he has thrown them at cars while he has driven down the road. Additionally, Mr. Elwell stated he has thrown parts of the cats in the previous owners' yards."

Shown images from the game camera Smith identified the man as possibly being Elwell. He noted that the man was walking with his hands in his pockets as he knew Elwell does.

Police learned that Elwell provides armed security for Lakes Region Mental Health in Laconia.

On April 27, Smith told police Elwell was seeking to move to Wisconsin and he said he was concerned Elwell would not be caught. Maloney added that Smith said Elwell was seeking "bigger game" and working on getting a hunting license.

Carroll County Superior Court Judge Amy Ignatius issued a warrant for Elwell's arrest on June 11. He was arrested without incident in a parking lot behind TD Bank in Wolfeboro. On June 28, Ignatius found probable cause to believe Elwell committed the crimes.

Once at the police station in an interview room, Elwell allegedly admitted to Maloney he had been killing cats. He confirmed he got them through Craigslist and he started caring for them. But then after drinking alcohol, he decided to kill them.

"Mr. Elwell stated there were a lot of videos and pictures on his phone detailing what he did to the cats," said Maloney. "He said the contents on his phone would give the staff sergeant nightmares."

Asked who knew about the cat killings, Elwell said his therapist, his mother and some friends from Connecticut. Elwell said he would allow this therapist to share information with police.

Elwell said he had been killing a cat per a month for about a year. He also said that he's not interested in killing people.

Elwell said he had an adult cat and two kittens in his apartment that he didn't intend to kill.

A search warrant was obtained for Elwell's residence. His grandmother, Diane Ecker, opened the door for police.

Maloney said there was a foul odor coming from the area of Elwell's bedroom. Inside it, police found guns, air soft guns, knives, swords, hatchets and a hammer. They also found a jacket and shoes that matched clothing worn by the suspect in the surveillance images.

"Many of the cutting weapons and the hammer had what appeared to be animal hair on them as well as blood," wrote Maloney.

They also found two live young kittens in a plastic container, which they brought to a humane society. Police also found an adult cat and Maloney told Ecker the police would make arrangements for it, as "it is likely he may not be able to have access to cats while he is out on bail."

Ignatius on June 28 issued a decision stating she would grant a motion for a bail hearing if there is a proposal for "significant mental health intervention and supervision."

On July 2, the judge approved a motion from Zaino to allow up to \$6,000 in state funds to be used for a mental health assessment by Dr. Eric Drogin, a forensic psychologist who provides expert testimony in trials.