

Subject: Impact With Deer at Portland Municipal Airport - 18 June 2021
From: A.J. [REDACTED] (Passenger)

Some time after departure from Grand Geneva, my pilot (Joe) advised me that severe weather was building in our planned route to Cincinnati Lunken, and that we would likely need to land at another airport until the storm front had passed. Not long after, we were cleared to Portland, IN. The flight was, in all respects, normal until the moments before touch-down on the runway in Portland, IN.

From my right-side, rear seat, I had been watching our final approach through the front, and recall that we were centered on the runway. I do not recall seeing anything on the runway or adjacent to it. As the aircraft descended over the end of the runway, I shifted my view to look out the right-side window. I estimate we were only a few feet above, or perhaps even in the moment of touch-down when I felt a sudden impact, and noticed immediately that the left side (from my orientation seated inside the plane) of the aircraft had instantly dropped to the ground. My first assumption was that the landing gear had failed. Joe held the aircraft on the runway for a few seconds (or so it seemed to me), and then the aircraft began to veer sharply, departed the left side of the runway and began sliding through grass. The aircraft came to rest when we descended into a drainage/retention ditch.

When the aircraft came to rest, Joe and I verbally confirmed to one another that we both "OK," and I immediately attempted to open the passenger door over the right wing. I was unable to force the door open and Joe immediately removed the left side window through which we then exited. Joe asked if I had seen the deer we struck. I acknowledged that I had not seen the deer, and told him I thought our landing gear had failed.

Minutes later, I walked past the hangars and over to the runway on which we landed. I observed a piece of metal (which I believed to be a part of the landing-gear fuselage panel) and a dead deer on the runway. I also saw the landing gear assembly that had been separated from the aircraft when we struck the deer. I inspected the panel and noticed fibers of deer hair along its edge.

While not relevant to any investigator, it is important that the record of this incident memorialize my appreciation (and that of my wife and four children) to Joe for his professionalism and decision-making that first allowed us to avoid hazardous weather, and subsequently, allowed us to avoid injury when the deer impacted the aircraft.

A.J. [REDACTED]