

5/11/2019 N51DM Deer Strike Report

May 13, 2019

To whom it may concern,

I, Charles Robert Opperman, ATP, Certificate Number [REDACTED], on the morning of May 11, 2019 was flying right seat as a passenger with Pilot Frank Key in his Gulfstream Commander N51DM from South Jersey Regional Airport, Lumberton, NJ (VAY) to Boire Field in Nashua, NH (ASH).

As we taxied to the end of the main taxiway, 90 degrees to the runway at midfield, number 3 for takeoff on 08, we saw a deer run across the runway and into the woods with a Cherokee on a short final. The Cherokee did report the deer on the field.

There was another Cherokee waiting for takeoff at the end of 08. I was not even aware he was down there until he announced taking the active. After the 1st Cherokee landed, the second Cherokee, who was number one for take off, took off.

There was a 172 Cessna, number two for takeoff, waiting at the end of the parallel taxiway which stops, just guessing, about 1500 feet from the end of 08. He back taxied on 08, right past where the deer ran across, to the end of 08 and he took off.

After the 172's takeoff, Frank and I back taxied on 08 to the end. I was looking for deer the entire way. I did not see any! We stopped in the turn around area on 08, off to the side of the runway, to get our IFR clearance. It took 10 to 12 minutes to get our clearance.

After getting our clearance, we announced taking the active, and started our take off run. When we got to about 60 knots and I saw 3 deer standing at the edge of the woods. I said to Frank we have deer on the right by the woods. By the time I had said that we were up to about 90 knots. One of the deer got spooked, I'm guessing by the extreme noise of a twin turbo-prop, and started running for the woods on the other side of the runway and the other 2 deer

followed closely behind. I said to Frank “Oh crap there running across the runway as he was rotating for take off.

The one ran directly into to plane just ahead of the prop. Our wheels were barely off the ground. I guess the other two ran behind the plane because I never saw them change direction. The airplane yawed what seemed like 20 to 30 degrees to the right, which Frank quickly corrected for. There was not enough runway left to land. Frank quickly assessed the airplane was still flyable so we started a climb. I quickly said to Frank, don’t bring the gear up, because I thought that’s what the deer hit, it could get halfway up and fail. Frank probably had no intentions of doing that but I know under stress we all tend to do things instinctively.

Frank reported the deer strike to McGuire Approach, and then switched to 122.8 and reported the strike to VAY and asked if anyone at VAY could take a look at our right gear if we did a low flyby. We did the flyby and were told the gear looked good from down there. Climbing out after the flyby we noticed a C172 on crosswind at The Flying W. We asked if the aircraft on crosswind at the Flying W was on the frequency. He said yes, he had been listening. We asked if we did a flyby if he could take a closer look at our right gear. He said yes and we did the flyby. He said the gear looked good to him. In the meanwhile South Jersey had cleared the deer and the debris off the runway so Frank landed back at South Jersey. The aircraft is based there.

No one mentioned part of the debris on the runway was our right elevator! No one mentioned our stabilizer was hanging out behind us looking like a tail hook. We had no idea of the extent of the damage.

Somehow the deer that hit us missed the prop but left a trail of damage all the way down the right side of the airplane starting just ahead of the prop and ending up almost completely taking off the right stabilizer.

I hope this statement helps. If anyone needs anymore information I can be reached at [REDACTED] or email at [REDACTED].

Sincerely,
Chuck Opperman