

# The New York Times

## Gilgo Beach Serial Killer Receives Life Sentence After Guilty Plea

*The decision on Wednesday brought an end an infamous case that took investigators more than a decade to solve.*



By [Corey Kilgannon](#)

Published June 17, 2026 Updated June 19, 2026, 4:59 p.m. ET

Rex Heuermann, 62, the serial killer on Long Island who admitted in April to murdering eight women in the so-called Gilgo Beach killings, was sentenced on Wednesday to life in prison, bringing an end to a case that took investigators more than a decade to solve.

State Supreme Court Justice Timothy P. Mazzei's voice cracked with rage as he sentenced him to multiple terms of life in prison without the possibility of parole, under the conditions of the plea deal Mr. Heuermann agreed to in April.

Mr. Heuermann stood briefly and in a hushed voice said he was responsible for his crimes, but added that "my words have no meaning," in a courtroom packed with relatives of Mr. Heuermann's victims.

With that, he sat back down.

"Get him out of here," the judge said. Court officers handcuffed Mr. Heuermann and led him out as onlookers cheered and jeered.

The judge delivered the sentence after an hour of impassioned statements from the loved ones of Mr. Heuermann's victims.

These victims were young women that Mr. Heuermann admitted to hiring as escorts before he strangled them, leaving most of their bodies along Ocean Parkway, at or near Gilgo Beach on the South Shore of Long Island, more than a decade ago.

One by one, parents, children, siblings and cousins of the women whom Mr. Heuermann killed stepped up to a courtroom lectern, not more than 10 feet from where he sat at the defense table.

Some praised God. Others acknowledged the investigators whose work led to Mr. Heuermann's arrest in 2023.

Some loved ones faced Mr. Heuermann on Wednesday and reviled him as a soulless killer. Others coolly focused on the memory of their loved ones. Some described how the trauma of the killings led to years of therapy.

Through the testimonies, Mr. Heuermann, dressed in a dark suit and yellow tie, sat calmly with his hands clasped on the defense table. He stared straight ahead or down at the table but almost never at the speakers.

Elizabeth Meserve, an aunt of one of Mr. Heuermann's victims, Megan Waterman, called him a "cowardly demon" who cut short the life of "a niece, a sister and a vibrant young woman."

Edwin Mack, the father of another victim, Valerie Mack, said his daughter's memory would not be affected by her murder.

"You have done horrible things to Valerie's body, but you have not touched the real Valerie," he said.

Melissa Cann, the sister of Maureen Brainard-Barnes, another victim, called her "a rare soul" and said that Mr. Heuermann "ripped her out of my life."

At one point Mr. Heuermann momentarily locked eyes with a speaker. Amanda Gove, a sister of Melissa Barthelemy, a victim, recounted when Mr. Heuermann called her when she was 15 years old and lewdly described raping Ms. Barthelemy and warned he might come after her, too.

"You can look at me while I'm talking," she snapped at a startled Mr. Heuermann, who reflexively turned to meet her angry stare. "It's been 17 years since we spoke, don't forget."

The investigation into the Gilgo murders began in 2010, when the police discovered four bodies at and around Gilgo Beach. Some officials quickly believed the deaths were the work of a serial killer, but the investigation was hindered for years by [dysfunction, disarray and corruption within the Suffolk County Police Department](#).

Mr. Heuermann finally emerged as a suspect in 2022. Investigators tracked him for more than a year before arresting him on a Midtown Manhattan street in 2023, nearly three decades after the death of his first victim in the case.

The arrest shocked his neighbors in Massapequa Park, a Long Island suburb not far from Gilgo Beach. To them he was Rex, a towering, eccentric family man who for decades had commuted from his rundown house to his architectural consulting firm in Midtown.

Mr. Heuermann, who had maintained his innocence since his arrest in July 2023, stunned followers of the case by abruptly pleading guilty in April. His lawyer, Michael J. Brown, attributed the decision in part to a desire to spare the victims' loved ones and Mr. Heuermann's own family the pain of a lurid trial.

In the courtroom on Wednesday, Ray Tierney, the Suffolk County district attorney, called Mr. Heuermann "a remorseless and sadistic serial killer who only cares about himself."

The brutality of the crimes shocked the public, and in court on Wednesday, Judge Mazzei was clearly frustrated with Mr. Heuermann's brief, almost mumbled statement.

Before sentencing Mr. Heuermann for life on Wednesday, the judge asked for one more thing: an apology.

"Are you at least a little sorry for what you did to these poor innocent women?" the judge said, his voice rising in anger.

Mr. Heuermann replied, "Yes, I am." The 72-year-old judge then began to yell.

"You've been described as a very big man, but you're a disgusting, despicable, small man, if you're a man at all," he said. "And you're a coward."

### **Corrected on June 19, 2026**

*An earlier version of this article incorrectly described Rex Heuermann's reaction after a judge asked if he was apologetic for his crimes. Mr. Heuermann replied, "Yes, I am"; he did not remain silent.*

We acknowledge mistakes in our reporting with corrections. If you spot an error, please let us know at [corrections@nytimes.com](mailto:corrections@nytimes.com). [Learn more](#).

**Corey Kilgannon** is a Times reporter who writes about crime and criminal justice in and around New York City, as well as breaking news and other feature stories.