

52 illegal nets and traps seized during a pandemic

In just nine months, from March 2020 to December 2020, 52 illegal fishing traps and nets were retrieved.

26 were found in Cambridgeshire and Bedfordshire, 14 in Suffolk and Essex, and 12 in Norfolk.

These figures show an increase compared to 2019 where a total of 30 traps were seized across East Anglia over the course of the whole year.

The illegal instruments trap eels, crayfish, water voles, otters and coarse fish. They are a significant risk to wildlife and fish stocks.

Ian Hirst, Fisheries Team Leader for Cambridgeshire and Bedfordshire said:

Despite Covid-19 our work to protect wildlife and the environment has remained, while observing social distancing rules.

We would like to thank the members of the public who reported these devices to our incident hotline number 0800 80 70 60.

Also, a special thank you to the agencies and river groups who have helped us recover some of the illegal nets and traps.

We urge the public to report all sightings of these instruments to our incident hotline number so we can investigate.

Lesley Robertson, Enforcement Team Leader for Essex, Norfolk & Suffolk said:

Traps and nets can often be seen from the river bank, and identified by a rope tied to the bankside.

We are very grateful to those who report these illegal traps. Without that information, illegal traps and nets might still be there causing damage to wildlife.

We encourage the public to keep their eyes peeled for any

suspicious fishing activities and to call us on our incident hotline 0800 807060.

Our officers are regularly out patrolling the river banks and will not hesitate to take enforcement action.

There are strict rules when it comes to trapping or fishing for crayfish, eels, salmon, sea trout, lamprey and smelt.

You would need an Environment Agency licence to do so – more details here: <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/permission-to-trap-crayfish-eels-elvers-salmon-and-sea-trout>

All sightings of illegal nets or traps need to be reported to 0800 807060 so we can investigate.