

Press release: Bank holiday blitz nets illegal anglers

A bank holiday weekend blitz to check anglers were fishing legally saw bailiffs net 14 people for offences on rivers and stillwaters across the North East.

A total of 14 anglers out of 389 checked were found to be in breach of rod licence and close season legislation and were reported for it.

Environment Agency Fisheries Enforcement Officers visited 80 waters across the North East from the Borders in the north down to North Yorkshire in the south.

It brings the total number of first time rod licence checks to 650 during May, with 37 offence reports issued.

Kevin Summerson, Environment Agency Fisheries Technical Specialist, said:

Our officers were out in force this weekend patrolling our rivers and stillwaters ensuring people were fishing legally and taking action against those flouting the law.

People who don't buy a licence are not only cheating other anglers and the future of the sport but they are running the risk of a criminal conviction and a fine. There is no excuse.

Intelligence-led patrols

The Environment Agency acts on information received to target their patrols to areas where its suspected illegal fishing is taking place. They work with partners at the police and local angling clubs, supported by the Angling Trust, to gather intelligence.

Just last week, Three men were ordered to pay fines and costs totalling more than £1,300 for poaching with illegal fishing nets in the River Derwent in Gateshead. Kevin added:

We track criminal activity on an intelligence led basis using information gathered by ourselves, partner organisations and reports from the public.

Anyone fishing illegally can expect to be prosecuted and face a fine. I'd urge people to report illegal fishing to us so we can investigate.

All income from rod licence sales is used to fund Environment Agency work to

protect and improve fish stocks and fisheries, including improving habitats for fish and facilities for anglers, tackling illegal fishing and working with partners to encourage people to give fishing a go.

Buying a rod licence is quick and easy – they start from just £30 for the year and are free for 13-16 year olds. Under 13s do not need a licence. [You can buy them online](#)

The Environment Agency urges anyone to report illegal fishing by calling 0800 80 70 60

Press release: Three men fined for illegal fishing

Three men have been ordered to pay fines and costs totalling more than £1,300 for poaching with illegal fishing nets in the River Derwent in Gateshead.

Scott McGuire, 30, of Beach Road, South Shields, appeared at South Tyneside Magistrates' Court on Thursday 24 May, where he pleaded guilty to using gill nets to catch fish at Durham Bank, Rowlands Gill. He was fined £120, ordered to pay £300 costs and a victim surcharge of £30.

Stuart Ashall, 45, also of Beach Road, appeared previously on 4 January for the same offence where he pleaded guilty and was fined £180, ordered to pay £400 in costs and a victim surcharge of £30.

A third man, John Britten, 34, of Belgrave Road in South Shields, had also previously pleaded guilty to the same offence and was fined £45, ordered to pay costs of £200 and a victim surcharge of £30 at a court hearing on 8 November last year.

Gill nets are designed to catch fish by their gills and are rarely licensed in rivers due to their indiscriminate nature and the fact that fish caught in the nets will usually suffocate and die.

Illegal gill net

Representing the Environment Agency, solicitor Chris Bunting told the court that Environment Agency enforcement officers were patrolling the River Derwent on 22 July 2016, looking for people fishing illegally.

At 12.40pm they came across a tent with the three men asleep, two inside and one outside. In the river next to them was a gill net set across the river. There was also a salmon head on the ground.

The men said the net had been there when they arrived and they had got the

salmon from a supermarket.

However, investigations from a fisheries expert concluded the remains were of an adult wild migratory salmon which had been subject to physical trauma before death and exposed to the natural environment post death. A fish bought from a supermarket would be farmed.

Two of the men attended for voluntary interviews on 8 August, 2016, where they said they did not know there was a net in the river until the enforcement officers had pointed it out, adding they had met some strangers on the riverbank the night before, who spoke to them before leaving. They reiterated the salmon was from a supermarket.

Net is extremely damaging

Following the case David Shears, Senior Fisheries Enforcement Officer for the Environment Agency in the North East, said:

The River Derwent is a recovering river that had been previously affected by industry but which has been slowly improving.

Water quality has improved drastically and a fish pass has been installed in Blaydon which has resulted in fish returning and repopulating the river system.

Gill nets such as the one used in this case are designed to catch fish by their gills and can be extremely damaging to fish stocks. Illegal fishing like this can have a devastating impact, especially on recovering rivers such as the Derwent.

We're committed to tackling illegal fishing of all kinds and we'll continue to work closely with police and angling clubs, supported by the Angling Trust, to target those flouting the law and take enforcement action.

All income from rod licence sales is used to fund Environment Agency work to protect and improve fish stocks and fisheries, including improving habitats for fish and facilities for anglers, tackling illegal fishing and working with partners to encourage people to give fishing a go.

Buying a rod licence is quick and easy – [you can buy them online](#)

The Environment Agency urges anyone to report illegal fishing by calling 0800 80 70 60.

[Press release: Illegal fishing clampdown throughout East Midlands](#)

[Environment Agency](#) enforcement officers in Nottinghamshire will be patrolling waters throughout the East Midlands this bank holiday weekend (26 to 28 May 2018) as part of a clampdown on illegal fishing.

The officers will be making sure anyone fishing is obeying the law. They'll be checking that people are not fishing in waters closed to anglers, are using the right tackle and equipment, and have a valid fishing licence.

Fish legally this bank holiday

Bank holiday weekends are a great opportunity for families to get out and do some fishing on waterways and the Environment Agency is keen to ensure everyone is enjoying themselves and doing the right thing.

In April this year, enforcement officers checked 1,074 anglers, with the majority being fully licensed and compliant. In that period, officers reported 31 people for offences. During the last May bank holiday weekend, 530 anglers were checked and 30 people were reported for offences.

Callum Underhill, fisheries enforcement officer at the Environment Agency, said:

We will once again be out and about around the county this bank holiday to make sure everyone is fishing legally. Anyone caught breaking the law can expect to face prosecution.

We regularly carry out enforcement operations in order to protect fish stocks and improve fisheries. We take all kinds of illegal fishing extremely seriously, whether it's fishing without a licence, using illegal equipment or fishing in the close season.

Illegal fishing is not just unfair on other anglers who fish within the law, it also endangers the future of the sport by damaging the sustainability of fish stocks, so it is important for people to report to us any information about suspected illegal fishing so we can investigate.

Officers to target hotspots

The Environment Agency's work is intelligence-led and officers work closely with partners to target known hotspots and act on reports of illegal fishing.

Anglers are reminded that it is currently the close season for coarse fishing, so fishing for coarse fish on rivers and streams is not permitted.

This is to protect breeding fish, helping to safeguard stocks for the future. Anglers are encouraged to check which waterways are open to fishing by [reading their area's byelaws](#).

Investing in fish

Money from fishing licence sales is invested in England's fisheries, and is used to fund a wide range of projects to improve facilities for anglers, including protecting stocks, restoring fish stocks through re-stocking, eradicating invasive species, and making fish habitat improvements. Fishing licence money is also used to fund the Angling Trust to provide information about fishing and to encourage participation in the sport.

Anyone who wants to go fishing needs to buy a fishing licence. A full annual licence costs from just £30 and is [available online](#).

People are urged to report illegal fishing to the Environment Agency's incident hotline on 0800 80 70 60, or Crimestoppers anonymously on 0800 555 111.

[Press release: Environment Agency kick-starts River Witham recovery](#)

The [Environment Agency](#) (EA) has released hundreds of thousands of roach and bream larvae into the River Witham on Friday (25 May 2018), to kick-start the river's recovery process following a major pollution incident in early March.

Following the pollution of the river in March, which is estimated to have caused the death of at least 100,000 fish, the EA has been working to bring those responsible to justice, as well as to ensure that the river recovers as quickly as possible.

Pollution killed at least 100,000 fish

The EA has staff dedicated to the pollution incident full-time and is continuing to take regular samples of the water quality in the Witham as the river recovers.

The release of the larvae into the river forms an important first step on the road to recovery, which could take many months or even years as the river's complex ecosystem gets back to full health.

The fish larvae have come from the EA's [national fish farm in Calverton](#), which produces around 450,000 fish of 9 species each year for re-stocking. Calverton Fish Farm is funded by income from fishing licence fees, and last

year it delivered more than 6 million advanced reared larvae back into the wild.

First step in river's recovery

Environment manager Simon Mitchell said:

The release of thousands of larvae, reared by our own fish farm in Calverton into the River Witham, marks an important step on the road to the river's recovery.

According to our latest estimates, the pollution incident in March caused the death of no fewer than 100,000 fish – although the exact figure is likely to be higher. As a river is a complex ecosystem with different species recovering at different rates, the full recovery process may take many months or even years.

We take pollution incidents like this extremely seriously and will always seek to prosecute those who negligently damage our precious environment and wildlife. We have staff continuing to work on this pollution incident full-time, as the river progresses through the recovery phase.

Re-stocking is made possible through fishing licence fees, which fund Calverton Fish Farm. An annual fishing licence is available from only £30, and is [easily bought online](#).

[Press release: Environment Agency calls for action on water efficiency](#)

The first major report on water resources in England states that climate change and demand from a growing population are the biggest pressures on the availability of water. Without action to increase supply, reduce demand and cut down on wastage, many areas in England could see significant supply deficits by 2050 – particularly in the south east.

The State of the Environment: Water Resources report highlights unsustainable levels of water abstraction, leakage from water companies – currently estimated at 3 billion litres per day – and demand from industry and the public as three of the issues to tackle in order to protect the water environment.

Emma Howard Boyd, Chair of the Environment Agency said:

We need to change our attitudes to water use. It is the most fundamental thing needed to ensure a healthy environment but we are taking too much of it and have to work together to manage this precious resource.

Industry must innovate and change behaviours in order to reduce demand and cut down on wastage – and we all have a duty to use water more wisely at home.

With demand on the rise, water companies must invest more in infrastructure to address leakage instead of relying on abstraction and the natural environment to make up this shortfall.

The report shows that current levels of water abstraction are unsustainable in more than a quarter of groundwaters and one fifth of rivers, leading to reduced flows which could damage local ecology and wildlife.

Previously, unsustainable abstraction has prevented up to 15% of rivers meeting good ecological status – including globally important chalk streams. Summer river flows and groundwater levels may decrease further in the future.

Last year the government announced a plan for abstraction reform which will review existing licences and introduce more controls to protect water resources. The Environment Agency has started work in four priority catchments to test out new licensing approaches to help meet local demand.

Of the water taken from freshwater sources over half (55%) is abstracted by water companies for public water supply and more than a third (36%) is used for electricity supply and other industries. The Environment Agency has urged water companies to pursue ambitious water resource management plans and called on industry to play its part to find ways to use water more efficiently.

The government's 25 year environment plan sets out an ambition to reduce individual water use – on average 140 litres per person each day – by working with industry to set a personal consumption target. The Environment Agency will work with the government to set this target and cost-effective measures to meet it.

The Environment Agency plays a key role in protecting water for people's lives and livelihoods – by responding to pollution incidents, prosecuting offenders, regulating abstraction and improving water quality along rivers and beaches.