

News story: No fishing for coarse fish in rivers from 15 March to 15 June

Every year, the close season prevents fishing for coarse fish, like barbel and chub, for 3 months to give the fish a chance to breed.

Judy Proctor, Head of Fisheries at the Environment Agency, said:

Our job is to protect fish stocks and improve fisheries. This includes rescuing fish in distress, improving habitat and restocking rivers with 450,000 fish a year. However, one of the best things we can do is simply to leave the fish alone during the spring allowing them the opportunity to breed so that we have healthy stocks in the future.

During the close season, the Environment Agency's specialist enforcement teams rigorously police illegal fishing. In the first few weeks of last year's close season, officers carried out more than 380 targeted patrols and found more than 70 people fishing on waters off-limits.

In addition to Environment Agency enforcement teams, the Angling Trust's Voluntary Bailiff Service, which is funded by fishing licence money, will be taking part in Operation Clampdown. The volunteers will be looking out for illegal fishing on local rivers and reporting any suspicious activity to the Environment Agency and police.

Judy Proctor:

The majority of anglers, who fish legally, rightly demand that we take action to catch offenders. Our enforcement officers, supported by Angling Trust voluntary bailiffs, will be targeting illegal fishing again this year and anyone caught can expect to face prosecution and receive a significant fine. We urge anyone to report illegal fishing as quickly as possible by calling our incident hotline on 0800 80 70 60.

Coarse fishing is still allowed on most still waters and canals, depending on fishery owner agreement, though a valid fishing licence is still required. You can check which still waters and canals still have a close season in operation by checking the byelaws which apply in your area at <https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/local-fishing-byelaws>

Anyone who wants to go fishing needs to buy a fishing licence. A full annual licence costs £30 (short term and some concessionary licences are also available) and are available online at www.gov.uk/get-a-fishing-licence.