

Press release: Nine anglers face combined fines of over £5,500 for fishing illegally in Staffordshire

Just one month after penalising eight Staffordshire anglers, the same court issues a combined fines of £5,500 to another nine anglers for fishing offences.

On 20 March, North Staffordshire Justice Centre Magistrates' Court heard how nine anglers were caught fishing illegally last summer.

All nine were caught fishing without a rod licence by Environment Agency officers out on regular patrols. Six anglers pleaded guilty but the fines were much higher for those who didn't submit a plea and didn't appear in court. And with an annual fishing licence now costing £30 these nine are probably wishing they'd chosen the cheaper option!

Connor Grey of Oak Grove in Cheadle, Nicholas Mills of Neale Place in Stoke on Trent, Samuel Smith of Moston Street in Stoke on Trent, Ashley Gould of Thornewill Drive in Burton on Trent, Stephen Clarke of Sandwood Crescent in Stoke on Trent, Ashley Taylor of Birches Head Road in Stoke, David Pickerill of Hoveringham Drive in Stoke on Trent, Michael Horton of Chapel Drive in Walsall and Ryan Marriette of Skipton Road in Liverpool were all found guilty for fishing without a licence under Section 27(1)(a) of the Salmon and Freshwater Fisheries Act 1975.

Magistrates heard that in August and September Environment Agency enforcement officers found these anglers fishing without a rod licence at pools in Stafford, Cannock, Burntwood, Leek, Newcastle under Lyme and Burton.

Andrew Eardley of the Environment Agency said:

The majority of anglers fish legally and purchase a rod licence. With anglers now being able to buy a licence online for a number of rods to cover any 12 month period it seems ridiculous the minority still risk a significant fine like these we've seen here.

The minority of anglers that fail to buy a rod licence are cheating their fellow anglers and the future of the sport. Fishing licence cheats risk a criminal conviction, a significant fine and could lose their fishing equipment.

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 from illegal fishing, pollution and disease;

restoring fish stocks through re-stocking; eradicating invasive species; and fish habitat improvements. Rod licence money is also used to fund the Angling Trust to provide information about fishing and to encourage participation in the sport.

You need a valid Environment Agency Rod Licence to fish for salmon, trout, freshwater fish, smelt or eel in England. Buying a rod licence is easy, simply visit www.gov.uk/fishing-licences/buy-a-fishing-licence.

Anyone witnessing illegal fishing incidents in progress can report it directly to the Environment Agency hotline, 0800 80 70 60. Information on illegal fishing and environmental crime can also be reported anonymously to Crime stoppers on 0800 555 111.