

[Press release: North East man fined for illegal fishing](#)

A Newcastle man has been fined for fishing using an illegal set line which can be damaging to fish stocks following an investigation by the Environment Agency.

Lin Zhi Jin, 42, of Belgrave Parade, Newcastle, appeared at Newcastle Magistrates' Court on Friday 13 April where he pleaded guilty to fishing using the illegal equipment. He was ordered to pay a total of £400 in fines and costs.

A set line, which is a fixed line above water with baited hooks attached to it, can result in severe injury to fish and is indiscriminate in nature, making it a damaging method of capture.

It happened in the early hours of 26 July last year when Environment Agency Fisheries Enforcement Officers were carrying out patrols of the River Tyne in the Wylam area when they saw the defendant on the river bank. He was spoken to and produced a valid rod licence, which permits fishing using a rod and line.

While checks were being carried out a search of the immediate area revealed a set line tied to a post on the river bank and leading into the river. It was hauled in and found to have four baited hooks attached to it.

Potential to damage fish populations

Kevin Summerson, Fisheries Technical Specialist at the Environment Agency, said:

The River Tyne is an important river for migratory fish and this spot in Wylam is popular for keen anglers. This type of equipment is illegal to use in rivers in England for a reason – they have the potential to cause significant damage to fish populations.

We take all kinds of illegal fishing very seriously, whether it's those fishing without a licence or licensed anglers using illegal equipment. It's not fair on other anglers who make sure they fish within the law, and also endangers the future of the sport by damaging the sustainability of fish stocks.

The Environment Agency's work is intelligence-led and they work closely with partners to target known hot spots and where illegal fishing is reported.

Important for people to report illegal fishing

During March the Environment Agency prosecuted nine anglers at courts in the

North East for unlicensed fishing and associated offences, resulting in fines and costs totalling almost £2,000.

This included three men from Morpeth prosecuted for unlicensed fishing and byelaw offences that took place on 29 September 2017 on the River Wansbeck. Fisheries Enforcement Officers were supported by Northumbria Police when they made the arrests.

Ashley Lawson, 29, of Shields Road, Dwayne Dodds, 33, of Rutherford Place, and Martin Shaun Pringle, 28, of Kitty Brewster Road, all had their cases proved in absence at South East Northumberland Magistrates' Court and received fines and costs totalling more than £1,100.

Kevin added:

As well as unlicensed fishing some of these offences included obstruction, failing to state correct names or addresses, using illegal baits, close season offences and theft. It's really important people report information about suspected illegal fishing to us so we can investigate.

The Environment Agency urges anyone to report illegal fishing by calling 0800 80 70 60 and are always looking to gather good intelligence.

With the support of the Angling Trust Voluntary Bailiffs – who keep watch on their local rivers and report suspicious activity to the Environment Agency and when appropriate, the police – this network has increased.

The Environment Agency is currently working with the Angling Trust as part of Operation Clampdown – the annual blitz on illegal coarse fishing during the close season, which started on 15 March and runs until 15 June.

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](#)