

West Bromwich anglers caught fishing illegally in the dark

The incident happened in July 2021 and their cases were brought to Redditch Magistrates Court by the Environment Agency on Monday 7 March 2022 where 33-year old Krzysztof Budzynski, of Gladstone Street and 43-year old Rafal Szalczewski, of Glover Street both pleaded guilty to the offences of the removal of fish and the removal of eel.

Both anglers got the same penalty, including a fine of £100 for the first offence and £200 for the second offence. Costs of £135 were awarded to the Environment Agency and there was a victim surcharge of £34, amounting to £469 for each angler.

The defendants were found in possession of fish and eels that they had removed from the river on 23 July 2021 at 10.40pm by a Birmingham Angling Association (BAA) club bailiff. The bailiff then contacted West Mercia Police and the fish, which included Chub, Perch and Bream, and the anglers' fishing equipment, were seized by a police officer and handed to the bailiff.

The fishing rights at the location where the anglers were found are owned by the BAA and the rules state that any fish caught must be returned alive, and fishing is only allowed until one hour after sunset. Night fishing is not allowed. All of the fish and eels were found to be dead.

Following the verdict, Nichola Tomlinson, fisheries enforcement team leader for the Environment Agency, said:

This case demonstrates great partnership working as it involved West Mercia Police, the local angling club and the Angling Trust to enable us to bring about a successful prosecution. Whilst on this occasion both men had a valid fishing licence, it is also imperative for anglers to observe fishing byelaws.

It also shows how seriously the courts take these offences and we hope the penalty will act as a deterrent to any angler who is thinking of breaking fishing byelaws.

Not complying with the byelaws can incur a fine of up to £50,000 and, as in this case, offenders can also have their fishing equipment seized.

The Environment Agency carries out enforcement work all year round and is supported by partners including the police and the Angling Trust. Fisheries enforcement work is intelligence-led, targeting known hot-spots and where illegal fishing is reported.

Anyone with information about illegal fishing activities can contact the

Environment Agency Incident Hotline 24/7 on 0800 80 70 60 or anonymously to Crimestoppers on 0800 555 111.