

Yeovil man fined for illegal fishing at Somerset fishery

The case was heard at Swindon Magistrates Court on 3 May 2022, when Mr Reid, 47, of Westfield Road, Yeovil, pleaded guilty to 3 offences:

- fishing without a licence
- leaving fishing rods unattended
- failing to provide correct name and address when required

On 1 December 2021, while on patrol at Coking Farm fishery near Henstridge in south Somerset, fisheries officers discovered Mr Reid fishing illegally.

He failed to produce a rod licence when asked and refused to provide his name and address. He was also found not to be in control of his rod and line, as they had been left unattended with bait and hook in the water.

Following the verdict, James Allan, Environment Agency Fisheries Enforcement Officer, said:

Money raised from fishing licence sales is used to protect and improve fish stocks and fisheries, benefitting anglers and, for those caught cheating the system, we will always prosecute. We are able to check offenders' details, so giving false information is not an easy route out of failing to comply.

This angler blatantly disregarded signs at the fishery that said an Environment Agency rod licence was needed to fish. As part of Operation Clampdown signs had been put at the entrance to the fishery and on each fishing peg.

Anglers must be in control of their rod and line at all times whilst fishing – it is illegal to leave them unattended with bait or hook in the water.

Rod fishing byelaws are there to protect fish stocks and their habitats. If you do not comply with these byelaws you could face prosecution and be fined up to £50,000.

Any angler aged 13 or over, fishing on a river, canal or still water needs a licence. A 1-day licence costs from just £6 and an annual licence costs from just £30 (concessions available). Junior licences are free for 13 – 16-year-olds. Licences are available from www.gov.uk/get-a-fishing-licence or by calling the Environment Agency on 0344 800 5386 between 8am and 6pm, Monday to Friday.

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.

The charges

On 1 December, at Coking Farm, Henstridge, in a place where fishing is regulated, Mr Reid fished for freshwater fish or eels by means of an unlicensed fishing instrument, namely rod and line. Contrary to Section 27(1)(a) of the Salmon and Freshwater Fisheries Act 1975.

On 1 December, at Coking Farm, Henstridge, Mr Reid left a rod and line with its bait or hook in the water unattended or so that he was unable at any time to take or exercise sufficient control over said rod and line. Contrary to Byelaw 10 of the Environment Agency National Byelaws which came into force on 27 May 2001 made pursuant to Section 210 and Schedule 25 of the Water Resources Act 1991 and Contrary to Section 211 of the said Act.

On 1 December, at Coking Farm, Henstridge, Mr Reid when fishing/being reasonably suspected of intending to fish/being reasonably suspected of having recently fished, failed, when required to do so, to state his name and address to a water bailiff/a constable/an officer of the Environment Agency having power to make such a request contrary to Section 35(3) of and Schedule 4 to the Salmon and Freshwater Fisheries Act 1975.