

Illegal fishing nets seized in Northumberland

On Monday 1 June Fisheries Enforcement Officers received information from the [Northumberland Inshore Fisheries & Conservation Authority \(NIFCA\)](#) that illegal nets had been found at the River Blyth Estuary at East Sleekburn.

They recovered and seized two illegal and unlicensed gill nets – one measuring 75 metres by 2 metres that had been set across the width of the river, and a second which had been hidden close by and measured 15 metres in length.

It's suspected they were being used to target salmon and sea trout.

A similar 100-metre salmon gill net, which had been set on the beach at Lynmouth, was previously recovered by NIFCA on 21 May. Their investigation into who deployed the net and where it was obtained is ongoing. The seizure also comes on the back of an illegal 40-metre net seizure last Wednesday (27 May) at Skinningrove in Redcar and Cleveland, which saw fisheries officers from Yorkshire and the North East working in partnership with [North Eastern Inshore Fisheries & Conservation Authority](#).

One of the nets seized by the Environment Agency at Blyth

Nets are 'indiscriminate'

John Crowl, Enforcement Team Leader for the Environment Agency, said:

Unattended and unlicensed gill nets are not only capable of killing fish indiscriminately, they will also kill any other wildlife that are unfortunate enough to get entangled in them.

This incident again highlights how vital it is for people to provide information to us and demonstrates that we will take action. Even during the current unprecedented times created by Covid-19, we are still actively patrolling the rivers and coastline and responding quickly to any reports of illegal fishing.

It's important individuals wanting to fish obtain a licence from the Environment Agency. Regulations are in place to protect the local fishing industry.

Environment Agency officers are wearing the appropriate protective equipment and adhering to social distancing measures.

Recovering river

A licensed, strictly regulated and managed sea trout fishery operates off the coast of Northumberland, but the use of illegal nets have a serious impact on sea trout and salmon returning to rivers to spawn.

The River Blyth is designated as a 'Recovering River' under the Salmon and Sea Trout Protection measures 2018 therefore any potential loss of fish can have a negative impact. Anglers on the river must catch and release any salmon caught.

Those who operate unlicensed nets risk prosecution, with unlimited fines and possible prison sentences available to the courts, and Environment Agency officers can seize equipment and vehicles.

Information about illegal fishing can be reported to the Environment Agency's 24-hour incident hotline on 0800 80 70 60.

[You can buy a fishing licence online.](#)