



Environment
Agency

taking stock

Taking freshwater fish –
the law

New rules on fish removals

We have introduced new byelaws that restrict what fish (coarse fish and eel) you can catch and *remove* by rod and line.

The word '*remove*' means to take permanently from a fishery. It includes the use of caught fish for live or dead bait. You can still keep fish in a **keepnet** or **keepsack** before returning them to the water. Just make sure your net or sack is a legal size. See www.environment-agency.gov.uk/fish for details.

Why do we need these new byelaws?

Most coarse anglers return their catch. But more anglers are taking coarse fish to eat. Also, many fish have been stolen to restock stillwater fisheries or been moved illegally.

We don't want to stop anglers from taking a few fish, but we do need to protect fisheries and fish stocks. For a copy of the new byelaws, see www.environment-agency.gov.uk/fish.

Rivers

On any given day, you may only remove:

- 15 small fish (up to 20 cm from tip of snout to fork of tail) of the native species listed in Box 1;
- one pike of up to 65 cm;
- two grayling of 30–38 cm.

If you remove more fish than this, you are committing an offence under the new byelaws – you risk a substantial fine.

Remember that you will still need the written permission of the owner or club to remove fish from privately owned waters. Fishery owners and clubs may also impose their own, stricter limits. *If you fish without permission and don't comply with their rules, you risk prosecution under the Theft Act 1968.*

Box 1: The byelaw applies to:

| | | | |
|--------------|--------|-------|-------|
| Common bream | Barbel | Chub | Dace |
| Common carp | Perch | Pike | Roach |
| Crucian carp | Rudd | Smelt | Tench |
| Silver bream | | | |

It **includes** hybrids of any of these species.

It **excludes** ornamental varieties or colour variants of these species, such as ghost or koi carp.

You can still take:

- unlisted 'tiddler' species – such as gudgeon;
- non-native species – such as zander;
- ornamental varieties of native species – such as ghost or koi carp.

The byelaws also apply to some natural lakes:

- Windermere, Coniston Water, Ullswater and Derwent Water (all in Cumbria);
- All the waters in the Norfolk and Suffolk Broads that are subject to the coarse fish close season;
- Llyn Tegid (Bala Lake) and Llyn Maelog in Wales.

Stillwaters and canals

You may only remove fish with the written permission of the owner or club. This is normally a day ticket or permit, on which the fishery rules are often printed.

These rules normally state the numbers and types of fish you can remove. If in doubt, ask the owner.

If you take fish without permission you are now committing an offence under the new byelaws. You risk a substantial fine. And you still risk prosecution under the Theft Act 1968.

If there is no obvious owner to ask for permission, you are not allowed to remove any fish.

The following canals are actually rivers:

- Aire & Calder Navigation – between Castleford Weir and Ferrybridge Lock;
- Stroudwater and Thames Canal;
- Fosdyke Canal;
- Kennet & Avon Canal – downstream of where it merges with the River Kennet at Kintbury;
- Lee Navigation – upstream of Aqueduct Lock.

If you're fishing on one of these canals, follow the rules for rivers.

Eel

European eel stocks are at worryingly low levels. The numbers of young eel returning to European rivers have fallen by more than 95 per cent. And they are still falling.

We are reducing net fishing where necessary, as well as other threats to eel stocks. Angling can also pose a risk, **so it is now illegal to remove any eel caught by rod and line.**

Salmon, trout and shad

These fish are covered by other byelaws – see www.environment-agency.gov.uk/fish.

Reporting offences

Not everyone removing fish will be breaking the law. Most anglers who take fish from stillwaters will be doing so with the owner's permission. It is still legal to take some fish from rivers. But do call us if you think that someone is committing an offence – by taking more or different fish than they should.

We would like you to tell us all you can about:

- what is happening;
- the methods being used;
- whether it is happening at that moment;
- where precisely it is happening;
- what laws are being broken;
- what fish are being taken and how many;
- the people involved – how many, their appearance and what they're driving;
- whether this happens regularly at this location.

Don't worry if you don't have all this information. Just tell us what you can. We can then decide the best way of dealing with the problem.

We cannot attend all incidents but your reports help us to identify where there is a serious problem or a pattern of regular offending.

If you report an incident, we will normally let you know what happens.

To report a problem, please ring the
Environment Agency Incident Hotline

0800 80 70 60

(Free-phone 24 hour)

**Would you like to find out
more about us, or about your
environment?**

Then call us on

08708 506 506* (Mon–Fri 8–6)

email

**enquiries@environment-agency.
gov.uk**

or visit our website

www.environment-agency.gov.uk

incident hotline 0800 80 70 60 (24hrs)

floodline 0845 988 1188

* Approximate call costs: 8p plus 6p per minute (standard landline).
Please note charges will vary across telephone providers.



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