



Otter Photo: Pixabay

Court issues guilty verdicts for killing of otter and hedgerow destruction

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Three individuals were convicted earlier this month in relation to the illegally killing of an otter at Ballynatray Estate in Co Waterford in September 2017.

The case appeared before Judge Marie Keane on 7 June and was taken by the Department of Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht.

The man pleaded guilty to hunting an otter and was convicted and fined €500. Otters are protected under the Wildlife Acts and also under the European Communities (Birds and Natural Habitats) Regulations 2011.

The area concerned is in the Blackwater River Special Area of Conservation which is designated under law for a range of habitats and species including otters.

Conservation Ranger Brian Duffy of the National Parks and Wildlife Service of the Department gave evidence that on 14th September 2017 he found a dead otter at Ballynatray Demesne dumped in bags with other dead unprotected animals.

The otter had been shot and an investigation was carried out. An individual came forward and made a statement admitting to shooting the otter but claimed it was an accident and that he had mistaken it for a fox in the darkness.

Judge Keane said she did not accept the explanation offered, that it was an outrageous and disgraceful offence carried out by people who were meant to have some knowledge and understanding of game keeping and she found them guilty.

Mr Duffy said the incident occurred in a wetland adjoining an estuary and that the men would have known otters occurred there.

A second man pleaded guilty to aiding and abetting in the commission of an offence and also to giving false information to an authorised person contrary to the Wildlife Acts. He was convicted and fined €350.

A third man pleaded guilty to aiding and abetting in the commission of an offence but the judge withheld this conviction on condition that he pays €250 to the Irish Wildlife Trust before 6th September 2019. All three men were working as gamekeepers at the time.

About the Author



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