

# Ballina men caught with dead protected hare

17th September 2019

FIVE Ballina men who were found in possession of a dead wild Irish mountain hare were each ordered to pay €600 to the Irish Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals.

The five men – **Martin Collier of 122 Greenhills Estate, Ballina; James Muldoon, 101 St Patrick's Estate, Ballina; Shane Muldoon of 40 St Muredach's Terrace, Ballina; Joseph Muldoon of 78 St Patrick's Estate, Ballina; and Jason Muldoon of 78 St Patrick's Estate, Ballina** – all appeared before last week's sitting of Belmullet District Court, where they all pleaded guilty to possession of the dead hare, which is a protected species.

Ranger Leonard Floyd, a conservation ranger with the National Parks and Wildlife Service, said in evidence that on January 9, 2018, he was accompanied by gardaí when he stopped a Peugeot van being driven by Jason Muldoon. The four other defendants were also in the vehicle.

The court heard that a dead wild Irish mountain hare was found in the van, which also contained five lurcher dogs. Mr Floyd said the five had been observed hunting with the dogs in the Binghamstown area of the Mullet Peninsula. He said the hare had been freshly killed, and pointed out that possession of a hare was an offence.

Michael Bohan and Peter Loftus, solicitors representing the men, both said that their clients were not aware that it was illegal to hunt a hare and that since they had discovered that it is, they have 'got rid' of their dogs.

Mr Loftus said his clients had been hunting all their lives and had previously shown themselves hunting on Facebook. This, he argued, showed that they did not know it was a prohibited activity. He added that they had hunted in the open, and not in the 'dead of night'.

Brendan McDonagh, counsel for the Minister for Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht, who brought the prosecutions, said this had been the explanation that the men had given when they were found with the hare.

When asked by Judge Fiona Lydon what they intended to do with the dead hare, it was indicated that it was to be fed to the dogs.

Mr Bohan accepted that ignorance of the law was not an excuse. He said that once the men were made aware of the law, they immediately owned up to the offence.

Judge Lydon was told that neither of the men had previous convictions for this type of offence, and she ordered them to each pay the Irish Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals €600. She gave them until February 12, 2020, to do so, adding that failure to pay would incur a fine of €750.

<https://www.mayonews.ie/news/34270-ballina-men-caught-with-dead-protected-hare>

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