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News Courts

Man will avoid jail for disturbing a seagull's nest and eggs if he gives money to children's hospital

A FILLING station owner, who has admitted to disturbing a seagull's nest and three eggs, has been given a chance by a judge to escape prison sentence.

Colin Hughes was told by District Court Judge John O'Neill that if he paid €500 to the Crumlin Children's Hospital he would consider striking out the two charges of disturbing and removing the nest and eggs.

Mr Hughes today denied he destroyed the nest. Judge O'Neill stroke out a third charge of destroying the birds' habitation, which was on the roof of his Texaco store, Dublin Street, Balbriggan, Co Dublin.

National Parks and Wildlife Service (NPWS) conservation ranger, Kieran Buckley, said he received a complaint last May about a herring gull's nest and eggs having been destroyed.

He told the prosecution solicitor that the nest with three eggs had been thrown away. Two eggs had been smashed.

Mr Hughes, who represented himself, said he was unaware herring gulls were an endangered and protected species.

He told Judge O'Neill he had called an air conditioning company after he noticed his store was extremely hot and chocolate bars had softened on the shelves.

The court heard that Mr Hughes had been on the roof and removed the nest after being told that it was partly blocking the vent. He said he was under pressure to get the store back to a normal temperature.

Judge O'Neill, hearing that the offences were punishable each with a €1,000 fine and/or a three months imprisonment, said Mr Hughes, who had no previous conviction, had felt he had no other option than to remove the nest.

He said he would strike out the charges if Mr Hughes paid €250 for each of them, bringing the total sum to €500, to Crumlin Children's Hospital. He adjourned the case.

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