

Judge Tells Coursing Club Members To Stay Away From Lough Boora

'EIGHT Limerick men have been told to stay away from Lough Boora Parklands after they admitted illegally hunting hares on the nature reserve.

The members of Doon Coursing Club appeared before Tullamore District Court and agreed to pay €350 each to Wildlife Rehabilitation Ireland.

John Morrissey, Killuragh, Cappamore; Dan Ryan, Upper Cooga, Doon; Gerry Ryan, Lower Cooga, Doon; Michael Ryan, Kilmoylan, Doon; Thomas Kennedy, Lisowen, Doon; Pat Maher, Tuogh, Cappamore; Seamus Hayes, Kilmoylan, Doon; and Ned Morrissey, 11 The Crescent, Cappaghwhite, pleaded guilty to summonses accusing them of hunting the Irish mountain hare, a protected wild animal, at Lough Boora Parklands on November 15 last.

Noel Bugler, a conservation ranger said he was on patrol in Boora when he saw a group of men and introduced himself to them.

Three of them ran away and hid before they were found and the others said they were hunting rabbits but they had boxes and long nets used for hunting hares.

Mr Bugler said he noticed that one of the men had a coursing club crest on his jacket and when gardai from Tullamore arrived the men gave correct information.

When a vehicle was searched a programme for a forthcoming meeting of Doon Coursing Club was found and Mr Bugler said he established that the men were members of that club.

Mr Bugler told Judge Catherine Staines that a licence is granted with conditions to the club each year to catch hares for coursing at a licensed event.

He believed in this case they went to Offaly because they were short of hares for the upcoming coursing meeting where a minimum number of the animals would be required for the club to comply with its licence.

He described Lough Boora Parklands as an important conservation area where land was owned by Bord na Mona and the National Parks & Wildlife Service (NPWS) and said that in addition to hares it was a huge success area for lapwings and curlews.

Bernadette Owens, solicitor for the eight men, said all of them apologised for what they had done but no hares had been found on them at Lough Boora.

Ms Owens said none of her clients had any previous convictions and she handed in a letter from Doon Coursing Club, plus a letter of apology signed by all eight defendants.

Judge Staines said she would impose the Probation Act once the money was paid to Wildlife Rehabilitation Ireland and she ordered that the equipment seized from them be forfeited to the NPWS for training and education purposes.

Judge Staines said she hoped the men would not offend again. 'Lough Boora Parklands is a beautiful place and it's a conservation area and you all know that. Please stay away from it,' she stated.'

Gearoid Keegan, Tullamore Tribune
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