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Men who tampered with badger sett are fined

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THREE men who admitted interfering with the sett of a badger were described as blackguards by a District Court judge yesterday.

Judge John Brophy threatened to remand them in custody for a week when they appeared before Trim District Court.

Eventually one of the men, Peter Maher, of Grangeclare, Robenstown, Co Kildare was remanded in custody for a seven days.

The court heard he had given a false name and address to a wildlife ranger who came upon the men. The others were fined.

Maher along with John Casey (32), of Coolcarrigan, and Patrick Mulligan jnr (28), of Knockmore, Carbury, Co Kildare, were charged, with entering lands without the owner's permission on February 25th, 1996, at Colehill, Kinnegad, Co Westmeath.

Casey and Mulligan were told they must pay £100 witness expenses each in addition to fines of £150 and, £100 respectively.

The judge also disqualified Casey from driving for 12 months for using his car in connection with the offence.

The three defendants also admitted interfering with/destroying the breeding place of a protected wild animal and carrying a spade and shovel capable of being used for the hunting of a wild bird or animal.

Ms Cora Higgins, defending, said the men had been given permission to hunt on lands belonging to a particular person and were doing that when a fox moved on to other land.

Judge Brophy said that there was no fox and if any part of a badger had been found in the sett her clients would be going to jail for three months.

He said they had dug 1.3 metres deep into the badger sett and "are blackguards. The badger is a protected animal, this is a well known sett in the area and they deliberately had two dogs and another dog in the boot ... If a badger catches you he won't let go. It is his only defence. It is disgusting."

The judge said that if the Wildlife Act permitted it, the defendants would be going to jail.

"A photograph of Maher had to be circulated to Garda stations to get him identified and the other defendants allowed him to give false information to the ranger. They went along with the charade," Judge Brophy added.

He remanded Maher in custody for one week to appear again in Trim District Court next Friday.

Recognisance was set in the event of an appeal.

Both the judge and Garda Supt Brendan Quinn complimented the wildlife ranger, Mr James Moore, on his role in the matter.

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