

## TWO SENTENCED FOR POISONING WILDLIFE AT WANSTEAD FLATS

Two men who intentionally poisoned wildlife at an East London lake were sentenced today (18 October) after pleading guilty to two counts of misuse of pesticides and two counts of theft of pesticides.

During a hearing at Snaresbrook Crown Court the court heard how their actions led to the deaths of 90 birds, including geese, moorhens, ducks and coot as well as the death of a pet dog.

Terrence Webb, 28 (dob 25/8/82), of Peregrine Road, Ilford and Mark Page, 35 (dob 22/10/74) of White Hart Lane, Romford, were employed by Newham Council at the time of the offences as pest control officers. They were sacked following the investigation into the incident.

On the 8 and 9 March 2010, during their lunch breaks, the men drove to Alexandra Lake, Wanstead Flats in east London. They baited bread with a strong pesticide and put it on the ground. The men later boasted of what they had done, describing how crows had taken the bait and watching them die.

One of the early victims of the men's actions was a German Shepherd dog owned by a local resident.

The risks to the public were initially deemed so serious by the authorities that Alexandra Lake was cordoned off for more than three weeks. In the meantime laboratory tests were conducted to identify the poison used. It was later revealed to be a pesticide used to control infestations of cockroaches, fleas and bed bugs.

The investigation was conducted by the Metropolitan Police's Wildlife Crime Unit working with officers from Natural England's Wildlife Management Team.

PC David Flint of the Met's Wildlife Crime Unit said: "These men showed a complete disregard for public safety with the indiscriminate use of dangerous chemicals. They derived personal amusement from the death of birds and caused the death of a pet dog. It is small consolation following the destruction caused that these men were brought to justice."

Paul Butt, Senior Specialist with the Wildlife Management & Licensing Team of Natural England said: "The deliberate and reckless use of pesticides as occurred in this case is both illegal and irresponsible. The fact that this action was taken by trained professional pest controllers is of particular concern. The placing of toxic material in areas to which the public and animals have access poses a significant hazard to wildlife, domestic animals and could expose the public particularly children, to the risks of being poisoned.

The successful outcome of this case was made possible by the co-operation between the Metropolitan Police Wildlife Crime Unit, Natural England, Newham Council and other agencies without whom it would not have been possible to bring the matter to the attention of the court."

## NOTES

Mark Page and Terrence Webb entered pleas of guilty to the following charges in September:

Count 1: On 8 March 2010, use a pesticide without approval, contrary to the Control of Pesticide Regulations 1986

Count 2: On 9 March 2010, use a pesticide without approval, contrary to the Control of Pesticide Regulations 1986

Count 3: On 8 March 2010 stole a quantity of pesticide belonging to London Borough of Newham, contrary to section 1(1) of the Theft Act 1968

Count 4: On 9 March 2010 stole a quantity of pesticide belonging to London Borough of Newham, contrary to section 1(1) of the Theft Act 1968

The prosecution dropped charges relating to the storing of pesticide and the theft of a sprayer. The remaining charges relating to the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 and the Protection of Animals Act 1911 were ordered to lie on file.

They were sentenced as follows:

Counts 1 and 2: Fined a total of £7,000 each (£3,500 for each count). They will receive four months imprisonment if they default on the fine.

Counts 3 and 4: A total of four months imprisonment on each count, to run concurrently.