

# IUCN SSC Anguillid Eel Specialist Group



2016-2017 Report



Matthew Gollock

## Chair

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## Number of members

10

## Social networks

Web site:

<https://www.zsl.org/conservation/species/fish-and-invertebrates/eel-conservation/iucn-anguillid-eel-specialist-group>



## Mission statement

To coordinate effective conservation and management activities for the benefit of eel species, as well as acting as advocates and increasing awareness of the threats to them.

## Main activities by Key Priority Area (2016 & 2017)

### Barometer of life

#### ■ Research activities

i. Study relating to the status of the 15 non-CITES listed anguillid eels. This project, using the existing Red List assessments as a baseline, was begun in late 2017 and the report will be published in mid-2018. (KSR #32)

### Bolster work at national scales

#### ■ Conservation activities

i. An eel management plan was developed for the Cagayan River Basin and implementation will be overseen by regional government over the next five years. This is being used as a template for replication in other regions, with the ultimate goal for a national plan to be developed. (KSR #15)

#### ■ Research activities

i. Building on work established by Zoological Society of London (ZSL) in this river system, the Philippine Bureau for Fisheries and Aquatic Resources established two juvenile eel monitoring programmes, in collaboration with local fishers. (KSR #12)

#### ■ Synergy

i. AESG member Kenzo Kaifu attended this meeting to explore synergies between the Japanese national Red List and the IUCN global Red List. (KSR #29)

### Communications

#### ■ Scientific meetings

i. Matthew Gollock and Alan Walker were part of the organising team for the First UK Internation-

al Eel Symposium, where near 120 attendees from over 20 countries discussed anguillid eels during three days. A special edition of Fisheries Management and Ecology will be produced in 2018 (MG and AW to co-edit). (KSR #28)

ii. Matthew Gollock organised a workshop for international government, academic and NGO participation to identify key knowledge gaps for all 16 anguillid eel species. A multi-author review paper has been submitted for publication. (KSR #28)

iii. A workshop was held in Tokyo to increase public awareness of the status of the Japanese eel as well as review existing data. It received media attention and resulted in a half-day conference open to the public. (KSR #28)

### Conservation action

#### ■ Research activities

i. Development of a 'threat index' for anguillid eels using the European eel as a case-study. A collation of data and analysis was carried out in 2017, and a draft report was produced. This will be finalised in 2018. (KSR #32)

ii. A paper relating to re-stocking in Japan was published (link below). (KSR #32)

iii. A PhD research project on glass eel fishery has been initiated and data collection, through non-structured interviews, was carried out during the UK glass eel fishing season on the River Severn. This data is presently being analysed. (KSR #32)

### Policy

#### ■ Technical advice

i. Attendance at Convention on Migratory Species (CMS) Science Meeting, CITES CoP (2016), CITES CoP (2017), Animals Committee (2017) and Standing Committee (2017). (KSR #27)



ii. In collaboration with the CMS Secretariat and the Sargasso Sea Commission, ZSL/IUCN ASEG held a side-event on progress of the CMS listing of the European eel. (KSR #27)

iii. In collaboration with the CMS Secretariat and the Sargasso Sea Commission, a workshop to convene European eel range states was held. Steps were taken to agree the establishment of an instrument under CMS in order to improve conservation of the species. (KSR #27)

iv. Study on the implementation and effectiveness of the CITES Appendix II listing of the European eel. This project, including the analysis of trade data, was begun in late 2017 and the report will be published in mid-2018. (KSR #27)

#### **Acknowledgements**

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#### **Targets for the quadrennium 2017-2020**

##### **Barometer of life**

Red List: (1) Red List assessment workshop of all 16 (13 updates and 3 new) anguillid eel species in 2018; (2) on-going engagement with academic institutions, government agencies and NGOs who can provide and/or initiate the collection of, robust monitoring data for inclusion in Red List assessments. Including from CITES processes - if CoP17 draft decisions are adopted.

Research activity: (1) increased engagement in relation to the practice of re-stocking of anguillids and determining how effective this measure is locally, regionally and globally; (2) monitor use and trade in anguillid species; (3) initiation of PhD on the socio-economics of eel fisheries and trade.

##### **Bolster work at national scales**

Conservation activities: (1) Species Action Plan developed for the Japanese eel in Japan; (2) Species Action Plan developed for the American eel in Costa Rica; (3) national management plan for eel fisheries in the Philippines produced.

Policy advice: engage Japanese stakeholders and the Ministry of the Environment with regards to updating the national assessment of *Anguilla japonica*.

Research activities: monitoring initiated in key sites for species where no data is being collected or fills gaps in species ranges.

##### **Communications**

Communication: (1) expansion of on-going engagement with policy-makers and industry stakeholders in range states to improve the understanding of the Red List assessments, the data used in them and the benefits of incorporating information in them in conservation and management activities. Information from Red List assessments used as species/trade reviews carried out on behalf of CITES parties; (2) develop the strategy of using eels as a flagship species for aquatic conservation.

##### **Conservation action**

Research activities: development of a 'threat index' for anguillid eels using the European eel as a case-study.

##### **Policy**

Policy advice: (1) ensure all relevant information on anguillids is shared in relation to the needs of conventions such as CITES and CMS; (2) engagement with range states encompassing transboundary watercourses in Europe as part of CMS cooperative actions; (3) continued engagement with the Sargasso Sea Commission regarding the importance of this region for American and European eels.

##### **Projected impact for the quadrennium 2017-2020**

Despite the fact that three anguillids are listed as EN or CR – the European, Japanese and American eel – these are relatively well studied, and it is arguably that the other 13 species are in greater need of conservation attention, as little is understood of their status. Our aim is to increase our understanding of all anguillids, the tropical species in particular, in order that conservation actions, policy interventions and use are guided by up to date science. Further, it is becoming clear that there are lessons to be learned from interventions relating to the better studied species that can be applied when working directly with, and/or advising manager and policymakers, and catalysing communication between range states of all species. Over the past five years, trade and use of anguillids has altered dramatically – both in relation to species traded and countries trading – to meet the on-going demand in East Asia; therefore, increasing our understanding of the global dynamics of import and export will be essential to ensure sustainable use.

##### **Summary of activities (2016-2017)**

Key Priority Area ratio: 5/7

Key Priority Areas addressed:

- Barometer of life (1 activity)
- Bolster work at national scales (3 activities)
- Communications (3 activities)
- Conservation action (3 activities)
- Policy (4 activity)

Main KSRs addressed: 12, 15, 27, 28, 29, 32

KSR: Key Species Result