

IUCN SSC Anguillid Eel Specialist Group

2018 Report



Japanese eel conservation meeting participants, Tokyo 2018
Photo: Teppei Dohke



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Chair

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Number of members

10

Social networks

Website:

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

<http://www.iucnffsg.org/about-ffsg/anguillid-specialist-sub-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.

Projected impact for the 2017-2020 quadrennium

Despite the fact that three anguillids are listed as Endangered or Critically Endangered – the European Eel (*Anguilla anguilla*), Japanese Eel (*Anguilla japonica*) and American Eel (*Anguilla rostrata*) – these are relatively well studied, and it is arguable that the other 13 species are in greater need of conservation attention, as little is understood of their status. The Anguillid Eel Specialist Group's (AESG) 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 learnt from interventions relating to the better studied species that can be applied when working directly with and/or advising managers 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 ongoing demand in East Asia; therefore, increasing our understanding of the global dynamics of import and export will be essential to ensure sustainable use.

Targets for the 2017-2020 quadrennium

Assess

Red List: (1) Red List assessment workshop of all 16 anguillid eel species (13 updates and three new) in 2018; (2) ongoing 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; (4) monitoring initiated in key sites for species where no data is being collected or gaps exist in species ranges; (5) development of a 'threat index' for anguillid eels using the European Eel as a case study.

Plan

Planning: (1) Species Action Plan developed for the Japanese Eel in Japan; (2) Species Action Plan developed for the American Eel in Costa Rica.

Policy: (1) engage Japanese stakeholders and the Ministry of the Environment with regards to updating the national assessment of *Anguilla japonica*; (2) ensure all relevant information on anguillids is shared in relation to the needs of conventions such as CITES and the Convention on the Conservation of Migratory Species of Wild Animals (CMS); (3) continued engagement with the Sargasso Sea Commission regarding the importance of this region for American and European Eels.

Act

Conservation actions: produce a national management plan for eel fisheries in the Philippines.

Network

Synergy: engage with range states encompassing transboundary watercourses in Europe as part of CMS cooperative actions.

Communicate

Communication: (1) expand ongoing engagement with policy makers and industry stakeholders in range states to improve the understanding of 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 are carried out on behalf of CITES parties; (2) develop the strategy of using eels as a flagship species for aquatic conservation.

Activities and results 2018

Assess

Red List

- i. The Red List assessment workshop was held, all 16 species were reviewed and assessments have begun to be drafted. We are prioritising the three Australasian species that have yet to be published for submission in March 2019. We expect publication of all assessments to be complete by the end of 2019. (KSR #1)
- ii. There was significant engagement by AESG members with anguillid eel range states and other stakeholders as part of the process of delivering two major reports on these species to the CITES Secretariat. (KSR #32)

Research activity

- i. Individuals in the AESG have engaged on the practice of re-stocking of anguillids and determining how effective this measure is locally, regionally and globally, through: discussing with the Philippine government the development of monitoring of the impact of their stocking of eels; ongoing research in Japan; an assessment of the benefit of stocking in the UK, included in a document developed to determine whether trade in European Eel could be carried out post-Brexit. (KSR #33)
- ii. The Zoological Society of London (ZSL) led the delivery, in collaboration with TRAFFIC and independent consultants, of two major reports on the trade in the CITES Appendix II-listed European Eel (<https://cites.org/sites/default/files/eng/com/ac/30/E-AC30-18-01-A1.pdf>), and non-listed species (<https://cites.org/sites/default/files/eng/com/ac/30/E-AC30-18-01-A2.pdf>). Range states and stakeholders were engaged via a questionnaire circulated by the CITES secretariat which yielded a great deal of useful information that was in turn used to inform the Red List assessments that were carried out. (KSR #33)
- iii. The PhD on the socio-economics of eel fisheries and trade is ongoing, though the candidate has had health issues which has slowed her progress. (KSR #32)

- iv. A monitoring programme was initiated at two sites in the Northern Philippines in 2018, which built on work carried out in the region in 2015–2016. (KSR #12)
- v. A draft version of a 'threat index' for anguillid eels using the European eel as a case study has been produced; however, we are still looking for funds to finalise this piece of work. (KSR #32)

Plan

Planning

- i. Engagement of Japanese Eel stakeholders in Japan continues; AESG members visited Japan in 2018 to engage on several matters. However, the development of a species action plan has presently been put on hold. (KSR #15)
- ii. The scope of engagement in the southern portion of the American Eel range has broadened due to a workshop that was held in 2018 in response to the CITES decisions from CoP17 (2016). Three members of the AESG were present at the workshop as well as a range of stakeholders from American Eel range states. This was extremely useful in building relationships and progress has been made in developing a more joined-up approach to management of this species across the range, particularly between US and Canada. (KSR #15)

Policy

- i. As with the Species Action Plan for the Japanese Eel in Japan, AESG members are engaging with the Japanese Ministry of the Environment and other government departments to update the national assessment of *Anguilla japonica*; however, there doesn't appear to be any plans to update this assessment at the present time. (KSR #27)
- ii. For CITES, sharing of all relevant information on anguillids has been carried out to some extent via monitoring in key sites for species where no data is being collected or for filling gaps in species ranges; the chair of the AESG has also attended the CITES Animal Committee and Standing Committee to engage with relevant stakeholders. For CMS, this is captured in the target addressing engagement with range states encompassing transboundary water-courses in Europe. (KSR #26)
- iii. The Sargasso Sea Commission were embedded both in the CMS meeting in Malmo and the American Eel Range State meeting, and as such, the AESG continues to work closely with them. (KSR #26)

Act

Conservation actions

- i. A draft management plan for eel fisheries in the Philippines was developed; however, in 2018, the eel was determined not to be a priority by the National Government, and as such, this is now on hold. (KSR #36)

Network

Synergy

- i. The second European Eel Range State meeting of CMS signatories took place in Malmo (14-17/5). This progressed the discussions around an instrument relating to conservation of the European Eel under CMS. AESG members were involved in the development of the agenda and the meeting itself. (KSR #26)

Communicate

Communication

- i. ZSL led the delivery, in collaboration with TRAFFIC and independent consultants, of two major reports on the trade in the CITES Appendix II-listed European Eel (<https://cites.org/sites/default/files/eng/com/ac/30/E-AC30-18-01-A1.pdf>), and non-listed species (<https://cites.org/sites/default/files/eng/com/ac/30/E-AC30-18-01-A2.pdf>). Range states and stakeholders were engaged via a questionnaire circulated by the CITES secretariat, which yielded a great deal of useful information that was in turn used to inform the Red List assessments that were carried out. Conversely, the Red List assessments provided a great deal of information on describing the present status of these species. (KSR #3)
- ii. A paper is being produced on using eels as a flagship species. (KSR #28)

Acknowledgements

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Summary of activities 2018

Species Conservation Cycle ratio: 5/5

Assess	7	
Plan	5	
Act	1	
Network	1	
Communicate	2	

Main KSRs addressed: 1, 3, 12, 15, 26, 27, 28, 32, 33, 36

Resolutions addressed: WCC-2016-Res-099