

IUCN SSC Anguillid Eel Specialist Group

2019 Report



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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) hold a Red List assessment workshop for all 16 anguillid eel species (13 updates and three new) in 2018; (2) maintain 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 draft decisions from the 17th meeting of the Conference of the Parties to CITES (CoP17) are adopted.

Research activities: (1) increase engagement in relation to the practice of re-stocking of anguillids and determine how effective this measure is locally, regionally and globally; (2) monitor use and trade in anguillid species; (3) initiate a PhD on the socioeconomics of eel fisheries and trade; (4) initiate monitoring in key sites for species where no data is being collected or gaps exist in species ranges; (5) develop a 'threat index' for anguillid eels using the European Eel as a case study.

Plan

Planning: (1) develop a Species Action Plan for the Japanese Eel in Japan; (2) develop a Species Action Plan 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) continue engagement with the Sargasso Sea Commission regarding the importance of this region for American and European Eels.



The European Eel, *Anguilla anguilla*,
Critically Endangered
Photo: David Curnick

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 2019

Assess

Red List

- i.** All but three Red List assessments have been submitted. We expect all assessments to be published in 2020. (KSR #1)
- ii.** Engagement is ongoing with relevant organisations, particularly in Europe and Japan, who can provide and/or initiate the collection of robust monitoring data for inclusion in Red List assessments. AESG provided input to CITES CoP17 and the relevant decisions were adopted. (KSR #1, 2, 32)

Research activities

- i.** Studies/engagement are ongoing, particularly in Japan, in relation to the practice of re-stocking of anguillids and determining how effective this measure is locally, regionally and globally. (KSR #33)

- ii.** Monitoring of use and trade in anguillid species is ongoing, particularly through engagement via CITES. (KSR #33)

- iii.** The student conducting a PhD on the socio-economics of eel fisheries and trade has ongoing health issues and progress is slow. (KSR #32)

- iv.** Monitoring for species where no data is being collected or that fills gaps in species ranges continues in new areas in Africa and Asia. (KSR #12)

- v.** The staff member leading development of a 'threat index' for anguillid eels using the European Eel as a case study has moved to a new role and this activity has paused. (KSR #32)

Plan

Planning

- i.** The Species Action Plan for the Japanese Eel in Japan is still not developed; however, it is hoped that a regional workshop to discuss coordination of efforts across the species' range will be held in 2020. (KSR #15)

- ii.** Development of a Species Action Plan for the American Eel in Costa Rica has been dropped due to lack of resources in-country. (KSR #15)

Policy

- i.** The Ministry of Environment is choosing not to engage in relation to eel matters, including updating the national assessment of *Anguilla japonica*. (KSR #27)
- ii.** Engagement with CMS and CITES is ongoing; we are expecting AESG members to deliver key pieces of work in 2020. (KSR #26)
- iii.** We attended the Sargasso Sea Commission Strategic Planning Meeting, and presented on the importance of the Sargasso Sea to anguillid eels and fed into strategy development. (KSR #26)

Act

Conservation actions

- i.** There is still discussion at the national level in relation to the production of a management

plan for eel fisheries in the Philippines; however, at present progress is uncertain. (KSR #36)

Network

Synergy

- i.** Engagement with range states encompassing transboundary watercourses in Europe as part of CMS cooperative actions will be absorbed into the CMS Action Plan that will be developed in 2020. (KSR #26)

Communicate

Communication

- i.** Engagement is ongoing through CITES, CMS, International Council for the Exploration of the Sea (ICES), General Fisheries Commission for the Mediterranean (GFCM) and Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO). (KSR #3)
- ii.** There is increasing understanding of the linkage eels represent in the aquatic realm. We are drafting a paper on this hypothesis in relation to the Japanese Eel. (KSR #3, 28)

Acknowledgements

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Summary of activities 2019

Components of Species Conservation Cycle: 5/5

Assess	7	
Plan	5	
Act	1	
Network	1	
Communicate	2	

Main KSRs addressed: 1, 2, 3, 12, 15, 26, 27, 28, 32, 33, 36

Resolutions addressed: WCC-2016-Res-099

KSR: Key Species Result