

# IUCN SSC Anguillid Eel Specialist Group

2020 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 socio-economics 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 the Japanese Eel; (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.



Least Concern Marbled Eel, *Anguilla marmorata*  
Photo: Matthew Gollock

### 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. Ensure information from Red List assessments is 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 2020

#### Assess

##### Red List

**i.** We are finalising the last Red List Assessment, for the American Eel, with a view to submitting this year. This is an update, so all 16 species have now been assessed. (KSR #1)

**ii.** We are in the process of identifying thematic and geographical gaps in our memberships and expertise in order to engage with relevant individuals and organisations. (KSR #1, 2, 32)

##### Research activities

**i.** Studies are taking place in Japan that aim to better understand the effectiveness of re-stocking anguillids. (KSR #33)

**ii.** Monitoring of use and trade in anguillid species is ongoing through our work with CITES. (KSR #33)

**iii.** The PhD on the socio-economics of eel fisheries and trade is ongoing, however, it has been delayed due to health issues of the candidate. (KSR #32)

**iv.** Monitoring has now been initiated in the Philippines. (KSR #12)

**v.** The staff member working on development of a 'threat index' for anguillid eels using the European Eel as a case study left the organisation and the project halted. (KSR #32)

### Plan

#### Planning

**i.** We continue to engage stakeholders in Japan in relation to Japanese eels, however, a species action plan has still not been developed. (KSR #15)

#### Policy

**i.** We engage regularly with both the CITES and CMS Secretariats, in relation to specific tasks and actions, as well as through convention meetings. (KSR #26, 27)

**ii.** A workshop is planned for 2021 that will aim to strengthen communication and collaboration across American Eel range states. (KSR #26)

### Act

#### Conservation actions

**i.** Production of a national management plan for eel fisheries in the Philippines was delayed due to COVID-19. We understand there is still a plan to produce this document, but it is not presently a priority. (KSR #36)

### Network

#### Synergy

**i.** As result of engagement with range states encompassing transboundary watercourses in Europe, we are involved in the development of a single species Action Plan for the European Eel. This is ongoing at present. (KSR #26)

### Communicate

#### Communication

**i.** We have kept engagement in CITES and CMS. (KSR #3)

**ii.** We aim to continue using eels as a flagship species for aquatic conservation. (KSR #3, 28)

### Acknowledgements

We wish to thank all those who helped with the two Red List assessments that were finalised in 2020. We also wish to thank the CITES and CMS Secretariats, and the Sargasso Sea Commission, with whom we have been engaging closely over the past 12 months to deliver joint work packages.

### Summary of activities 2020

Components of Species Conservation Cycle: 5/5

Assess	7	
Plan	3	
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