

## An endangered species

The European eel is listed as Critically Endangered on the IUCN Red List.

There are regulations at national and European levels which oblige States to deliver management plans to conserve the threatened species. Eel population monitoring enables us to ensure a significant percentage of individuals mature to adulthood and reproduce to enable the survival of the species.

## Conservation

Actions to help eel populations recover include the protection of its habitat, improved connectivity of rivers (barrier removal), control of illegal fishing and the temporal closure of some fisheries.

These measures should be developed at local, national and international level to protect eels in all its life stages and ensure that adults can return to the Sargasso Sea to breed.

## What can you do?

-Take care of rivers and coastal wetlands. The riverside woodland facilitates the migration of eels.

-Choose sustainable, local fish that come from legal fishing.

-Become a volunteer.

-Avoid wasting water.

# THE EUROPEAN EEL

*Anguilla anguilla*



### Sustainable Eel Fisheries in Natura 2000

Project for the improvement of knowledge and conservation of European eel populations in the Iberian southeast.



This leaflet is framed within a project co-financed by the European Maritime and Fisheries Fund.

## Sustainable Eel Fisheries in Natura 2000

-  MONITORING
-  COLLABORATION WITH FISHERMEN
-  MARKING AND TRACKING
-  DISSEMINATION AND VOLUNTEERING
-  MANAGEMENT PROPOSALS

## The role of the eel in our ecosystems

The European eel is a migratory fish with an impressive life cycle.

The role of the eel in ecosystems is that of a predator and the transfer of matter and energy between mediums.

## The great trip

The migration of larvae called leptocephali takes place thanks to the marine currents such as the Gulf's stream that push them across the ocean.

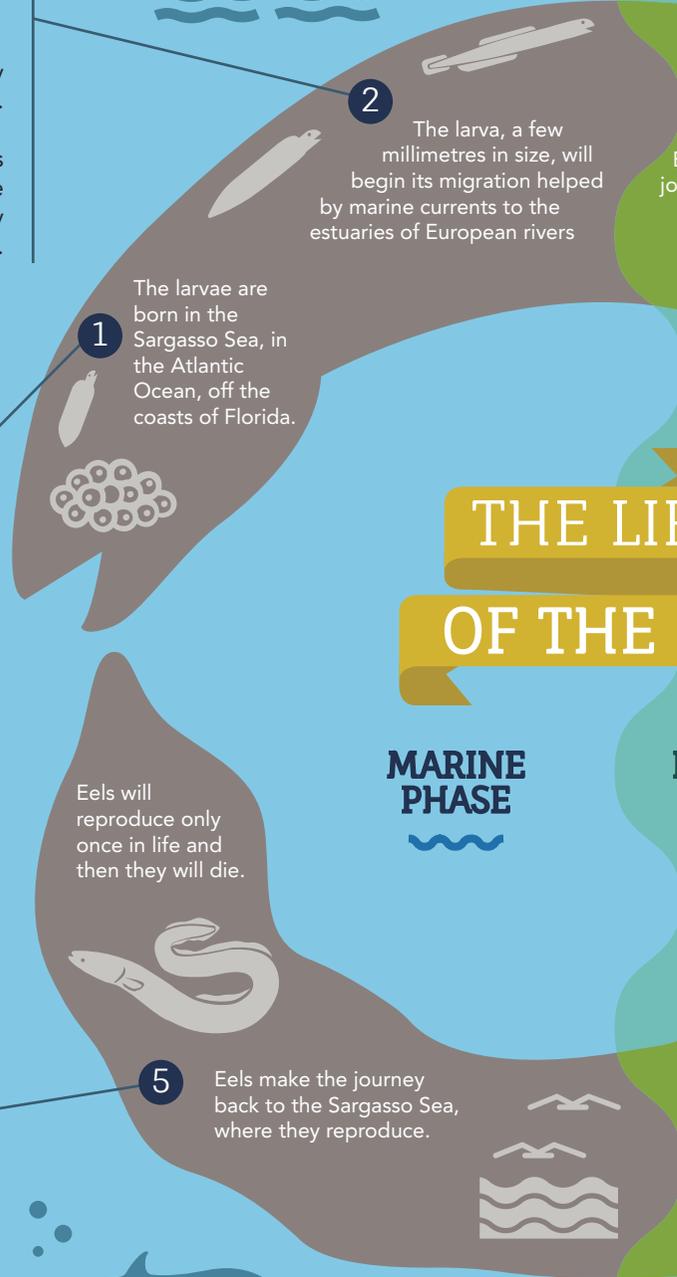
Climate change and small variations in these currents can diminish the arrival of animals to our coasts.

## The reproduction

Adult eels undertake their trip of about 5000 km and during this time they do not feed.

During the day, they swim to 1000m depth, but during the night they ascend close to the surface.

Not all of them will arrive. Some of them could be preyed upon by animals such as pilot whales.



2 The larva, a few millimetres in size, will begin its migration helped by marine currents to the estuaries of European rivers

1 The larvae are born in the Sargasso Sea, in the Atlantic Ocean, off the coasts of Florida.



Eels will reproduce only once in life and then they will die.



5 Eels make the journey back to the Sargasso Sea, where they reproduce.

# THE LIFE OF THE EEL

## MARINE PHASE

## FRESHWATER PHASE



The larvae migrate several thousand kilometres towards the European coasts. Adults will make the journey in the opposite direction



3. The elver phase develops in estuaries and coastal lagoons.



Eels must move against the river stream



Young or "yellow" eels will feed themselves for several years in the middle part of the rivers.



Adult eels go river down. When they become a silver eel, they will be ready to reproduce.



## Threats in estuaries and rivers

One of the main threats to the eel is the existence of barriers in the rivers which impede its migration (dams, turbines,...).

Another important pressure of the populations is the overfishing of elvers and adults.

They are also affected by the pollution of water channels or the existence of parasites and diseases.

## The eel in the peninsular southeast

The main eel populations in the Iberian southeast are found in the wetlands of the South of Alicante, in the Mar Menor, and the watercourse of Segura riverbed. In the latter, they remained extinct during several decades due to water pollution and the construction of numerous dams.

However, even though eels have been detected again in the Segura River, populations in the southeast continue sloping, and actions for its conservation are urgent

