



## PRESS RELEASE

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10 May

### Help save London's endangered eels

Volunteers are needed to help endangered eels (*Anguilla anguilla*) set up home on the River Lea in Hackney, as the species complete a 3,000 mile journey from the Atlantic Ocean.

The Canal & River Trust – the charity that cares for the waterway – is working in partnership with international conservation charity the Zoological Society of London (ZSL) to monitor eel numbers at a specially made eel pass at Lee Bridge Road. The pass enables the species to make their way around the weir on this part of the River, and continue their journey upstream.

All eels start their lives in the Sargasso Sea, 3,000 miles away, before using ocean currents to journey to the estuaries and rivers of Europe, which provide ideal habitat for them to mature. Their epic route is interrupted only when they come to obstructions, such as dams, weirs and lock gates.

Specially made passes are needed to help them navigate around the barriers, as efforts are made to help reverse the rapid decline in the number of young eels, known as elvers, entering our rivers over the past 30 years. The eels live inland for around two decades before returning to the Sargasso.

Volunteers will be trained to count and measure eels and feed information back to ecologists at ZSL and the Trust. The first training session is on 24 May, at 6pm at Lea Bridge in Clapton. To book contact [nittan.mann@canalrivertrust.org.uk](mailto:nittan.mann@canalrivertrust.org.uk)

Joe Pecorelli, project manager for ZSL's citizen science conservation projects, said: "This is a very exciting new monitoring site in our programme of work, now in its eleventh year, to improve London's rivers. By building passes we open up more habitat to eels, allowing greater numbers to reach maturity in our rivers and make the epic journey back to the Sargasso to spawn. This is not only of benefit to populations of the critically endangered eel but also to the wider ecology of our precious urban rivers."

Richard Bennett, Canal & River Trust environmental scientist, said: "Eels make this amazing journey from the Sargasso Sea to set up home in our rivers and canals. We know there has been a huge decline in numbers since the 1970s, and there's a lot more we want to know about them. Gathering data on the numbers making it into areas like the River Lea is a start to doing this and the more help we can get to do this the better. I'd encourage anyone interested in being involved to get in touch."

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For more information visit [canalrivertrust.org.uk](http://canalrivertrust.org.uk)

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