**press release**

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**HELP SAVE LONDON’S ENDANGERED EELS**

**Volunteers sought on River Brent for eel training on 24 May**

One of the nation’s critically endangered species – the European eel – has made an appearance in Brentford. Now local charities are calling for volunteers to help monitor the eels this summer as they make the journey upstream to mature.

In May, an elver – a juvenile eel – was spotted in a monitoring station on the River Brent in Brentford within a week of a new elver pass, which allows elvers to get round barriers such as weirs, becoming operational.

Over the last 30 years the number of elvers joining the adult population of European eels in our rivers has declined. The Canal & River Trust has been working in partnership with the Thames Rivers Trust and the Zoological Society of London to make a number of improvements to allow elvers to move past barriers on the River Brent, one of the measures necessary to contribute to the recovery of the eels.

Volunteers are being sought to monitor the migration of the eels on the River Brent in Brentford. On **24 May 2013** volunteers are being invited to a free training session where they will learn how to check the eel trap and count and measure any eels. The training will take place at **18:00 at Stoney Sluice, located in Brentford**. To book a place, volunteers should email: ccockel@thamesriverstrust.org.uk

Eel monitoring takes place between April and September so volunteers will get to enjoy the summer on London’s rivers, while playing an important role in helping understand eels in the Thames.

Leela O’Dea, environment manager at the Canal & River Trust, said:  “It’s really exciting to have proof that eels are finding their way up the Thames to Brentford. They really do make an incredible journey, travelling all the way from the Sargasso Sea on their way back to Britain to mature, and we’re supporting their recovery on London’s rivers by removing barriers and improving the environment. Volunteers are tremendously passionate about our canals and rivers and the animals and plants that thrive on them and this is a great chance to get involved in helping us understand the habits of the critically endangered European eel.”

Chris Cockel, River Brent Project Officer with the Thames Rivers Trust, said: “After two years of planning, it was thrilling to find a glass eel in the trap at Brentford, particularly considering the epic journey it must have made from the other side of the Atlantic.”

For details of the Canal & River Trust, including how to visit, volunteer or donate see [www.canalrivertrust.org.uk](http://www.canalrivertrust.org.uk).

**ENDS**

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**Notes to editors:**

**Canal & River Trust** is the guardian of 2,000 miles of historic waterways across England and Wales.  We are among the largest charities in the UK, maintaining the nation’s third largest collection of Listed structures, as well as museums, archives, navigations and hundreds of important wildlife sites.

We believe that our canals and rivers are a national treasure and a local haven for people and wildlife. It is our job to care for this wonderful legacy – holding it in trust for the nation in perpetuity and giving people a greater role in the running of their local waterways

**European eels** (*Anguilla* Anguilla) have a fascinating life cycle, with spawning taking place in the Sargasso Sea near Bermuda. Larvae drift with the Gulf Stream to Europe where, upon reaching coastal areas, they develop into glass eels and migrate up rivers and streams, such as the River Brent. As the juvenile fish change colour and become dark green they are referred to as elvers.  In the right conditions they can overcome obstacles, crawl through wet grass and dig through wet sand to reach the upstream waters and ponds where they mature.  Upon maturity, they swim back downstream to make the long journey back towards their spawning grounds. The European eel is listed as critically endangered on the International Union for Conservation of Nature Red List of Threatened Species.