**press release**

11 December 2013

**GIANT EEL DISCOVERED AS HISTORIC LOCK DRAINED**

A rare 8lb 2oz female eel thought to be around 50-years old, was found by a team working on major repairs of a canal lock in Northamptonshire.

Dealing with water and wildlife is just part of the job for the Canal & River Trust however, finding a large slippery creature lurking at the bottom of the Grand Union Canal was a quite a surprise for those carrying out the restoration of the popular Watford Lock Flight.

Specialists from MEM Fisheries were called in to catch and relocate fish from the canal so the Trust’s maintenance teams could drain the canal and repair leaking lock gates.

Becca Dent, national angling development manager for the Canal & River Trust, said: “Finding an eel this size is pretty amazing.  We have lots of eels living in the canal system but to find something as big as this one is a brilliant discovery.  The biggest European eel caught with a rod and line in the UK was just 3lbs heavier than the one we found.

“Eels are such a fascinating animal, they start life as a little egg in the Sargasso Sea near Bermuda and make an epic 4,000 mile journey across the world and end up in canals and rivers across Europe.  Once they enter in the canal they will spend their life growing and maturing before returning to the Sargasso Sea to breed.”

Eels, which are protected by law, and are capable of surviving for periods of time out of water and are capable of crossing land and damp meadows in their search for water systems. Once eels have left the rivers to return to the sea to spawn, they stop feeding, and so have to rely on stored energy alone.

Becca continues: “We have safely put the eel back in the canal so it can continue exploring our wonderful waterways.  And if you’re really lucky you might just catch a glimpse of it swimming somewhere near you!”

**ENDS**

For media enquiries please contact Sarah Rudy on 01908 302584 / 07788 691 219 or email [sarah.rudy@canalrivertrust.org.uk](mailto:sarah.rudy@canalrivertrust.org.uk)

The 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.

[www.canalrivertrust.org.uk](http://www.canalrivertrust.org.uk)