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European eel (*Anguilla anguilla*)

Eel has experienced a serious decline its entire distribution area during the last century considered a critically endangered species. For all these reasons and having suffered a 99% decline in European stocks since 1980, rendering their current status “Vulnerable” according to the IUCN and it is objective of an ambitious Eel Recovery Plan of the European Community.

In Spain and Catalonia, eel can be caught only by anglers and with restrictions. The eel population is outside safe biological limits and its fishing is not sustainable. On this basis, the European Commission adopted the Regulation 1100/2007 of 18 September 2007, which sets out guidelines to be followed to ensure the recovery of this species. Basically it focuses on reducing fishing effort, restocking and improvement of habitats. It is important that the eel can access the highest sections of the river, and they are in best status. This ensures that eel can grow, mature and eat right to make the necessary energy reserves in the form of fat to begin their migration to the sea.

Until the mid-twentieth century in Catalonia eel was distributed to most river basins and up to an altitude of about one thousand meters high above the level of the Sea. Today, their range is reduced by more than 90%, eel only resists in basins or areas where there are no obstacles. Is greatly affected by overfishing, both juveniles (glass eels) as adults, organic pollution and heavy metals, and, also very serious, a nematode parasite (*Anguillicola crassus*). Eel densities are generally low, except for the lower Ebre and its Delta, and other lower reaches of coastal rivers and streams.

CONSERVATION STATUS

- **IUCN Worldwide Category:** Vulnerable
- **Spanish IUCN Category:** Vulnerable
- **Regional legislation.** Classified as “Endangered” in Community of Madrid wild flora and fauna endangered species regional catalogue, 18/92, 26th march. Classified as “Special interest” in Annex IV Aragon endangered species catalogue, 28th March 49/1995.
- **European Directives.** 18th September 2007, 1100/2007 Directive.
- **Red Books.** Mentioned as “Vulnerable” in Spanish Vertebrate Red Book (992).