

Press release: Environment Agency's efforts see Norfolk's eel population boosted

Increased numbers of eels have been observed at a Norwich fish pass, as well as sightings further upstream on the River Tud, the first to be found in that location for nearly 40 years.

Jez Wood, a specialist at the Environment Agency, said:

Last month 2 small eels were found on a routine fish survey on the Tud, a tributary of the Wensum.

Two doesn't sound like many, but these are the only small eels we've found on this stretch for years, and only the fifth and sixth of this size found in the Wensum catchment since 1973.

Whilst this does not herald the recovery of the species as a whole, it does show the positive benefit of eel passes at barriers to migration and the monitoring programme at the Environment Agency.

The global eel population has dropped dramatically over the past 40 years, with numbers down by as much as 95%. Whilst there are thought to be many reasons for this decline, barriers to upstream migration are one that we can do something about.

These barriers reduce access to freshwater habitat in which many eels prefer to live while they mature, before migrating back across the Atlantic to the Sargasso Sea where they spawn and die.

In Norfolk barriers include tidal sluices, weirs and mills. Eel passes are helping the Environment Agency ensure the population can be restored and stabilised.

The status of the European eel is still regarded as "critical" and the Environment Agency is creating passes at several key obstruction locations on Norfolk Rivers, such as New Mills Yard, in Norwich.

Eel numbers are monitored by the Environment Agency at various tidal structures and also in fish monitoring surveys on the rivers. Since the New Mills pass was installed in 2009, the number of eels have ranged from the hundreds to a record 34,000 in 2016.

These are not new eels fresh from the Sargasso, but older eels which have spent time in the Broads for maybe 2 or 3 years before attempting to migrate upstream.

Whilst it's not known why the numbers of eels fluctuate so greatly, the general increase in numbers and the findings upstream are positive signs for the health of our rivers.

Factfile: Lifecycle of eels

Much is still unknown about the lifecycle of the European eel.

It is catadromous, which means it spends most of its time in freshwater but returns to sea to breed.

The larval stage of the eel, called Leptocephala, migrate across the Atlantic drifting on the Gulf Stream before metamorphosing into the glass eel stage 7 centimetres when they enter continental waters around September.

They reach the estuaries in the UK from October/November in the South West and spread over the rest of Britain over the next few months, though don't tend to actively migrate upstream until the spring.

Glass eels start passing tidal structures in April and through the summer and gradually become pigmented elvers.

The urge to migrate upstream is not consistent – not all glass eels migrate past the tidal barriers in the first year. Some elvers stay in the estuary never entering the rivers, some stay in the estuary and enter the river in subsequent years.

Those that do enter the rivers can migrate upstream for several years, moving during the warmer months so the downstream reaches tend to be dominated by younger age-classes whilst upstream areas can contain only old/large individuals, predominately female.

Growth rates vary, but females reach between 45 and 85cm 10 to 12 years post-metamorphosis and males between 30 and 45cm 6 to 10 years post-metamorphosis.

At this point physical changes occur, and they change from yellow eels to silver eels and they start the downstream migration in late summer and autumn and return to the Sargasso where it is believed that they spawn and die, though this behaviour has never been witnessed.

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[Detailed guide: BPS 2018](#)

Updated: We've added updated guidance about land cover eligibility checks on common land.

Latest news

Commons eligibility checks

We've published updated [guidance](#) about land cover eligibility checks on common land.

Hot and dry weather conditions in England

We've published [guidance](#) for farmers experiencing difficulties meeting rural grant and payment scheme requirements due to the recent hot and dry weather conditions.

BPS applications are closed

You can no longer make a BPS application for 2018.

Rural Payments service

Some parts of the service are unavailable, so you cannot make changes which may affect your 2018 application. Read more about what you can do using the [Rural Payments service](#).

Countryside Stewardship

Apply for the Countryside Stewardship (CS) Arable Offer. Find out more about the Arable Offer on [GOV.UK](#).

Wet weather derogation announced

George Eustice, Minister of State, announced in May a relaxation (derogation) of the crop diversification rules following wet weather. Read more information about [the derogation](#).

Scheme rules and other guidance

- [Basic Payment Scheme: rules for 2018](#)
(PDF, 2.79MB, 127 pages)
find out how the scheme works
- [BPS Key dates 2018](#)
(PDF, 129KB, 1 page)
shows important dates in the BPS scheme year

Other guidance and forms:

- [BPS 2018 land use codes](#)
- [Greening workbook for 2018](#)
(PDF, 2.75MB, 11 pages)
- [Winter varieties of Brassica crops](#)
(PDF, 337KB, 3 pages)
for 'crop diversification'
- [Young and new farmer form](#)
(PDF, 226KB, 8 pages)

- [The guide to cross compliance in England 2018](#)

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- [How to claim BPS online in 2018](#)

- (PDF, 3.79MB, 61 pages)

gives information about applying using the Rural Payments service

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- [How to claim BPS online in 2018 – checklist](#)

- (PDF, 592KB, 3 pages)

use this checklist to remind you what you need to check, change and confirm, before you submit your application in the Rural Payments service

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- [How to claim BPS online in 2018 – troubleshooting questions](#)

- (PDF, 705KB, 6 pages)

gives an overview of the most common problems and where to find more information in the 'How to claim BPS online' guidance above

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- [How to apply for BPS using a paper form in 2018](#)

- (PDF, 1.32MB, 67 pages)

gives information about using the BP5 application form to apply

Continuation booklets (for paper applications):

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- [BP5 continuation booklet – Part C: Field data sheet](#)

- (PDF, 628KB, 12 pages)

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- [BP5 continuation booklet – Part D: Greening: ecological focus areas \(EFA\)](#)

- (PDF, 626KB, 8 pages)

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- [BP5 continuation booklet – Part E: Common land grazing rights](#)

- (PDF, 611KB, 8 pages)

Payment queries from previous years

If you have a query about a previous BPS payment that you've received, please fill in a [BPS payment query form](#) and send it to RPA. Then carry on with your 2018 application, declaring your land as it is on 15 May 2018.

Commons eligibility checks

Read everything you need to know about [land cover eligibility checks on common land](#).

Rural Payments service

You can use the [Rural Payments service](#) to:

- register for rural payments
- update your personal and business details
- give someone else (like an agent) permission to act on your behalf
- view your BPS 2018 application summary
- view your BPS entitlements
- view and print digital maps of your land parcels
- view your previous year's claim
- apply for Countryside Stewardship, including the Arable Offer.

At the moment you cannot:

- transfer entitlements
- transfer or remove land
- edit land use online
- add or delete commons rights
- apply for BPS

Forgotten your online password?

If you're logging in with a Customer Reference Number (CRN) and have forgotten your password, you can create a new one from the [sign-in page](#).

Click 'Having trouble signing in?' then 'create a new one'.

If you can't remember your CRN, call RPA on 03000 200 301.

How to use the Rural Payments service – help is available

Onscreen 'Help' in the service to guide you if you get stuck. Or you can read and print a copy of all the

[onscreen Help](#)

(PDF, 2.39MB, 52 pages)

Our [videos](#) also show you how to use the service.

Planned maintenance of the Rural Payments service

There are times when the Rural Payments service is unavailable because of essential planned maintenance and updates.

Check [Rural Payments: registering and updating your details](#) to keep up to date about availability of the Rural Payments service.

Contact RPA

Email

ruralpayments@defra.gsi.gov.uk

Helpline

03000 200 301

[Decision: Walney Extension Offshore Wind Farm Order 2014 – variation 2](#)

On 26 April 2017 and 26 July 2017, the Marine Management Organisation (MMO) received requests from DONG Energy Walney Extension (UK) Limited to vary the Deemed Marine Licences (DMLs) contained within Schedule 9 (generation assets) and Schedule 10 (transmission assets) of the Walney Extension Offshore Wind Farm Order 2014.

Following consultation with relevant stakeholders the MMO has now completed its consideration of the request and, in exercise of the powers conferred by section 72(3)(d) of the Marine and Coastal Access Act 2009, has determined to make the variations as detailed in the attached draft documents.

[Notice: LN11 7EX, Egdon Resources UK Limited: environmental permit application advertisement EPR/XP3839MU/V004](#)

The Environment Agency consults the public on certain applications for waste operations, mining waste operations, installations, water discharge and groundwater activities. The arrangements are explained in its [Public Participation Statement](#)

These notices explain:

- what the application is about
- where you can visit to see the application documents
- when you need to comment by

The Environment Agency will decide:

- whether to grant or refuse the application
- what conditions to include in the permit (if granted)