



# Eels in the Classroom

a guide for project organisers



Hello and welcome.

We extend our sincerest thanks to the schools and community organisations who have chosen to participate in this valuable conservation exercise.

Your involvement in the 'Eels in the Classroom' project underscores a commitment to educational excellence and real environmental awareness.

By engaging with creatures that once dominated Somerset's culture and heritage, you're not only providing valuable learning experiences for your community but contributing to the conservation efforts of a critically endangered species.

With your support, more than one million eels will be removed from hazardous environments and transported beyond obstructive barriers, where they'll have the opportunity to thrive and contribute to the preservation of their species.

## Who you're meeting.

The elvers you're about to meet are sourced from reputable suppliers focusing on sustainability.

Every one of our industry partners adheres to the Sustainable Eel Group's strict regulations for ethical fishing, handling, and care, ensuring the eels' wellbeing and population sustainability.

Before arrival, the glass eels and pigmented elvers undergo feeding for at least one month, gradually transitioning to a diet based on trout dust. This prepares them for classroom environments and enhances their chances of long-term survival.

Our suppliers also maintain strict biosecurity protocols to prevent disease spread, a natural concern when dealing with delicate wildlife in contained, densely populated environments.

In sourcing elvers we've taken into account a number of ethical and regulatory factors, which have shaped the project into what it is today.





## What you need.

### Tank.

*Capacity of 60 to 100 litres to minimise disease spread.*

### Tank Lid.

*A secure lid to prevent eel escape.*

### Air Pump.

*Necessary for oxygenation.*

### Air Stone with Non-Return Valve.

*Provides aeration while preventing backflow.*

### Two Airlines.

*One for connecting to the air stone and another for siphoning waste.*

### Filter.

*Internal or external system for effective biomatter filtration.*

### Water Jugs.

*Two jugs for various tasks.*

### Thermometer.

*Essential for ensuring water temperature remains below 22°C*

### Refuge Material.

*Pipes or mesh strainers to offer shelter for eels.*

### Polystyrene or Cardboard Sheet.

*Place beneath the tank to distribute weight evenly.*

## Setting up the tanks.

Thoroughly clean and disinfect the tanks, then leave them to stand for two to three weeks.

Now that the chlorine evaporation and bacteria stabilisation process has concluded, set the tank.

Position the tank on a cardboard sheet away from direct sunlight to prevent temperature stress.

Install non-return valves in air pump lines to prevent water ingress and deter escapement.

Place spray bars on filters above the water line (5 cm below the lid) to prevent eels from entering.

Fit filters with fine mesh guards to prevent eel entrapment and unnecessary casualties.

Ensure proper cable management, including drip loops to prevent water damage to power sockets.

Match water temperature closely with the eels' previous environment to minimise shock.



## Caring for the eels.

### *Good Housekeeping*

Clean the tank daily, siphoning waste before feeding. This helps prevent the accumulation of organic matter, reducing the risk of ammonia spikes and other unhealthy water quality issues.

### *Regular Feeding*

Feed eels a measured amount daily, adjusting if necessary to avoid overfeeding. This ensures that eels receive adequate nutrition without producing too much waste, which can affect water quality.

### *Water Monitoring*

Perform regular water changes or temperature checks, and clean the filters twice weekly. This prevents the buildup of harmful substances and ensures a clean and healthy environment for eels. At no point should the temperature of the tanks exceed 22°C; this can amplify mortality rates.



## Monitoring behaviour.

Eels seek shelter and may gather around objects in the tank. Providing refuge materials such as pipes or mesh strainers can reduce clustering, minimise stress, and promote natural behavior.

Eelers may appear attracted to pumps or heaters, especially during the initial stages of acclimation. This behaviour is normal and tends to diminish over time as they settle into their new home.

Cannibalism can occur among eels, particularly in overcrowded environments where food is scarce. Monitor for cannibalistic behavior and adjust feeding accordingly to mitigate casualties.

Eels are natural escape artists at all stages of their life cycle. Ensure the water level remains at least 5 cm below the lid, and that any equipment likely to facilitate an escape is out of the eels' reach.

Be prepared to remove eels with visible signs of 'white spot'. This can serve as early indication of a parasitic infection which can spread quickly.





## Safely back home.

Once the project comes to an end, organisers and participants will have the opportunity to take part in an eel release on the Somerset Levels.

The cultural resonance of this will be profound, the reappearance of eels upstream fostering a sense of stewardship for future generations.

The affect of the day's skills workshops, covering everything from eel rope making to local action, will no doubt contribute to social development.

And with human-engineered barriers constituting the single most significant threat to migratory fish, the ecological impact of smaller scale restocking projects such as this is by no means insignificant.

While many eels will never find their way into the waters of the Huntspill, Brue, or Parrett, it is quite possible that the eels grown on at your school could one day make their way across the Atlantic to the Sargasso Sea to spawn.



Sustainable *Eel* Group

more *at* [sustainableeelgroup.com](http://sustainableeelgroup.com)