

Young eels join reserve

Elver release helps endangered species



Reedbed and fen is ideal habitat for many rare plants and animals including our native European eel which has become critically endangered in recent years. The Hawk and Owl Trust's Sculthorpe Moor Community Nature Reserve in Norfolk is an important area of inland valley fen, nationally and internationally recognized as important for the fen habitat found there.

There were no longer any eels in the drains on Sculthorpe Moor Community Nature Reserve but in partnership with the Environment Agency the reserve has now become an official release site for them in an effort to boost the population.

"The stocking of elvers into waters with good escapement will help to establish a population which in a few years can return to the Sargasso to spawn. This is just one of the Environment Agency's ongoing plans to help the eel numbers recover from the steep decline in the past 30years. The work is being undertaken with partners under Eel Management Plans and also includes investigating barriers to the eel migration", said Tom Howard, Fisheries Technical Officer for the EA.

1500 glass eels were released into the pools at Sculthorpe which provide ideal habitat for the small fish. The pools will provide food and shelter for the eels which should grow to anything up to a metre in length over the next 6 to 10 years. Eventually some of the eels will leave the reserve and use the river Wensum to get out to sea where they will travel to the Sargasso Sea in the Caribbean to breed.

Eels are also an important food source for other species including kingfisher, otter and the rare and illusive bittern.