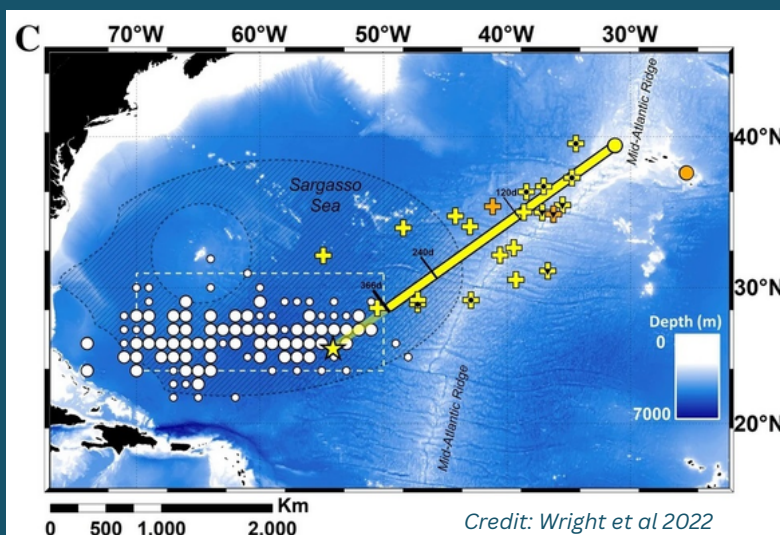


Eel fisheries & the Sargasso Sea



The Sargasso Sea is the only spawning area for two species of anguillid eel: the endangered American eel and the critically endangered European eel.



An amazing migration

The eels spawn in the ocean to the South of Bermuda but migrate several thousand kilometres to the coast of the Americas, the Caribbean, Europe, the Baltic, the Mediterranean, and northern Africa, to live most of their lives in brackish or freshwater environments.

Catches have fallen by 80%+ since 1960.

The eels are harvested for human consumption, driving a decline that is exacerbated by other threats, including habitat loss, barriers to migration, pollution, and more.

European eel 'smuggling' is valued at 2.5 billion euros a year.



Photo credit: CEFAS UK

Recovery depends on cooperation across the entire eel life cycle.

European eels are protected under European Union Law and CITES, and are listed under Appendix II of the Convention on Migratory Species indicating that it is a species that needs or would significantly benefit from international co-operation.

The conservation of American eels depends on the range state, with the eels being protected in Canada under the Species at Risk Act.



Range states workshops for anguillid eels

The Sargasso Sea Commission has hosted two range states workshops for the American eel and four range states workshops for the European eel with the aim of increasing collaboration to strengthen conservation of the two species.

CMS COP 15 - IISD



Single Species Action Plan for the European eel

A single species action plan for the European eel was agreed by the parties to the Convention on Migratory Species during their COP 15 in Campo Grande, Brazil, in April 2026. The draft was supported by the EU and Monaco at the meeting and passed without any changes. The Sargasso Sea Commission has been working with the Convention on Migratory Species as well as States and NGOs to develop the plan for years.