



Action for the River Kennet

8th July 2014

Eels in the Classroom heading back to the Kennet

Five local schools, which have been taking part in a new project to raise baby Eels in their classroom, are preparing to release them in to the River Kennet this week. Students at Preshute, Aldbourne St Michael's, Ramsbury, Hungerford and St John's Academy have been caring for the Elvers (baby Eels) in their classrooms. The release is the culmination of an eight-week project to learn more about the European Eel and reintroduce the species to the Kennet. The project has been a joint venture between Severn & Wye Smokery, Action for the River Kennet and Thames Water.

Helen Kelly, Schools Liaison for ARK says 'The children's response to this project has been really exciting. They have been truly captivated by the Elvers and have enjoyed learning all about the fascinating journey that each Eel has made from the Sargasso Sea. The release of the Eels in to the Kennet has really helped instil the importance of caring for the Kennet and using Water Wisely to ensure that there is enough for us, and the wildlife'.

The European Eel has been absent from the Kennet for at least the last 20 years, after previously being a key part of the river ecology. ARK supporter, Lady Elizabeth Kennet has been a fervent supporter of the project to return the Eel to the Kennet 'I remember catching Elvers many years ago, we would pick them up in our fingers - how lovely to think of the Kennet once again being home to baby Eels'

Charlotte Hitchmough said, 'Eel populations are in decline worldwide. Between 2005 and 2010 the eel population in the River Thames declined by 98%. Our eel project has been tremendous fun and we hope it will play a small part in helping eels to recover. If our eels reach maturity they may swim down the Kennet, along the Thames and out to the Sargasso sea – that's a very exciting thought'.

Journalists are welcome to attend our Eel release, on Wednesday the 16th of July at 10am at the Jubilee Field in Manton.

St John's Academy and Preshute School release at Manton. Please contact Helen Kelly on Helen@riverkennet.org for further details.

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