



1 European eels start their lives near to America. Eel larvae hatch in the Sargasso Sea before taking advantage of the Gulf Stream currents to drift over to Scotland when they are just a few centimetres long.

2 The 3,700 mile journey is thought to take around 300 days, but no one really knows for certain.

3 As they approach Scotland's coastal waters, they are small, wriggly and virtually see-through. They are known as glass eels.

4 By the time they find their way into a river, the young eels have developed colouring and look much like an adult eel, but are still small, no longer than a pencil. They are called elvers. Elvers cannot jump, but are great at climbing. They can wriggle their way up near vertical surfaces, as long as they have something wet to cling to and the flow is not too fast. Garden weir has been altered to create the right climbing conditions.

5 The young eels guddle about in the mud and gravels of ponds and rivers, feeding on fish, invertebrates and scavenging on dead organisms. As they mature, they grow. Adult eels can grow to over a metre in length.

6 Eels can live for more than 50 years in captivity but will typically spend less time in the Lugton Water before heading back downstream and out to sea.

7 When the adult eels are ready to return to the Sargasso Sea their bodies turn silver. This helps them to hide from marine predators on their long journey back across the Atlantic. They start the return journey in the spring time, usually under the cover of darkness. European eels are listed as critically endangered by the IUCN (International Union for Conservation of Nature).