

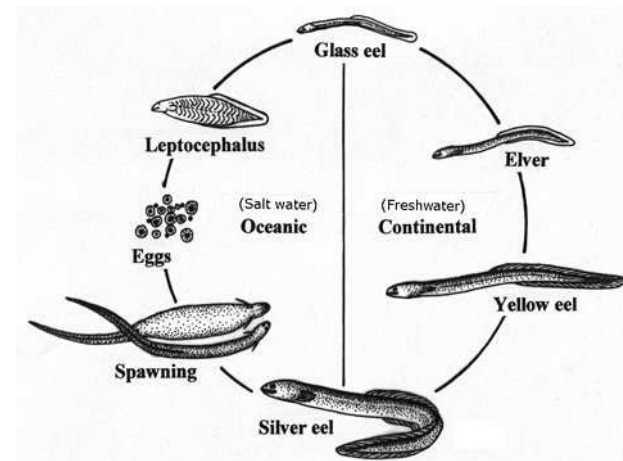
# Eels - A flagship species for freshwater conservation in the Philippines

**Matthew Gollock**



## Project need

- ‘The biodiversity of freshwater ecosystems is declining faster than that of any other biome’ (CBD 2010)
- At least 5 anguillids in the Philippines.
  - Range of threats – knowledge gaps.
  - Hub for harvest and legal/illegal trade.
- Fisherfolks unempowered/low income.
  - Uncertain demand - overseas market.
  - Needs to be local to global analysis.

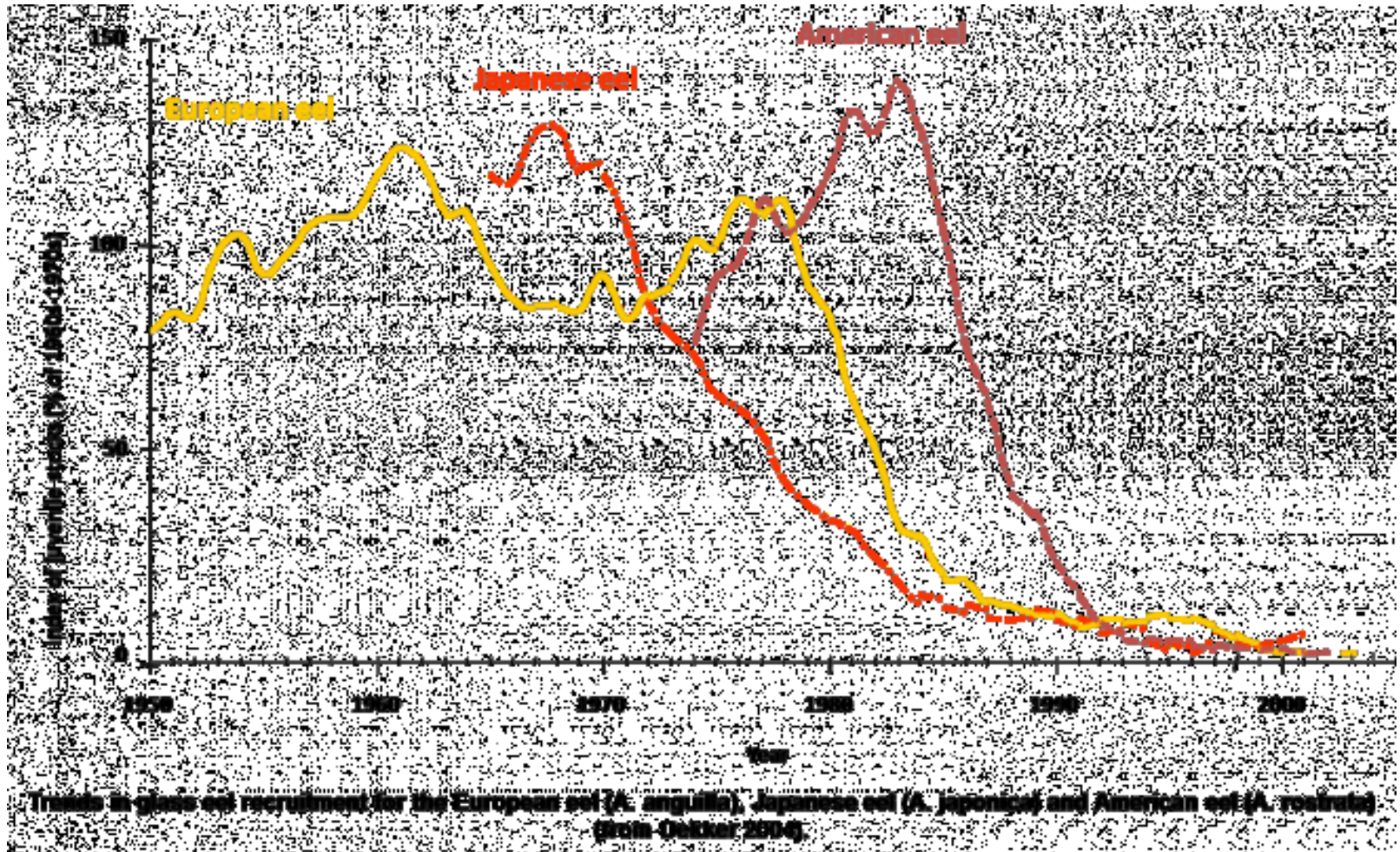


# Philippines via Japan and beyond?



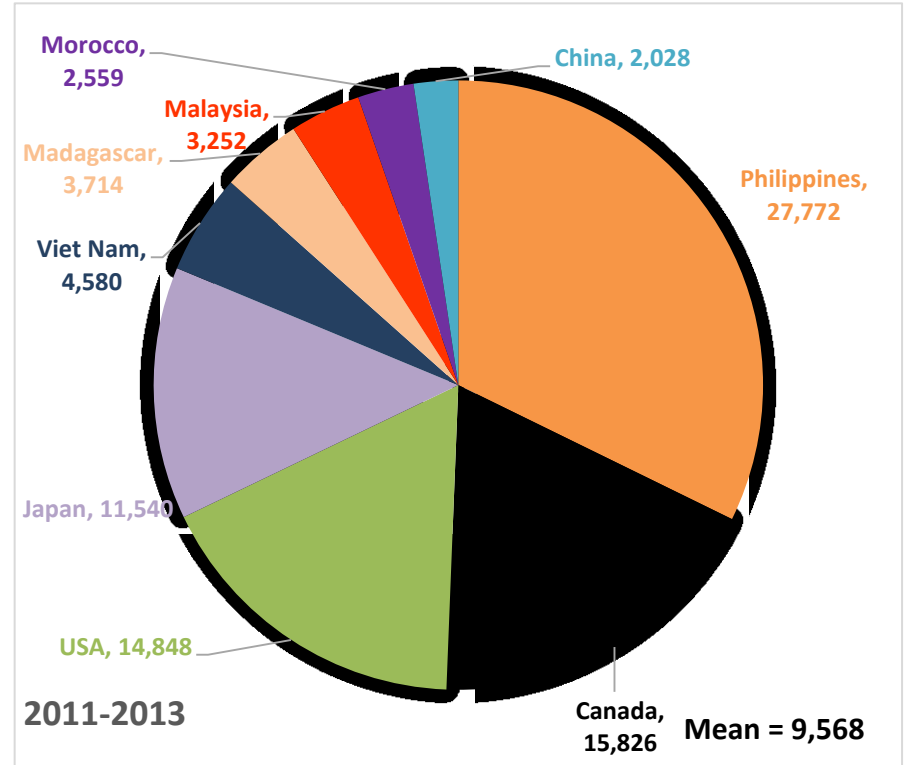
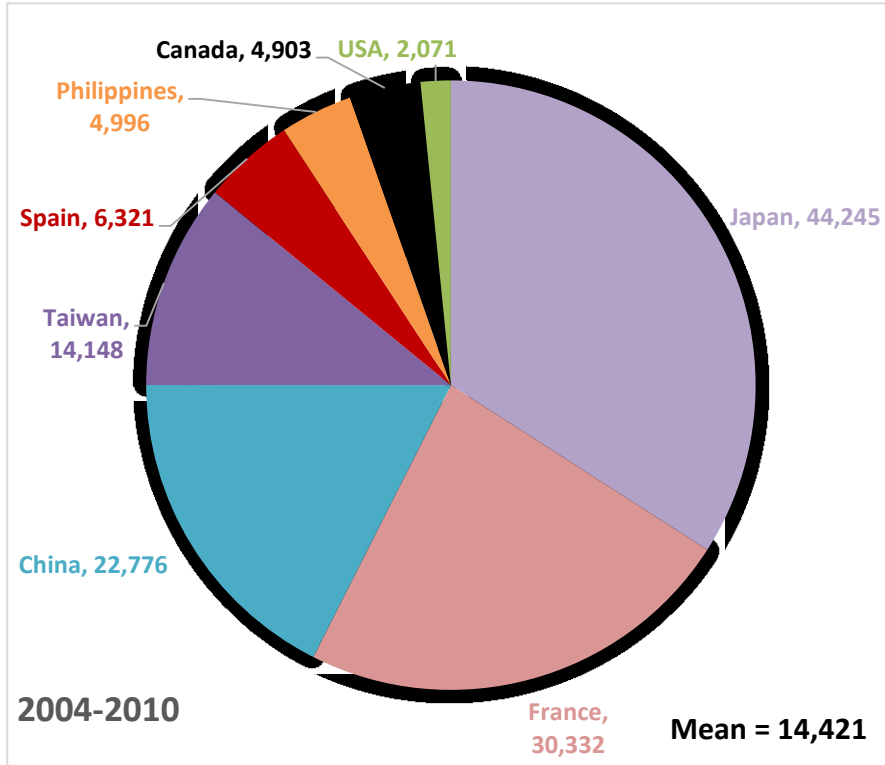


# Philippines via Japan and beyond?



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- 5 (7?) species – primarily tropical; little data



- Legal export in t/yr (Not species/life-stage specific)
- Philippines peak in 2012 = \$5000/kg

## Increase in fishing activity



- Migration to N. Luzon from across the Philippines.
- Children are often involved at the expense of education.
- BFAR / Customs have no capacity to deal with 'gold-rush'.

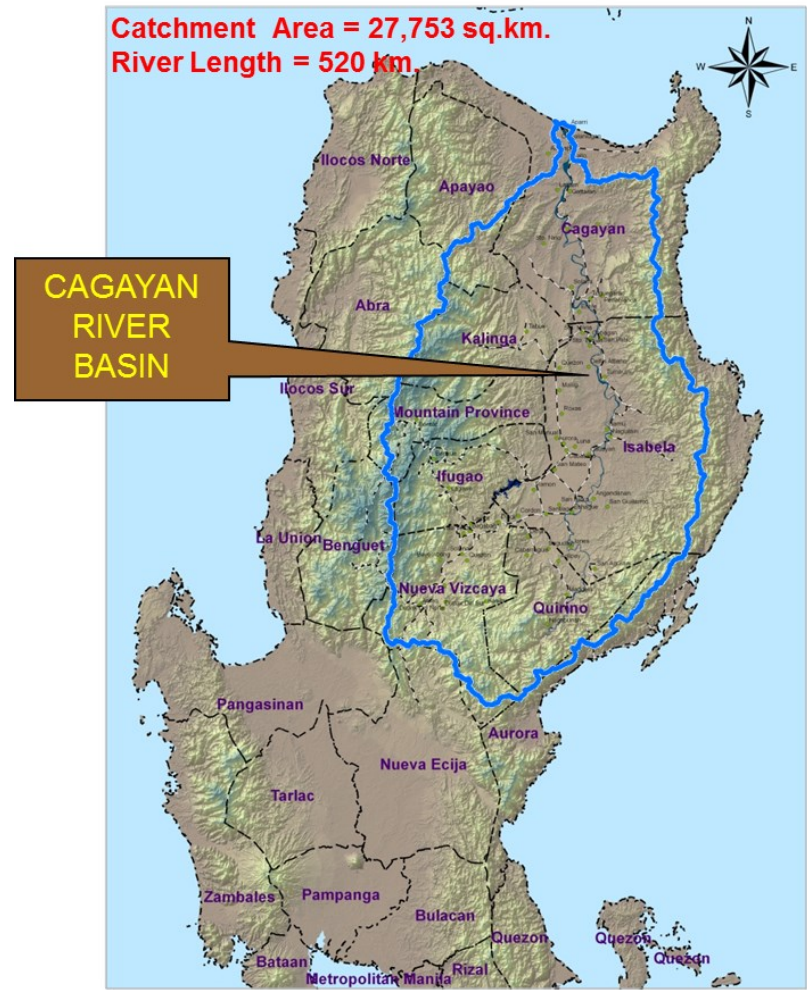


## Project Outcome

Conservation of eels measurably improves freshwater biodiversity in the Cagayan River as a result of ecologically sustainable, community-led management and exploitation, and equitable national and international trade.



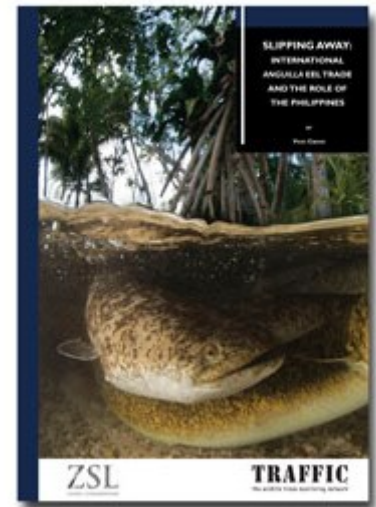
# Project location





## Output 1 progress

- Local and national legislation and policy is amended to ensure any international trade is sustainable and CITES commitments are being met.
- Trade analysis carried out by TRAFFIC.
- BFAR amending permitting to increase transparency and traceability.
- Enforcement workshop – 17-20 May.
- FAO 242 strengthening.



## Output 2 progress

- **Sustainable eel management plan for the Cagayan River Basin integrated from the community to the national level.**
- Stakeholder engagement
  - Quarterly TWG
  - Socio-economic survey
- Assessment of eel fishery
  - Market surveys / Fisheries dependent monitoring
    - Species shift / demand and price variability
- EMP drafting workshop – 22 March 2016



# Output 3 progress

- Existing Organizations Associations managing and fisheries and fisheries dependent data collection at the community level.
- Socio-economic survey
  - ~2,500 respondents
- LGU/Barangay engagement
- Focal communities identified
  - Focus group discussions
  - Capacity training for FFAs
  - Self-selected for COMSCAs





## Output 4 progress

- Aquatic survey methods are established to monitor the freshwater biodiversity in the Cagayan River Basin and key threats are mitigated against.
- Region-wide habitat surveys at key sites identified with communities.
- Standardised survey protocol adopted by BMB.
- Key threats identified.
- Establishment of first eel-focused freshwater sanctuary.



# Output 5 progress

- ~~SDG 8 funding for eel farming project and feasibility study for eel farming is complete.~~  
Feasibility study for eel farming is complete.
- Increasing external interest in eel farming in the Philippines
  - Tropical species?
  - Is community farming feasible?
  - Local resources e.g. feed.
- Management of expectations
  - Communities and Governments
  - Not a silver bullet.



## Monitoring and evaluation

- Daily e-mails – ZSL UK / Philippines; Partners; DI
- Weekly calls – ZSL UK/Philippines
- Weekly in-country staff meetings
- Monthly reports (ZSL)
- Quarterly TWG meetings
- Bi-annual reporting to Darwin
- Bi-annual Project visits
  - Timed in line with Darwin reporting
  - Workplan / Budget reviews
- Annual PDRs (ZSL)



## Monitoring and evaluation

- Key indicators
  - Focal sites / communities identified
  - Baselines established
    - Data collection
  - Interventions implemented
    - Threat mitigation
    - Stakeholder IEC / training
  - Capacity increase
    - Training workshops

## Monitoring and evaluation

- Verifying indicators
  - Survey reports
    - Consolidation and assessment of data
    - Legacy
    - Recommendations beyond project
  - Meeting and training workshop minutes
    - Stakeholder input and buy-in is crucial
  - Legal documents
    - e.g. LGU recognition of protected areas

## Monitoring and evaluation

- Change requests
  - Change requests make the project stronger.
  - Allows adaptation to changes on the ground.
  - Much of the work in this project was novel and the results were often surprising.
  - Time slippage has been a problem.
  - Personal attitude
    - First submission felt almost like failure.
    - Got over it.



## What worked / didn't work

- Scoping trip allowed building of partner relations
  - Working with implementing agencies
  - Identified national and local needs
  - Secured office space
- Under-estimated time for recruitment
  - Six month delay
  - Change request has allowed a 3 month extension
- Under-estimated workload
  - Enumerators hired
  - Budget-line flexibility

## What worked / didn't work

- TRAFFIC trade review was a very important document.
- Illegal trade is still a problem.
  - Scale was bigger than originally described.
  - Demand was very variable.
  - In-country capacity much less than initially thought.
- Government bureaucracy has slowed policy engagement and eel management plan development.
- Shift in species composition and fishery.
  - Biological fluctuations



# What worked / didn't work

- Socio-survey was over-ambitious in scale
  - Fewer questions / respondents
- However, served it's purpose:
  - HUGE engagement at national, local and individual level
    - Courtesy visits are essential but time-consuming
  - Data has fed in to EMP
  - Identified focal sites
  - Guided interventions (COMSCAs) and IEC/training needs





# What worked / didn't work

- Involving communities in habitat survey
  - Engagement
  - Buy-in to freshwater sanctuaries
  - Legacy
- Farming project indicated it was not a viable activity
- However, again, it served it's purpose:
  - Feasibility study
  - Encouraged engagement with industry stakeholders
  - Managed expectations



## Key Lessons

- There have been issues but by being adaptable the project has developed to meet the needs of the focal species, habitat and beneficiaries.
- Change requests indicate that monitoring and evaluation plans are in place and doing their job.
- Stakeholder engagement has been at the core of the work and this was essential for the project to be successful both identifying key elements of work and ensuring they were implemented.
- Good communications within the project team and between the partners are what have allowed the project to evolve.

# Acknowledgements



- Surshti Patel and Cassandra Murray (ZSL London)
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**Thanks for listening**