

Freshwater Fish Extinction

One in three European freshwater fish is threatened with extinction.

Posted: November 7, 2007, 2 a.m. EST

European eel by Ron Offermans

More than a third of Europe's freshwater fish species are threatened with extinction, according to a new study by the World Conservation Union.

Of the continent's 522 freshwater fish, 200 species are at serious risk of extinction, and 12 are already extinct.

One of the freshwater species listed is the critically endangered European eel (*Anguilla anguilla*). In the last 30 years, the number of European eels has dropped about 95 percent. The eel, which reproduces on average once every 20 years, is the only European freshwater fish that spawns along the Atlantic coast.

The extinction of the fish is largely due to human actions. Large dams built for irrigation, flood control and power generation have had major impacts on species in large rivers and have led to local extinction of numerous migratory species which has led to rivers drying up in the summer months.

Overfishing and the introduction of nonnative fish, bringing with them diseases, was also cited as a cause.