

Eels in the Classroom

The Tweed Foundation's Fish in the Classroom projects are targeted at primary school age groups with the aim to engage young people with their local rivers throughout the Tweed catchment. The children learn about the River Tweed and its incredible biodiversity while focusing on one of the Tweed's fish species.

"Eels in the Classroom" focusses on the Tweed's European Eels. European Eels used to be prolific in rivers right throughout Britain, but in the past 40 years their population has crashed by around 95%, leaving them critically endangered. The project is to help raise the awareness of the Tweed's European Eels.

The project lasts a total of six weeks during the summer term, during three of which the class will look after a tank of young eels. There would be one session planned for each week, with each lesson lasting approximately 1.5 hours and ideally taking place on the same day of each week. The lessons are as follows:

- 1. The River Tweed and Fish Tank Setup:** The pupils will learn about the River Tweed's catchment and tributaries whilst learning about the water cycle. They will look at the whole Tweed ecosystem, looking at what lives in and around the river whilst learning about food chains and webs, before discovering how to set up a fish tank.
- 2. Invertebrates:** The class take a trip to their local river to look at the river's invertebrates. They undertake kick sampling, identifying and learning about the different invertebrate groups, and learn about the importance of invertebrates in the river ecosystem.
- 3. Tweed Fish:** Pupils learn about the different fish species living in the River Tweed. An electro-fishing demonstration allows pupils to see the fish up close, learning how to identify them and why they are so important in our rivers. It's during this session too that eels are introduced into the classroom!
- 4. The European Eel:** Pupils will learn all about the European Eel, their life cycle and the challenges that they face.
- 5. Eel Stop Motion:** Here the class take what they have learned about the eels and create a stop motion animation based on the incredible life cycle of the European Eel. This is a new, engaging and very enjoyable method for reinforcing learning.
- 6. Release the eels:** The class take a trip to the river to release the eels they have been looking after.

Looking after the eels while they are in the classroom is not difficult or time consuming. The class will follow a rota to take turns in cleaning the tank and feeding the eels twice a day, as well as cleaning the filter twice a week. They will also monitor the tank conditions and eel behaviour throughout the project, taking daily records to look out for any changes or potential problems in the tank.

Having the eels in the classroom is great fun and allows the class to immerse themselves fully in the project. If you are interested in taking part in the project, or for more information, then please do get in touch. Likewise, if you would like only one or a few of the sessions to take place, then get in touch and this can be arranged.

