

Name:**Smelt***Osmerus eperlanus***UK status:**

UK SCC (formerly long-listed). Nationally scarce. Historic decline.

London status:

Rare but nationally important population in River Thames and some tidal tributaries.

Protected status:

None

Relevant London HAPs:

Tidal Thames; Rivers & Streams

Citation:

The smelt is a small, attractive fish with a highly distinctive smell of cucumber when freshly caught. Its popularity as a table fish once supported important fisheries in several maritime and estuarine cities around the UK coastline. The smelt has been in steady decline since the 19th century however, and is now a comparatively rare species. The reasons for this are predictable: increasing pollution, over-exploitation and destructive river engineering schemes, the last effecting both up-river migration as well as the actual spawning grounds. Ever-improving water quality has assisted the recovery of the species in several rivers and in particular, the River Thames. In Greater London we now have a small but nationally significant population, with spawning known to occur at the mouth of the River Wandle for example. Fish have also been caught in Bow Creek on the River Lea, at Brentford and Isleworth Aits, and mid-channel in Battersea and Greenwich Reaches. Managing agencies; Environment Agency, British Waterways, Port of London Authority, LVRPA, Lee Rivers Trust



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Conservation priorities:

- Monitor and protect known activity 'hot-spots'
- Targeted river channel habitat-creation schemes, including deployment of spawning and refuge cages

References:

Maitland, P S (2004). *The status, ecology and conservation of the Smelt in the British Isles*, in British Wildlife Vol.15 (pages 330-338).

Maitland, P S (2003). *The status of Smelt (Osmerus eperlanus) in England*. EN Research Report 516 (English Nature).