



Eels - How do you catch an eel?

Fact

- You always catch an eel with the help of an adult assistant!
- One of the best ways to catch an eel is using a net that's a bit like a laundry basket :o) with an opening that's large enough so an eel can slither into the basket to get the bait but small enough that it can't get out again.
- The net should have lots of little holes in it so that the river water can run through it easily.
- The net should have the kind of bait in it that eels love to eat like fish, bugs or meat.
- The net should be left in the river over night because that's the time when eels are active – they like it best when it's dark.
- And the opening of the net should face down the river because that's the direction that the smell of the bait will travel as the water rushes by.

Do you know

- Maori have been using baskets like this for hundreds of years. They call them Hinaki. (he-nah-key)
- You should always have an adult assistant when you got eeling (they can help you carry your net to the river and all the eels home the next day!)
- An eel is a type of fish that looks more like a snake than a fish but they have fins and gills and they live in rivers, streams and in the sea.
- An eel's body is covered with a slipper slime that helps it move through the water easily, helps protect its body and helps it escape from its predators.
- An eel can swim backwards as well as forwards – not many fish can do that!

Experiments you can do

Make your own eel net or Hinaki

What you need:

An adult assistant

An plastic old laundry basket with a lid that has lots of little holes in the sides.

An empty 2 litre fizzy bottle

Wire or nylon string

Some nylon rope

What you do:

Have your adult assistant cut a hole in the lid of the laundry basket that's no bigger than circle of the lid of a small peanut butter jar. Have them cut the bottom and top off the fizzy bottle and a then put a cut up the length of the bottle. Squeeze the bottle at one end so that the plastic overlaps each other and the bottle forms a cone shape.

Get your assistant to put a couple of holes through both pieces of the overlapping plastic at the wider end so that you can fasten it with the wire or string and have them make some holes along the bottom of the bottle so that you can attach the bottle to the lid with wire or string too.

(the overlapping plastic should have an opening at the smaller end that's big enough for an eel to push through – about the size of a toddler's fist)

Use the wire or string to tie the lid to the basket firmly and tie a rope to the basket. And there you have yourself a hinaki

Other Investigations

Find out about the Maori calendar that tells you when the next full moon is and when it's best to go eeling. Remember the Tuna Heke (heke rhymes with Becky) is the time when the eels migrate out to sea – normally around February or March. See if this is marked on the Maori calendar too.

Jokes

What is an eel's favourite card game?

Fish

From Jessie Johns