

50. ウナギの生態(1)：構造理解

If you travel by boat up the River Thames in London, you will pass a small island called Eel Pie Island. It is said that in the 16th century a woman living on that island made such delicious eel pies that the King and his court always stopped there for a snack when going from London to his country palace upstream.

For many centuries, since at least the time of the ancient Greeks, and probably longer, eels, both fresh and smoked, have been appreciated in Europe as food. The tough skin was also used in place of leather as a thong to tie together certain tools, while children used it for whipping their tops.

The European freshwater eel is found in all waters of western Europe and the Mediterranean area. By day it burrows into the mud of lakes and streams, and emerges at night to feed on whatever kinds of animal food it can find. Eel traps are therefore set in the evening in rivers where it lives. Long and slim, they are woven of willow twigs in such a way that the eel swims into the basket-like trap following the current of the river, and cannot thereafter escape. Early the following morning, the traps are inspected to see what the night's catch has been.
