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Delta Smelt Population Increases in 2011

Submitted by Sarah Langford on Wed, 12/28/2011 - 4:29pm in [Endangered and Invasive Species](#) [Water News](#)

The endangered Delta smelt population rebounded this year to its highest level in a decade, according to a state survey released last week.

The Department of Fish and Game survey showed the tiny fish is significantly more abundant than in 2010 and at its highest population level since 2001.

The Fall Midwater Trawl Survey index of Delta smelt abundance — which has been developed almost yearly since 1967 and is named after the season and type of net used to collect fish for the index — was 343 this year, while the index in 2010 was 29 and its record high was 1673 in 1970.

State scientists credited abundant rainfall in part for the species' rebound. In January, DFG will begin monitoring the spawning migration of adult Delta smelt and resulting larval Delta smelt.

While the fish is no longer at the brink of extinction, the present population is still a fraction of its historical highs. The smelt was listed as threatened under the California and federal Endangered Species Acts in 1993, and was designated as endangered in 2010 under California law.

Read the DFG's [press release](#) and a story in the [Fresno Bee](#).



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