

Drugs in river at UK's Glastonbury music festival harming fish: scientists

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Scientists found high levels of cocaine and ecstasy in the water course running downstream from Glastonbury.

High levels of illegal drugs have been found in a river running through Britain's Glastonbury music festival site, endangering a rare species of

fish and other wildlife, scientists said on Tuesday.

The levels of cocaine and MDMA—more commonly known as ecstasy—detected in the [water](#) were so high, experts said, they could be harming wildlife downstream in Whitelake River that runs through the festival grounds.

Samples taken from the river in 2019, when more than 200,000 people thronged the five-day summer festival in Somerset, southwest England, found MDMA concentrations were four times higher the week after the festival.

The damagingly high levels of cocaine in the water in particular had risen to levels that interfere with the [life cycles](#) of the rare and protected European eel found in the area, the scientists said.

Experts are urging festival attendees to use Glastonbury's official toilets in the future because it is believed the drugs enter the surrounding water sources through public urination.

Born trippy

Dan Aberg, a postgraduate student at Bangor University in north Wales who collected the data, said all [music festivals](#) were "undoubtedly" an "annual source of illicit drug release".

"Unfortunately, Glastonbury Festival's [close proximity](#) to a river results in any drugs released by festival attendees having little time to degrade in the soil before entering the fragile freshwater ecosystem," he added.



Researchers expressed concern about the effect on the life cycle of the protected European eel.

Christian Dunn, also from Bangor University, said the amount of illicit drugs being released into the water had the potential to derail conservation of the endangered eels.

"We also need to raise awareness around [drug](#) and pharmaceutical waste," Dunn said, calling the pollutants "hidden, worryingly-understudied yet potentially devastating".

Because of COVID restrictions, the [festival](#) was forced to cancel its 50th

anniversary celebrations in 2020, and again this year, after some 135,000 people purchased tickets.

Glastonbury's organisers have said they hope to hold the event in June 2022.

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