

AMERICAN EEL

MY SCIENTIFIC NAME

Anguilla rostrata

BY THE NUMBERS

If I am a female, I can grow up to 4 feet in length and weigh up to 9 pounds. Males only reach 1.5 feet in length. Females also are lighter in color, with smaller eyes and higher fins than males.

HOW TO IDENTIFY ME

When I am an adult my coloring is olive-green or brown on my back and pale green or yellow on my sides and underneath. I have long dorsal and anal fins that are joined to my tail fin with two small pectoral fins behind my gills.

WHY I MATTER AND WHAT'S BEEN HAPPENING

My species once made up over a quarter of the total fish found in Atlantic coastal streams. Dams have prevented us from reaching our feeding grounds, and have reduced the amount of good habitat for us to live in the river. And when we migrate downstream to return to the ocean, we can get caught, and sometimes even die, in turbines at hydroelectric facilities, where electricity is generated using river water.

MY STATUS

Biologists are studying my downstream migration to see if large dams that are used to generate electricity are having an effect on my journey. The biologists are also working on ways to safely move us up and downstream of dams.

DID YOU KNOW?

- American eels are the only species of freshwater eel found in North America.
- They live along the Atlantic coastline from Venezuela to Greenland and Iceland. Eels can also be found in the Great Lakes and Mississippi River (Figure 1).

- Eels have a complex lifecycle that begins far offshore in the Sargasso Sea where adults **spawn**.
- After eggs hatch, young eels drift inland with ocean currents into streams, rivers and lakes for over 3,700 miles. This journey may take many years.

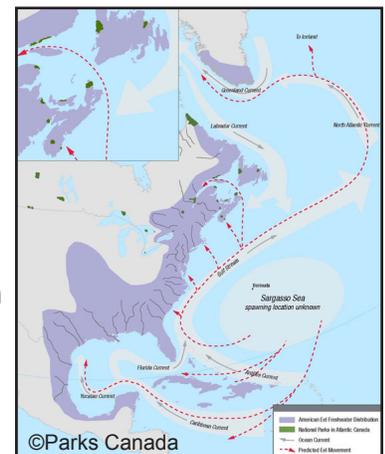


Figure 1 – Where American eel are found.

- Young eels stay in freshwater until they reach maturity, between 10 to 25 years, before migrating back to the Sargasso Sea.
- Eels hunt at night, feeding on crustaceans, small insects and other fish.
- During the day, they hide among tree snags, plants, and other types of shelters found close to shore.

Fish illustration by Laury Zicari, USFWS, Retired.



Website: www.fws.gov/fisheries



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MORE ABOUT US



Along the way, eels metamorphose, or change, through different life stages - glass eel, elver and yellow eel, as they enter freshwater. Elvers are climbing up rocks near the base of a dam.

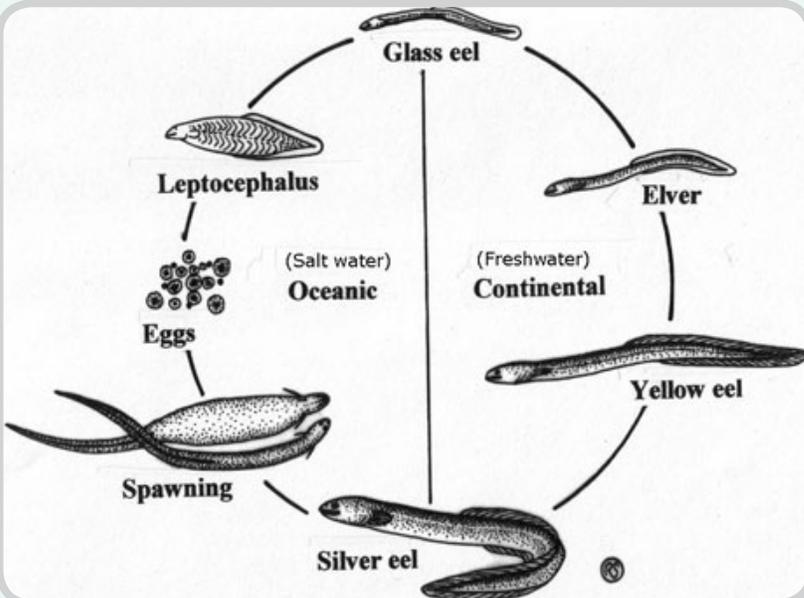


Ever heard the phrase slippery as an eel? Eels can cover their bodies with a mucous layer, making them nearly impossible to capture by hand.



Biologists study upstream migration of juvenile eels, or elvers, that are using specially designed ramps to migrate around a dam.

AMERICAN EEL LIFE CYCLE



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Learn more about the American eel!
usfwsnortheast.wordpress.com/2014/06/20/bringing-back-american-eels-in-the-susquehanna-river

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