

CONNECTICUT RIVER ATLANTIC SALMON COMMISSION

Connecticut River

American Eels

The Connecticut River Atlantic Salmon Commission and its member agencies are working with partners to restore Atlantic salmon, American shad, and other migratory fish to the Connecticut River basin through fisheries management including hatchery production and release of salmon, harvest management, habitat restoration, fishway construction, dam removal, research and public education.



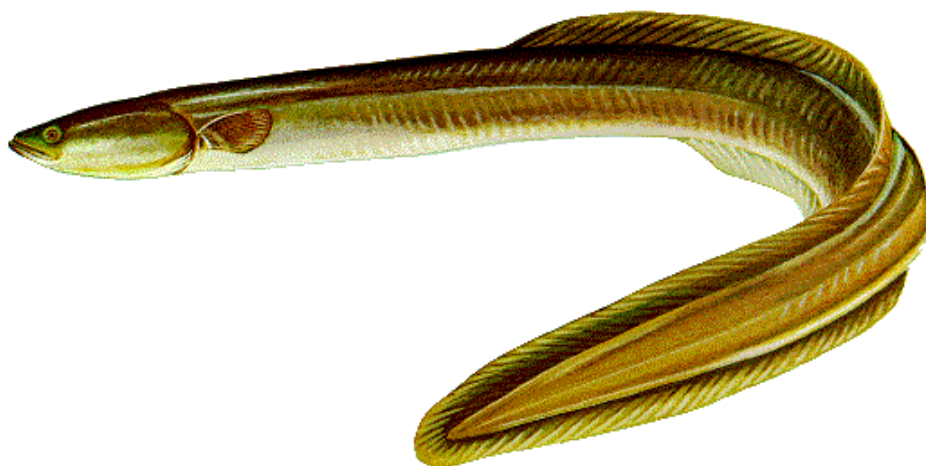
CONNECTICUT RIVER
ATLANTIC SALMON
COMMISSION

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American Eel Trivia

- (1) Mature adult eels eat (a) anything they can swallow (b) fish (c) insects (d) none of the above
- (2) Eels are most closely related to: (a) snakes (b) sea lamprey (c) fish (d) lobsters
- (3) Eel predators include: (a) striped bass (b) largemouth bass (c) eagles (d) all of the above
- (4) Most commercially caught eels are exported to: (a) Canada (b) Europe (c) Asia (d) both b & c

[Trivia Question Answers: (1) d (2) c (3) d (4) d

Eel Facts: Did You Know?

- When mature, adult or "bronze or silver eels" quit feeding in freshwater; they have 3 fins fused on their back which is gray in color, the sides are silvery-bronze colored, and the stomach is white;
- These 2-4 foot long adult fish migrate in the fall to the Caribbean south of Bermuda and they spawn in winter in the Sargasso sea;
- Each female produces about 15-20 million eggs and then she dies;
- Eels have a larval form in the ocean that turns into a clear or glass eel by winter;
- Young returning eels, glass eels, are transparent until they feed in freshwater;
- Glass eels migrate to freshwater and move upstream where they burrow into sediment and grow for another 8-23 years before they become adults;
- Male eels are half the size of females;
- Eels can live for an extended time out of water and can even crawl on land to get around a dam if the soil is moist;
- Young eels feed and move mostly at night, dining on insects, clams, crustaceans, worms and other fish—including other eels;

Sea lamprey are not closely related to eels though adults of both species are similar in size and snake-like in appearance. Lampreys are jawless, boneless primitive fish that are parasitic in the ocean. Like eels they stop feeding as adults. But, unlike eels, they spawn in freshwater.



Sea lamprey

Eel Geography

- Eels are found in Atlantic Coastal estuaries and rivers from Greenland to Northeastern South America and throughout the Connecticut River watershed, especially downstream of high dams;

Status of Eels

- The status of eel populations in the Connecticut River is unclear but may be declining especially upstream of high dams;
- CRASC is working to protect and increase numbers of eels by building eelpasses so the eels can reach historic habitat above dams;
- American eels are monitored at a few locations where Connecticut biologists have built eelpasses;
- Protection also requires state recreational harvest limits to establish a minimum size of 6 inches and maximum of 50 eels per person;

It's easiest to catch an eel in a trap one hour after sunset.