## American Eel (*Anguilla rostrata*)

### General Information

Found throughout the state in small to large rivers and from small ponds to large reservoirs, this snakelike fish is quite prevalent. It resides in freshwater but travels to the western Atlantic Ocean to spawn.

### Native Range

Eastern Gulf of Mexico, along the entire east coast of the United States, through the states bordering the Gulf of Maine to the states and provinces bordering the Gulf of St. Lawrence, to Newfoundland and Labrador. (Scott and Crossman 1973)

### Habitat Description

**Lake:** Found in large reservoirs and small lakes alike, reside in the shallow coves with silty, muddy bottoms. Reside in the substrate during the day and are active at night. Spend the winter months buried in the mud.

**River:** Found in small streams to large rivers, reside in pool areas with adequate cover in the form of under cut banks or fallen trees and branches. Substrate silt and mud. Prefer clear water but are tolerant of moderately turbid conditions.

### Optimum Habitat Requirements

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Dissolved Oxygen</th>
<th>Temperature</th>
<th>pH</th>
<th>Turbidity</th>
<th>Current</th>
<th>Diet</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Fry</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Juveniles fishes and invertebrates</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Adults fishes and invertebrates</td>
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<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td>Notes: feed at night</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Growth (mm)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Age</th>
<th>I</th>
<th>II</th>
<th>III</th>
<th>IV</th>
<th>V</th>
<th>VI</th>
<th>VII</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
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</tbody>
</table>

No Available Growth Data

Notes: Males seldom exceed 24” whereas females can achieve lengths to 40”. Females are usually greater than 20” at sexual maturity while males are usually under 18”.

### Reproduction

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Time of Year</th>
<th>Winter</th>
<th>Age Males Mature</th>
<th>V-XX</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Temperature Range</td>
<td></td>
<td>Age Females Mature</td>
<td>V-XX</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Water Depth</td>
<td>&lt; 400 ’</td>
<td>Nest</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Substrate</td>
<td></td>
<td>Egg Type</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Time of Day</td>
<td></td>
<td>Parental Care</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Critical pH</td>
<td></td>
<td>Days to Hatching</td>
<td>1-2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vegetation</td>
<td></td>
<td>Stable Water Level</td>
<td>NA</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Notes: Specific details of the spawning of the American eel are not known. They spawn in the Sargasso Sea, a western portion of the north Atlantic Ocean east of the Bahamas and South Bermuda. The larval stage lasts almost a full year. The leptocephalus (larvae) reside in the upper few hundred feet of the ocean and slowly migrate back to the eastern shore. Transform into small transparent eels (glass eels) by the time they arrive into the estuaries and rivers during March and early April. As they develop pigmentation they are considered to be elvers. Migrate into freshwater streams and lakes and will reside there until sexually mature. Late fall migrate to estuaries and sea. Usually become silvery prior to migration. Spawn once and die. High mortality with various life stages. Life history information taken from Scott and Crossman, 1973 and McCleave 1995.