

# 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

Dissolved Oxygen	
Temperature	
pH	
Turbidity	
Current	

## Diet

Fry	
Juveniles	fishes and invertebrates
Adults	fishes and invertebrates
Notes: feed at night	

## Growth (mm)

Age	I	II	III	IV	V	VI	VII
	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

Time of Year	Winter	Age Males Mature	V-XX
Temperature Range		Age Females Mature	V-XX
Water Depth	< 400'	Nest	
Substrate		Egg Type	
Time of Day		Parental Care	
Critical pH		Days to Hatching	1-2
Vegetation		Stable Water Level	NA

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.