

## WHEN AM I MOST LIKELY TO CATCH AN EEL?

- If you fish in the evening or at night
- If you fish with live bait
- If you are targeting catfish

## WHAT DO I DO IF I CATCH AN EEL?

RELEASE IT!! By law you must release the eel as soon as possible, either by cutting the line or removing the hook.

## WILL AN EEL SURVIVE IF I CUT THE LINE?

In June 2018, the Canadian Wildlife Federation and Carleton University conducted a catch-and-release experiment on American Eels to determine whether line cutting or hook removal was better for eel survival following an incidental capture. The experiment found:

- All eels survived the catch-and-release experiment, whether they were released by cutting the line or hook removal
- 87 per cent of eels had little or no sign of hooking injury after seven days
- A large proportion of the line-cut eels shed their hooks within seven days (94 per cent of lip-hooked eels, 72 per cent of deeper hooked eels)

For more information, visit

[CanadianWildlifeFederation.ca/Eels](http://CanadianWildlifeFederation.ca/Eels)

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Cover photo: Sean Landsman

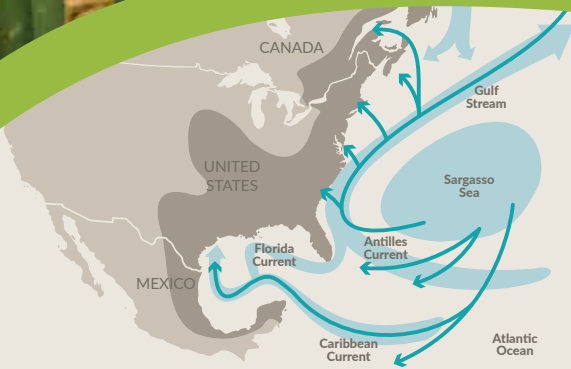


# You've Got an Eel on Your Reel – NOW WHAT?!

## BEST PRACTICES TO HELP CONSERVE THE AMERICAN EEL



CANADIAN WILDLIFE  
FEDERATION



### THE REAL DEAL ABOUT AMERICAN EELS

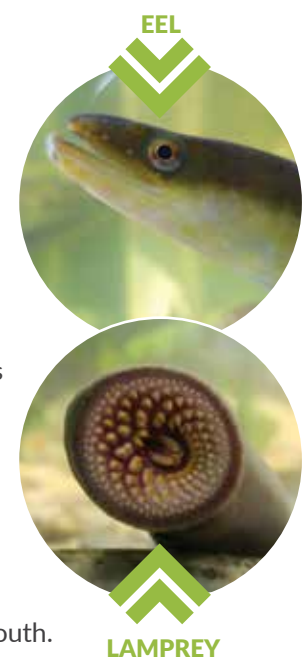
The long, narrow-bodied American Eel is not a snake or a lamprey, and definitely nothing to fear. Instead, American Eels are one of the most fascinating and vulnerable fish species in Ontario, capable of living in both salt and freshwater. Their life journey begins as small eggs in the Sargasso Sea, in the Atlantic Ocean near Bermuda. Once hatched, American Eels migrate thousands of kilometres along ocean currents to live in freshwater habitats from Venezuela all the way to southern Greenland – including the Ottawa River, the St. Lawrence River and Lake Ontario. Those that reach Ontario may be three to seven years old upon arrival. They live in their freshwater habitat for another 10 to 20 years before attempting to retrace their roots back to the ocean to spawn. American Eels spawn only once, at the end of their life – if they can make it past all the things that threaten their survival.

### WHAT THREATENS THE AMERICAN EEL?

American Eels were once common in Ontario rivers, but since the 1980s, their population has declined by more than 99 per cent. River barriers such as dams are one of the main reasons for the decline. Dam turbines can strike and kill adult eels that are attempting to migrate back to the ocean. Dams also prevent juvenile eels from accessing upstream habitat for feeding and growing. Since 2007, eels have been listed as Endangered in Ontario. This means that it is illegal to target eels when fishing, and if you capture an eel when fishing for another species, you must release it immediately.

### HOW TO TELL IF I'VE HOOKED AN AMERICAN EEL

The American Eel is easily distinguished from a snake or lamprey by the shape of its mouth and its pectoral fins on the sides of its body, behind its head and gills. Eels have a regular fish mouth with a jaw, whereas lamprey have a toothed, funnel-shaped and suctioning mouth.



Photos: Sean Landsman, Getty Images