

The American Eel (*Anguilla rostrata*)

American eels are catadromous fish: they hatch in salt water and migrate to fresh water to grow. They live along the Atlantic Coast of North America in estuaries and rivers, including the Hudson. Eels are important to a healthy river. They eat many smaller animals and are themselves food for larger creatures. Eels are also a vital part of human cultures all over the world. Eel populations have declined, but conservationists and communities are working to help eel numbers improve.

Barriers

Although eels climb over rapids and waterfalls, dams and culverts can limit their migration upstream. Removing barriers helps to restore these migratory fish.

Near the continental shelf the larvae transform into small **glass eels**, which are transparent and look more like eels.

Eel larvae are clear, flat, and leaf shaped. Known as **leptocephali** (narrow head) they float along ocean currents like the Gulf Stream to reach coastal waters.

After glass eels enter estuaries and rivers, they get darker to blend into their new environment. At this life-stage they are called **elvers**.

Eels spend years in rivers and streams, eating and growing. During this time, they are known as **yellow eels**, although they are often brown or green in color.

When eels are ready to spawn they go through one more transition and become **silver eels**. They swim back to the Sargasso Sea to spawn once and then die.

Eels hatch from **eggs** in the Sargasso Sea between Bermuda and Puerto Rico.

