

AMERICAN EEL

(06/03 ARCHIVE - NCDMF)

Stock Status — *Unknown* - The current status of the American eel stock is poorly understood. This is due to limited and non-uniform stock assessment efforts and protocols across the range of this species.

Average Commercial Landings and Value 1992-2002 – 105,767 lbs., \$192,600

2002 Commercial Landings and Value – 59,820 lbs., \$83,350

Average Recreational Landings 1992-2002 — Unknown **2002** — Unknown

Status of Fisheries Management Plan — ASMFC FMP 2000

Research and Data Needs – Studies to improve the understanding of the life history and the environmental stresses that influence stock health and abundance.

Current Minimum Size limit/Creel limit – 6 inch total length (TL) for recreational and commercial fisheries. A possession limit of 50 eels for recreational fishermen.

Harvest Season — Entire year

Size and Age at Maturity – Males 12 inches at age 4-8, Females 18 inches at age 7-12

Historical and Current Maximum Age — 85 years old

Juvenile Abundance Index Average 1992-2002 – no data for 1992-2000, Annual Young-of-Year Abundance Survey initiated in January 2001; **2001** – 55.32, **2002** – 5.97.

Habits/Habitats – Catadromous species requiring multiple habitats including ocean, estuaries, and fresh water streams and rivers. Catadromous life cycle, migrating back to spawn in the ocean (Sargasso Sea) in the winter and early spring and spending the majority of its life in brackish and freshwater. Larvae (leptocephali) develop at sea and change from glass eels into young (elvers) in nearshore oceanic waters and estuaries. Around age 2 the juvenile or yellow eel stage resembles the adult form. They inhabit estuaries, rivers, streams, and lakes and feed on invertebrates and smaller fish. Prefer areas with soft bottom and vegetation to hide in. The mature silver eel life stage occurs at the time of downstream migration, leaving the estuary for the open ocean to spawn then die. Seaward migration occurs in late summer and fall.

Interesting American Eel Links:

<http://noaa.chesapeakebay.net/spc/eel.htm>

<http://www.nanfa.org/aki/Ameel.htm>

<http://www.dfo-mpo.gc.ca/COMMUNIC/ss-marin/eel/eel.htm>

<http://www.ecoscope.com/eelbase.htm>

<http://noaa.chesapeakebay.net/spc/eel.htm>

http://www.baiteels.com/life_history.htm

For more information, see [DMF Species Leads page](#)