

While most fish are born in rivers and swim down stream to the sea, American Eels are born in the sea and swim upstream to the Elizabeth River!



## American Eel

### *Anguilla rostrata*

**Common Names:** Eel

**Lifespan:** Average of 5 years but can reach up to 20

**Size:** About 1.5 feet long with the maximum recorded at almost 5 feet

**Habitat:** Found all throughout the Elizabeth River, American Eels can live in freshwater and brackish ecosystems. Active only at night, but during the day they will hide under rocks or under sediment.

**Range:** American Eels are found along the Atlantic coast as far north and the St. Lawrence River and as far south as the eastern Gulf of Mexico. You can find them in the deeper regions of the Elizabeth River.

**Diet:** Eats worms, small fish, mollusks, and crustaceans.

**Appearance:** Eels have a greenish, yellowish-brown, or blackish body with a lighter or cream-colored belly. They do not have scales like most other fish, but they do resemble snakes with their long, slender bodies.

**Predators:** Eels are preyed upon by many animals that call our river home, such as striped bass and birds like gulls, ospreys, and eagles.

**Fun Fact:** Eels are a catadromous species. This means that they spend most of their lives in the Elizabeth River and then travel out to sea to breed. They are also very resourceful animals that are capable of wiggling through very small and shallow spaces!

**What can you do?** Make sure to dispose of trash and chemicals properly. When fishing in the Elizabeth River, make sure to learn and follow all rules about what species you can and cannot keep as well as bag limits and gear requirements.

## On-Line Resources

[https://www.fws.gov/fisheries/freshwater-fish-of-america/american\\_eel.html](https://www.fws.gov/fisheries/freshwater-fish-of-america/american_eel.html)

<https://nas.er.usgs.gov/queries/factsheet.aspx?SpeciesID=310>

[https://www.chesapeakebay.net/discover/field-guide/entry/american\\_eel](https://www.chesapeakebay.net/discover/field-guide/entry/american_eel)



[www.elizabethriver.org](http://www.elizabethriver.org)