

# NOT-SO-SCARY SPECIES

WITH AMERICORPS MEMBER ALAYNA

## AMERICAN EEL (*ANGUILLA ROSTRATA*)



The American Eel (*Anguilla rostrata*) is North America's only freshwater eel. While they live mostly in rivers and estuaries, they are catadromous, meaning they migrate into the ocean to breed. You may think of eels as slimy monsters that hide in the shadows of the water; however, these long fish are much more than they seem!

### WHY DO WE WANT THEM?

American eels act as prey, predator, and host to other species in freshwater, estuarine, and marine ecosystems. They act as an indicator species, meaning that their wellbeing signifies the wellbeing of the entire ecosystem. They are also culturally significant to many Indigenous communities in North America.

### AMERICAN EEL FUN FACTS!

- American eels only spawn in the Sargasso Sea, after which adults die and young swim to freshwater!
- They enjoy hiding close to shore in burrows, tree snags, and plant masses!
- A main goal of the Childs River restoration was to remove barriers to American eel migration, along with brook trout and river herring

### WHY SO SLIMY?

American eels are covered with a thick mucous layer that makes them slick to the touch. Research suggests that this slimy substance allows the eels to minimize friction and move easier through the water. It may also keep pathogens away from their skin!

### SHOULD I BE SCARED OF THEM?

Short answer: No! American eels do not target people and they are not electrically charged. **However, all wildlife should be given a respectful distance when being observed.** Eels will bite if threatened and could mistake a finger for food if it is placed in front of them. To avoid an interaction with an American eel, only go in the water during the day as eels are only active at night.

## REFERENCES

- [HTTPS://WWW.AMERICANOCEANS.ORG/FACTS/SEA-SNAKE-VS-EEL/](https://www.americanoceans.org/facts/sea-snake-vs-eel/)  
(PHOTO)
- [HTTPS://WWW.FWS.GOV/SPECIES/AMERICAN-EEL-ANGUILLA-ROSTRATA](https://www.fws.gov/species/american-eel-anguilla-rostrata)
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