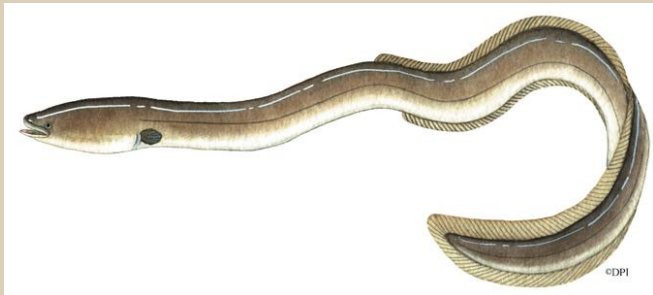


Citizen Science, Water Quality and the Short Finned Eel



Common name: Short finned eel
Scientific name: *Anguilla australis*
Wadawurrung name: Buniya

Distribution: Common in Victoria south of the Great Dividing Range

Habitat: Lives in a variety of habitats but prefers low-lying swampy streams and lakes

Biology: It is an opportunistic omnivore. Hibernates when water is less than 10°C. Male eels mature at about 8-12 years of age and female can be 10-20 years before breeding.

Value of eels: In Wudawurrung country, eels were an important food and barter item for exchanging with other aboriginal groups. Eels are now commercially fished in Victoria, NSW and Tasmania.

The eel's incredible lifecycle

Australian and New Zealand freshwater eels undertake an incredible journey of thousands of kilometers

In preparation for the long journey the eels fatten up, their fins grow larger and their eyes almost double in size.

They stop feeding and begin to migrate from rivers to sea where they swim against the ocean currents to reach their spawning ground in the Coral sea.

Immature eels, resembling a little flat leaf, begin their lives at a spawning ground in the Coral Sea off the coast of North Queensland, south east of New Guinea.

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They are carried south by the East Australian Current close to Tasmania and New Zealand. They eventually change into a small transparent eel called a glass eel and begin to move toward estuaries.

When they reach freshwater in mid winter to late spring they develop their colour and become elvers. They migrate up rivers even travelling overland to overcome obstacles such as dams and waterfalls.

Waterway health and eels: Native fish need healthy waterways

Bank, instream and aquatic vegetation to support diverse plant and animal life providing abundant food sources

Woody snags, logs and boulders to provide suitable refuge and varied flow conditions

Good quality water will support diverse populations of fish, invertebrates and waterplants providing the diet of eels

Water levels are seasonally influenced and will determine how much habitat an eel will have

Connectivity between wetland, river, estuary and sea will facilitate the journey of the eel and other migratory fish.

What can the community do for native fish? Get

involved as a citizen scientist and become a Waterwatch monitor. You will gain skills in monitoring the water quality and develop knowledge of waterway and catchment health.

Contact Waterwatch@ccma.vic.gov.au

*Eel illustration and information on native fish from Victorian Fisheries Authority vfa.vic.gov.au

