

The River Institute says “Get Real with Eels”

Diver Information Sheet



Did You Know?

- ◆ Not long ago well over a million American Eels were known to swim the waters of the St. Lawrence River in this area. Today these eels are endangered, with the population a mere fraction of what it once was.
- ◆ American Eels begin life in the Sargasso Sea (*extending south and east of Bermuda*) where adults return to spawn. The young eels (*all female*) that manage to make their way to the St. Lawrence River past predators, dams, and the eel fishery are survivors. They have journeyed over 5000 kilometres by the time they reach us here.
- ◆ The American Eel is currently listed as endangered under Ontario Endangered Species Act, 2007. The identification and protection of critical habitat has been listed as a priority for the recovery for this species.
- ◆ The River Institute is looking at critical eel habitat in the Upper St. Lawrence River, and includes citizen science opportunities for interested members of the public to assist in research.

The diving community is encouraged to report any sightings of eels in the St. Lawrence River to the St. Lawrence River Institute of Environmental Sciences and Eel Project lead Matt Windle at (613) 936-6620 or mwindle@riverinstitute.ca.

Information regarding the date, location, and habitat characteristics (depth, temperature, bottom substrate, plants, and structures such as wrecks) where eels have been sighted would be invaluable. Pictures and videos of eels in their natural habitat would also be very helpful.

If dead have been found, divers are encouraged to note the density (number of eels over a given area/distance), condition of the eel including signs of obvious injuries, and whether other species of dead fish are present.

Where possible, dead eels can be collected, bagged, and frozen, and River Institute staff can be contacted to collect the specimens for analysis.



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