

American Eel



The American eel, "pimizi" in the Algonquin language, is a fish species of great cultural, ecological, and economic significance that was once abundant in the Ottawa River or "Kichi-Sibi". Sadly, this species has suffered significant population declines in Ontario over the last century, especially within the Ottawa River watershed, the traditional territory of the Algonquin people.

The American eel has a long, snake-like body and a small pointed head with many small teeth. They have a large fin that extends from their back around the end of the tail to under their belly as well as a set of small fins behind their gill openings. Juveniles are yellowish-green or brown and adults are silver/grey with a white belly. Adult females can reach over 1 metre in length.

The American eel begins its life cycle in saltwater in the Sargasso Sea, migrates thousands of kilometres to mature in the inland freshwaters of North and Central America, and returns to its saltwater birthplace to spawn and die. This complex life cycle can take up to 50 years and makes the species especially vulnerable to impacts like hydropower dams, pollution, and climate change.

Only 1% of historic American eel populations remain in Ontario and significant recovery effort is needed to avoid a future where this species may be extirpated in the Ottawa River and its tributaries.



You Can Help!

Have you seen an American Eel?
REPORT IT!

We need to better understand American eels and their habitat in the Ottawa River watershed.

If you see or catch an American eel, please complete our online survey by scanning this QR code or visiting the [Algonquins of Ontario website](#).



Your sightings are important! The information you share will contribute to the protection and recovery of this important species.

The American eel is protected under Ontario's *Endangered Species Act*. If you catch one, it must be released unharmed.

Algonquins of Ontario

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