



sea lamprey

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Common Name	sea lamprey
Genus & Species	<i>Petromyzon marinus</i>
Family	Petromyzontidae (lampreys)
Order	Petromyzontiformes (lampreys)
Class	Agnatha (jawless fishes)

Diagnosis: The sea lamprey is cartilaginous with an elongated body reaching lengths from 64cm in landlocked habitats and up to 120cm with access to the ocean. Lampreys are jawless and characterized by a round mouth and esophagus encircled with rows of curved teeth. *P. marinus* is further identified by the presence of two dorsal fins and seven gill openings as well as the absence of paired fins. The body is grey in color with a mottled pattern dorsally.



Ecology: The sea lamprey has an anadromous life cycle; being born in nursery habitats of freshwater streams and rivers and make their way back to the saltwater environment of the sea in adulthood. Females may lay up to 100,000 eggs into a pre-dug bed in the gravel as males fertilization occurs externally.

Ammocoete larvae hatch toothless and blind and will take up to 4 years to reach maturity and migrating to the open waters of an ocean or lake. Larvae will feed upon detritus and microscopic aquatic organisms. Adults feed parasitically on healthy, large bodied fish by rasping a hole with their curved teeth exteriorly then extracting bodily fluids.

Habitat & Distribution: The native range of the sea lamprey extends from the North American Atlantic coastline from Labrador to the Gulf of Mexico to the eastern coastline of northern Africa. Although they have been introduced to the Great Lakes via the Welland Canal into Lake Erie, sea lampreys are native to Lake Ontario with access from the St. Lawrence Seaway. *P. marinus* populations are now established in all Great Lakes including many of the rivers and streams that make up the drainage basin.

Status: The sea lampreys were first reported from Lake Erie in 1921 and likely migrated from Lake Ontario through the Welland Canal after modifications to the structure in 1919. In 25 years the sea lamprey had spread through the remaining three Great Lakes and is currently well established throughout.

USGS Fact Sheet: <http://nas.er.usgs.gov/queries/FactSheet.aspx?SpeciesID=836>