



Australian Government



Native Fish Strategy

FISH FACTSHEET: LONG-FINNED EEL (SPOTTED EEL)



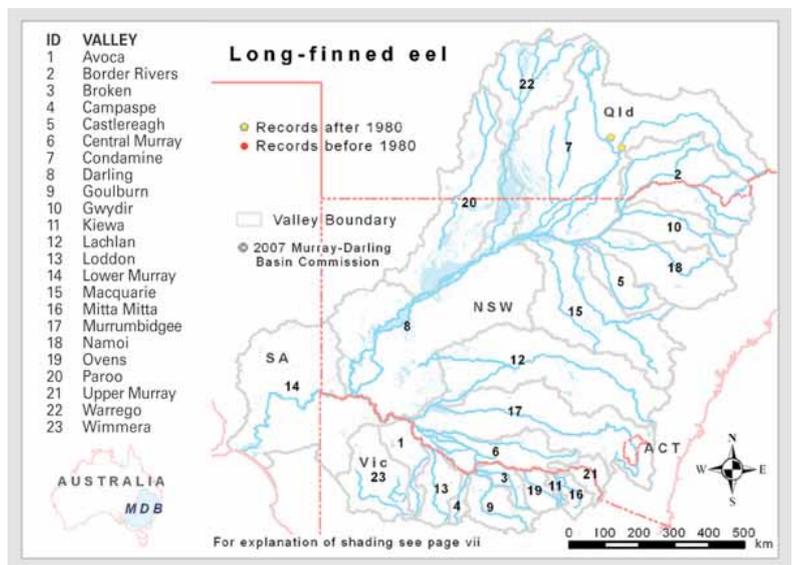
Scientific Name

Anguilla reinhardtii Steindachner, 1867

photo by Gunther Schmida

DISTRIBUTION AND ABUNDANCE

Eels are generally only recorded from coastal streams outside the Basin. This species is more commonly found in lowland sections of coastal streams although it is occasionally recorded from upland sections as well. However, it is far less abundant in upland habitats than the Short-finned eel. The only known records from the Murray-Darling Basin are in the Condamine-Balonne drainage in southern Qld and the Lower Lakes of the Murray in SA.



IDENTIFICATION

A large, elongate, cylindrical eel. Maximum size 1650mm and 22kg, but typically about 1000mm and 1-2kg. The mouth is large, extending back well past the eye. The back and sides of the body are distinctly blotched or mottled with dark brownish spots or patches. Like the Short-finned eel, the dorsal, anal and caudal fins are joined. Readily differentiated from the Short-finned eel by the spotted body pattern and length of the dorsal fin, which commences well in front of the anal fin.

BIOLOGY AND HABITAT

Similar to the Short-finned eel but more commonly recorded in rivers than lakes. Preferred habitats include undercut banks and areas with snags. The larvae of Long-finned eels (glass eels, ~58mm length) enter estuaries and migrate upstream to freshwater habitats where they may remain for up to 52 years before returning to the ocean to spawn and die. Long-finned eels in freshwater habitats generally have a restricted home range of 300 m or less, although larger movements are recorded when the eels return to the sea to spawn. Size and age range in coastal Australian rivers varies between the sexes with females generally larger and older (up to 52 years of age) than males. Size at sexual differentiation and migration also varies between the sexes: males differentiate at 42-60 cm and migrate at 44-62 cm and females at 50-76 cm and 74-142 cm, respectively. The majority of males are found in the tidal zones whilst females dominate abundance (up to 97% of individuals) in freshwater habitats.

Like the Short-finned eel, the Long-finned eel is a nocturnal predator of fish, crustaceans, molluscs and insects, and the occasional juvenile waterfowl.

POTENTIAL THREATS

None known in MDB, but in coastal systems barriers to downstream migration of adults, particularly hydroelectricity schemes and associated turbines are cause cause for concern. Overharvesting of larval eels for aquaculture and adult eels are also potential threats.

GENERAL REFERENCES

- Beumer 1979a,
- 1996; Koehn & O'Connor 1990;
- McKinnon 2002;
- Moffat & Voller 2002;
- Pease et al . 2003;
- Sloane 1984a,b;
- Walsh et al. 2003, 2004.

PDF LINKS

Fishes of the Murray-Darling Basin: An introductory Guide;

<http://mdba.gov.au/files/publications/MDBA-Fish-species-book.pdf>



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