Did You Know This About the American Eel?

Mi'kmaq Uses: Eel was used in many Mi'kmaq traditions, ceremonies and was a valued resource.

TRADITIONAL – It's a traditional animal for the Mi'kmaq people, used for generations for food to medicine.

CEREMONIES – Eel were used in many ceremonies, including a young man's first harvest, etc.

FOOD – Eels were and still are used for food during tough Times for the Mi'kmaq.

HARVESTING – Traditionally harvest using spears, but also can use eel pots. Harvest what you need and use all aspects of the eel.

HEALING – Mi'kmaq used almost every aspect of the eel for healing treatments. (ex. Eel skins used for sprains, ties. Eel oil provided treatment for infections (ear infections))

MEDICINAL – Eels were used for medicine.

NETUKULIMK – Mi'kmaq belief on how we should keep our land and resources as natural as possible; To give and take without harming or affecting the natural environment.

RESPECT – Respect the eel and all animals as if it were a human or spirit, its part of Mi'kmaq netukulimk.

EQUALLIFE – Mi'kmaq tradition is to represent all life equal, treat with respect and gratitude.

SPIRITUAL – Eels were used to calm and comfort the sick/dying as they move into the Spirit World.

SPEAR – Traditional Mi'kmaq fishing tool for eels.

SHARING – Important part of Mi'kmaq culture. Share your food (eel) with others, especially with those who are elderly/young or injured, thus cannot hunt for food.

Life Cycle: The eel changes a few times throughout its life.

LEPTOCEPHALI – Transparent larval stage that resembles a leaf or ribbon flowing through the water current.

TRANSPARENT – Eels are transparent during larval and first non-larval stages in life.

GLASS EEL – Small transparent eels, not larvae.

YELLOW – After glass eel, the next stage in life is yellow. This is when they are at their peak, and are very active in travel and in hunting.

EEL – An elongated fish, with jaws and their fins are fused together usually for one fin that runs along the eel where the dorsal and caudal would be.

SILVER – Old reproductive stage in life.

REPRODUCTION – Only reproduce once in their life.

Migration: From the Sargasso Sea to all over North and South America in rivers and streams.

MIGRATE – Eels migrate from Ocean to river, and rivers to the Ocean.

SARGASSO SEA – A body of water off the Southern US where most eels start and end their lives.

SALTWATER – Where most eels are born and die, migrate away from saltwater to freshwater.

FRESHWATER – Where some eels migrate to live and feed.

HABITAT – Where an organism lives or calls home.

By: Charles Marshall, Research & Education Assistant Mi'kmaw Conservation Group. Some source information from “Netukulimk: Bras d'Or Lakes Eel” by UINR as seen in the August 2012 issue of MMNN.
The Eelmazing Maze
Take the American eel through its journey to the Sargasso Sea so it can safely release its eggs.

The American eel starts its life in the Sargasso Sea in the Atlantic Ocean. Then it floats and swims to rivers and streams across North and South America. It spends most of its life in freshwater. Once it is time to reproduce, it goes back to the Sargasso Sea. This is where it was born in saltwater. Help the American eel return safely to its breeding grounds.

Predators are animals that feed on eels. The eel has very few predators. They are: porbeagle sharks, barracudas, grouper fish, humans and, sometimes, seabirds.

- The net represents humans; watch out so they don’t catch you!
- Porbeagle sharks, keep your eyes open, they’re one of the American eel’s biggest predators!
- Barracudas, this nasty fish is hungry and loves to feed on eels.
- Grouper fish is a large fish with a large appetite. Eel is its favorite meal on the menu.

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The Confederacy of Mainland Mi’kmaq