

Lamprey

Geotria australis

Native

Declining

Photo: Bruno David

This is a primitive animal which superficially look similar to eels with their elongated body shape. Lamprey do not have jaws, instead, they have a large sucking disk as a mouth which they use to attach themselves to larger host animals where they act as parasites, feeding off the flesh and juices of their host. This parasitic phase takes place in the ocean during their adult phase.

Lamprey come into freshwater after 3-4 years at sea and migrate upstream to spawn many thousands of eggs (c. 1mm). Once having reproduced, the adults die. The larvae hatch and slowly make their way downstream spending 4-5 years in freshwater as filter feeders before moving into the ocean.

Hatchlings (ammocoete) resemble small eels because of their shape and colour.

