

# SEA LAMPREY

*(Petromyzon marinus)*

**Oneida Lake Status:**  
**Rare**



*Sea lamprey attached to lake trout*  
USGS



*Sea lamprey mouth*  
USEPA

- Present in Oneida Lake since the early 1900s
- Parasitic on adult fish
- Length 12 to 24 inches

Sea lamprey were first identified in Lake Ontario in 1835 and have occupied Oneida Lake drainages since the early 1900s. Exactly how they arrived in Oneida Lake is unclear. They may have been stocked, migrated through canals or used as baitfish.

Sea lamprey have a mottled brown appearance and may grow as long as two feet. Despite their length, they usually weigh less than one pound. They have two dorsal (back) fins and a single ventral (belly) fin that have a reddish brown color near their edges.

Larval lamprey are called ammocoetes and live in streams like Fish Creek for 4 to 5 years. They then transform into the parasitic adult stage and enter Oneida Lake to feed on fish.

It was common to see wounding by parasitic lamprey on Oneida Lake fish like ciscoes, white suckers, and burbot in the 1970s. Sea lamprey populations are now controlled in Fish Creek and are rarely reported in the lake.



*Sea lamprey illustration*  
*Penobscot River Restoration Project*

Sea lamprey are parasitic as adults; using their sharp concentric rows of teeth, they attach themselves to the host fish and scrape a hole through skin through which they suck out body fluids and flesh.

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