

chestnut lamprey

Ichthyomyzon castaneus

Kingdom: Animalia

Phylum: Chordata

Class: Cephalaspidomorphi

Order: Petromyzontiformes

Family: Petromyzontidae

ILLINOIS STATUS

common, native

FEATURES

The chestnut lamprey larva may grow to six inches or more in length. The larva does not have eyes, and its mouth is shaped like a horseshoe. The adult's mouth is as wide or wider than the head and contains sharp teeth. A cartilage skeleton supports the yellow or tan body. This fish has one dorsal fin.

BEHAVIORS

The chestnut lamprey lives in lakes and streams. This fish reaches maturity at a length of 10 to 12 inches. The adults move into streams to spawn in late winter and spring. The female may deposit more than 42,000 eggs in a nest that is hollowed out on the stream bottom. The ammocoete is the blind, larval form that hatches from the egg. It burrows into the stream bottom with its head sticking out to filter microscopic organisms that pass by. The larval stage lasts three to six years. The adult may live about 18 months, but it feeds for only about five months midway through its life span. The adult chestnut lamprey is parasitic on fishes. It attaches to a fish and scrapes a hole in the body through which it may suck out blood and tissue fluids. After feeding on a fish in this manner for several days, the lamprey drops off. The fish is generally not killed directly by the attack but may die due to infections that invade through the wound.



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inside of mouth

ILLINOIS RANGE



Permanent

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Aquatic Habitats

lakes, ponds and reservoirs; rivers and streams

Woodland Habitats

none

Prairie and Edge Habitats

none