

Anguilla rostrata

By [Frederick W. Schuele](#)

Editor's note: *Anguilla rostrata* is the Latin name for the American Eel which is a migratory species whose life cycle includes both marine and freshwater areas. It breeds in the warm waters in the vicinity of the Sargasso Sea and Barbados. The translucent young (sometimes called *leptocephali*) then are carried by currents toward the rivers and streams which drain into the Atlantic Ocean of eastern North America, southwest Greenland, and the north coast of South America and where, over a number of years, they develop into adults. Notwithstanding the adaptive resiliency of this species, human destruction of their freshwater habitat through pollution and countless dams is making it ever more difficult for the eels to survive. This poem was published in *Sea Wind*, Bulletin of Ocean Voice International, Vol. 14, No. 3, page 24.

*I am a balance of life and death and migration:
n less a billion may not be enough*

*Are you still watching for me?
Am I still here?*

*Go down to the sunny spring shore to check
Am I still here?*

*Go down to the silver autumn sound and check
Am I still here?*

*Where are the salt marshes and the knothole ponds?
Where has Lake Ontario gone?
Where is Kemptville Creek?
Am I still here?*

*Eels can live anywhere: even in a canal
Eels can live anywhere: even in sewage
Eels can live anywhere: even in a clearcut
Eels can live anywhere: even in a subdivision
Eels can live anywhere: even in a landfill*

*I am the eternal bounty of the sea washing up onto your shore.
Pickle me in leachate, smoke me with PCB's;
Do not weep for me:
 there will be no mitigation when I am gone.*

*I will be more invisible than leptocephali when I am gone
Black will be the Sargasso depths when I am gone — black as today.*

Clear will be the the Atlantic waters — clear as today.

Watch for my death

Watch for my going

Watch for me

Come down to the shore to be sure this spring has come.

As silent as my coming will be the spring when I am gone:

n less a billion may not be enough.

.....Bishops Mills, Ontario, Canada, 20 November 1990

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