

KATAQ

Kataq EELS in the Bras d'Or Lakes

From 2007-2010 UINR, with the help of Mi'kmaq eel fishers, researched eels in the Bras d'Or Lakes.

From our research, we learned that:

- Eels caught by our Mi'kmaq fishers are between 7 and 19 years old.
- For every 20 cm an eel grows, its weight triples.
- About half of the eels in the Bras d'Or Lakes carry a parasite in their swimbladder. This does not affect the health of humans and we are unsure how it affects eels.
- Eels in Whycomough, Wagmatcook, and Malikewe'j areas have more parasites than those found in Eskasoni and Potlotek.

From our conversations with fishers and Elders, some of what we learned includes:

- Eels are common to many habitats in the Bras d'Or Lakes but they favour certain habitats in different seasons.
- Eel grass is very important habitat for eels as it slows down the current of water and is host to many fish that are food for eels.
- Little eel fishing takes place in freshwater compared to the saltier water of the Bras d'Or Lakes.



- Eels burrow in the mud later in the season.
- Both humans and Mother Nature have a role to play in eel conservation.
- It takes longer to catch eels now than it did 10 to 15 years ago. Some areas, for example Potlotek, have very few eels.
- Concern was expressed about the effects of water quality, increasing water temperature, invasive species, and practices of the non-Mi'kmaq recreational eel spear fishery on the eel population in the Bras d'Or Lakes.



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