



## silver lamprey

*Ichthyomyzon unicuspis*

Kingdom: Animalia  
Division/Phylum: Chordata  
Class: Agnatha  
Order: Petromyzoniformes  
Family: Petromyzontidae

### FEATURES

The silver lamprey has a shallow notch in the dorsal fin. When held open, its mouth disc is wider than its head. Larvae and immatures are yellow in color while adults are blue to black. Larvae may reach seven inches in length while full grown adults may be about 15 inches long.

### BEHAVIORS

The silver lamprey may be found in the Mississippi, Illinois, Kaskaskia, Ohio and Wabash rivers in Illinois. This fish lives in large rivers and lakes and spawns in spring in medium-sized streams with sand and gravel riffles. The ammocoete is the blind, larval form which hatches from the egg. It burrows into the stream bottom with its head sticking out to filter microscopic organisms that pass by. Larval development of the silver lamprey takes four to seven years. The adult form lives for about one year. The adult is an external parasite of 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.

### HABITATS

- bottomland forests
- coniferous forest
- southern Illinois lowlands
- upland deciduous forest

### ILLINOIS STATUS

- common
- endangered
- threatened
- native
- exotic

### ILLINOIS RANGE

Permanent resident: Mississippi, Illinois, Kaskaskia, Ohio and Wabash rivers border counties

Summer resident:

Migrant:

Winter resident:

### BIBLIOGRAPHY

Illinois Department of Natural Resources. 1999.

Biodiversity of Illinois, Volume 2: Woodland Habitats CD-ROM.