

# Shortfin eel / tuna matamoe

## *Anguilla australis*

**Native**

**Not threatened**

Shortfin eels are found in New Zealand, Australia and throughout the South Pacific. They are common in the Waikato living mainly in lowland waterways and generally not going as far upriver as the longfin eel (tuna ōrea / *Anguilla dieffenbachii*). They prefer cover and primarily eat aquatic insects, snails, crustaceans and once they grow large enough, they also eat other fish.

Shortfin eels may reach lengths of up to 1200 millimetres and weigh around 3.5 kilograms. The larger, heavier shortfin eels are typically females most males only reaching 600 millimetres. Adults mature at around 15 (males) and 30 (females) years of age. The adults migrate to somewhere near the western subtropical Pacific islands (perhaps Fiji/ Tahiti area) to spawn 1 to 3 million eggs. The larvae return, via ocean currents, to freshwater ecosystems. Both shortfin and longfin eels reproduce only once and will die after reproducing. Therefore, it is only the offspring that return to fresh waters, and any eels seen in fresh water have never spawned.

The most distinctive feature of the shortfin is the difference in origin between the dorsal and anal fins. On the shortfin, the difference in origin is small (both originating halfway along the eel) whereas on the longfin, the dorsal fin begins two-thirds of the way along the back (see photo).

Shortfins are more abundant than the threatened longfin, and it is appreciated if members of the public returned longfins to the stream when caught.

