

CONNECTICUT WEEKLY DIADROMOUS FISH REPORT
 Report Date: May 5, 2020



This is a report generated by the Connecticut Department of Energy and Environmental Protection/Fisheries Division- Diadromous Program. For more information, contact Steve Gephard, 860/447-4316. For more information about fish runs on the Connecticut River visit the USFWS website at www.fws.gov/r5crc. For more information about Atlantic salmon, visit the Connecticut River Salmon Association at www.ctriversalmon.org.

CONNECTICUT RIVER LOCATIONS

FISHWAY (RIVER)	ATLANTIC SALMON	AMER. SHAD	ALEWIFE	BLUEBACK HERRING	GIZZARD SHAD	STRIPED BASS	SEA LAMPREY	STURGEON/ TROUT++	AMER. EEL
Rainbow* (Farmington)	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Leesville (Salmon)	0	-	-	0	-	-	0**	0	0
StanChem* (Mattabesset)	0	0	62	0	2	-	3	0	2
Moulson Pond* (Eightmile)	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	-
Mary Steube* (Mill Brook)	-	-	35,572	-	-	-	-	-	- -
Rogers Lake+ (Mill Brook)			2,314						
West Springfield (Westfield- MA)	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Holyoke (Connecticut- MA)	0	7,740	0	2	1	0	1	0	0
Manhan River* (Manhan- MA)	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Turners Falls* (Connecticut- MA)	0	0	-	0	0	0	0	-	-
Vernon* (Connecticut- VT)	0	0	-	0	0	0	0	-	0
Bellows Falls* (Connecticut- VT)	0	0	-	0	0	0	0	-	0
Wilder* (Connecticut- VT)	0	-	-	-	-	-	0	-	0
Other (all sites)	0								
TOTALS=	0	7,740	35,634	2	3	0	4	0	2
(last year's totals)	3	318,707	11,308	5,113	366	207	20,479	20/0	0

Fishways listed in gray font above are not yet opened for the season. In some cases, the fishways will be opened soon. In the case of the fishways on the Connecticut River, some fishways are not opened until significant numbers of fish pass through the fishway immediately downstream of them. If that never happens, the fishway may not be opened during the season.

*There is a video camera that records passage. There is a considerable lag between the date a tape is recorded and when staff is able to count fish from the tape, so these numbers will not represent up-to-date counts until after the end of spring season.** Population estimates based on end-of-the-season nest surveys. +There is an electronic fish counter at this fishway. ++Shortnose Sturgeon (Holyoke)/Sea-run Trout (other locations) NOTE: All fish that pass through the Turners Falls, Vernon, Bellows Falls, and Wilder fishways had to first go through the Holyoke Fishlift where they were counted. Therefore those fish are not included in the totals at the bottom. The same for Rogers Lake—they first pass through Mary Steube and therefore won't be counted as part of the total.

COMMENTS:

Has spring finally arrived? The Connecticut River is at typical levels (30,000 cfs and low enough for Holyoke to operate) and typical temperatures (12 C or 54 F). Holyoke is now lifting shad and that number is likely to shoot up this coming week. I'm seeing boned shad for sale at stores in the lower river valley selling shad that could not get it last year. But the big news is the arrival of Blueback Herring. With the warm weekend weather, they came on like gangbusters and are all the way to Holyoke and in most tributaries. After long last, we're finally seeing fish on the Eightmile at Moulson Pond, although we don't have any hard numbers to report until Valinn gets caught up with the video record. Thousands were below the dam and the fishway (more than in recent years). David Bingham sent a video but it is too large to share. Kevin netted fish from the fishway and got both Bluebacks and Alewives. I snorkeled Leesville Sunday and saw both species but Bluebacks were definitely dominant. And small! Lots of small Bluebacks. We have lots of eyes on the Salmon River area and all of our reporters are seeing lots of fish in the river, Pine Brook, and Moodus River. A good wave in Higganum Creek below the falls. The Connecticut River Conservancy has volunteers out in the upper part of the state but neither they nor our staff are seeing herring in tributaries north of Middletown. It is way too early to make any conclusions about the Blueback run but I'll say that this is probably the strongest first wave of Bluebacks (and at the very beginning of the run) that we've seen in years. But as we're celebrating the Bluebacks, let's not fail to mention the phenomenal run we had in Mill Brook in Old Lyme this year. They are still coming up and we have set a new record for the number of fish passing the Mary Steube fishway and the Rogers Lake Fishway. Last year was the first year we passed fish into Rogers Lake (285). We have surpassed 2,000 this year. Thanks go to the Yale University crew for taking charge of that fishway and trap this year. The success on Mill Brook is likely due to many factors including control of beavers and breaching of their dams, better fishway operation, perhaps an increase in sea survival, but definitely the transplantation of Alewives from Bride Brook into the lake over the past few years. Lots of osprey flying around with river herring in their talons. While we are pleased that the Atlantic Herring fishery off southern New England was closed this past winter, eliminating that source of possible bycatch of river herring, the Natural Resource Defense Council is not satisfied over the federal management of river herring and has filed suit: <https://www.nrdc.org/media/2020/200504>

A few Sea Lampreys are showing up—not many yet. In my snorkeling I was surprised at the lack of many other species, including Tesselated Darters, Smallmouth Bass, and only a couple of Striped Bass. There is a big school of Spottail Shiners at Leesville and still plenty of White Suckers, although they seem on the small side and not many displaying spawning colors. I saw two Atlantic Salmon smolts heading to sea and while the Rainbow Fishway has yet to pass much going up, there seems to be a strong Atlantic Salmon smolt run going down, past the window. Bruce's planned fry stocking of the Farmington River has been delayed due to high, cold water. Hopefully, next week. Bruce is reviewing the video files for StanChem and reported seeing a down-running beaver.

The CTDEEP Fisheries Division has developed an Instagram page at <https://www.instagram.com/ctfishandwildlife...>



Spawning Blueback Herring below the Moulson Pond Fishway.



This hefty Brown Trout was caught by Ryan Ammerman in the lower Connecticut River. While not bright silver like most sea-run trout, this has a sheen to it that is typical of big river/estuarine trout. We couldn't get a scale salmon to confirm its life history because Ryan released it, but it is likely a sea- or river-run fish.

OTHER LOCATIONS WITHIN CONNECTICUT

FISHWAY (RIVER)	AMER. SHAD	ALEWIFE	BLUEBACK HERRING	GIZZARD SHAD	STRIPED BASS	SEA LAMPREY	SEA-RUN TROUT	AMER. EEL
Greeneville* (Shetucket R., Norwich)	60	111	0	1	0	0	0	0
Taftville* (Shetucket R., Norwich)	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Scotland* (Shetucket R. Windham)	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Tunnel* (Quinebaug R., Preston)	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Kinneytown* (Naugatuck R., Seymour)	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	
Hallville Pond* (Poquetanuck Br. Preston)	-	18	0	(plenty of trout)		0	0	0
Jordan Brook ** (Jordan Brook, Waterford)	-	172	-	-	-	-	-	-
Latimers Brook** (Latimers Br., E.Lyme)	-	16,031	-	-	-	-	-	-
Gortons Pond* (Pattaganset R., E.Lyme)		71		(no additional data expected; had to take counter to Brides)				
Brides Brook** (Brides Brook, E.Lyme)		402,347						
Fishing Brook** (Fishing Brook, OSaybrook)		11,762						
Chapmans Pond* (Menunketesuck R., Clinton)		228	0	0	0	0	0	0
Branford Supply Pond Dam** 113 (Queach Br., Branford)			-	-	-	-	-	-
Lower Guilford Lake** (East River, Guilford)		291	0	-	-	-	-	-
Haakonsen Fishway* 0 (Quinnipiac R., Wallingford)	0	316	0	7	0	24	0	0
Hanover Pond Fishway* (Quinnipiac River, Meriden)		1	0	0	-	25	-	0
Bunnells Pond* (Peqonnock R., Bridgeport)		1,000s this week	Open and operating but no videography this season due to COVID-19					
Mianus River Pond* ** (Mianus R., Greenwich)		1,951	0	0	0	0	0	-

*Fish passage is video-recorded and counts are made off of tapes several days later so these data are always lagged a little behind. This report covers passage up to the following dates for these fishways:

Greeneville= 5/4 Taftville= na Occum= na Tunnel= na Kinneytown= 5/4 Haakonsen= 5/4 Hallville= 5/4 Hanover= 5/4

Bunnells= na Chapmans= 5/4 **These locations have an electronic fish counter and are used as index sites for river herring runs. The counter is checked daily Monday-Friday. Monday counts typically include all weekend passage. These counts are usually up-to-date but some may lag behind a day or two, occasionally.

Counts in parentheses indicate numbers seen in a run that is now over and no further fish were counted during the past week. Typically used for alewife runs later in June.

COMMENTS:

Last week I said that the time when the runs will ‘explode’ keeps getting put off due to the lack of warm weather. Well, it happened over the week with that nice weather. Water temperatures shot up and so did the fish. Sadly, last night and tonight parts of the state are under frost warnings so the temperatures will go back down again, as will the fish counts. But all numbers went up and the numbers are finally starting to spread westward. First, we should acknowledge that we set a new record at Bride Brook—over 402,000 Alewives and a few are still coming in, although we think it is just about over. Fishing Brook and Latimers continued to build on strong numbers. Last week, we had reported fish crowding below the Darrow Pond Dam upstream of Latimers. They came back this week and we netted some up and threw them in the pond. We’ll look for more opportunities to do that. The lower Shetucket and Yantic rivers were packed with river herring this past week and Norwich Public Utilities got the Greenville lift going after the high water events and is started to pass fish. Taftville is still not fully open due to high water but the other fishways in that system are operating but not seeing any fish yet. We started to pick up numbers at Haakonsen, the gateway fishway for the Quinnipiac River. Dennis Bennett has been reporting a lot of fish in the lower river ice ponds and heading upstream on Waterman’s Brook but finally they are moving upstream past Wallingford. Hanover Pond has passed its first Alewife and Sea Lamprey of the season but still a lot of water spilling there and they had computer problems so they may have missed some fish. Patrick opened up the eel pass for the season and said the young eels were swarming around his boots as he set up the pump. Also a lot of water spilling over at Kinneytown, which is missing some boards. We don’t expect to see any fish passing there until that spill subsides. Jon at Save the Sound is still getting Alewives at Konolds and Hyde Pond. Matt McKenzie reported that the ospreys fishing the mouth of Fort Hill Brook in Groton were making a good living on river herring this past week but the brook was pretty muddy farther upstream due to run off from a construction site. Ray and Nick Baldwin still haven’t observed any Alewives at the Clark’s Pond Fishway in Milford and no birds, either. We don’t have a lot of reports from Fairfield County but you can see that the fish are rolling into Bunnells, even if we can’t count them. Our new Fairfield observer Brendan Murphy is also seeing the fish at Bunnells and lots of birds on the Mill River in Fairfield, all the way up to the Perry Pond area. No one has reported any fish at Sasco Brook yet. We would love to hear of reports of river herring getting up over the now-breached Bulkley Pond Dam.

So, in summary, the warm weather got fish moving all over the state: definitely East and Connecticut River, moderately in the central coast, and in spots in the west. Alewives are dwindling in the east but seemingly building in the central and west. There could be considerable overlap in those areas this year (as there is now on the Connecticut River) if the cool temperatures prolong the Alewife run while the Bluebacks come in.

Eel Counts- Fishing Brook = 7,260 glass/55 yellow; Chapmans Pond= 4,028 glass/83 yellow; Mill River Eel Trap= 0 glass/0 yellow; Hanover Pond= 0 yellow; Greenville Eel Lift= 0 glass/0 yellow. Occum= 0 yellow eels; Kinneytown= 0 yellow.

My weekly Diadromous Fish Radio show is live on iCRV (www.iCRVradio.com) at 8:00 am on Wednesdays. Due to the COVID situation, I call in rather than sit in the studio. If you can’t tune in at 8:00 am, listen to it at any time: www.icrvradio.com/programs/program/50. They archive the shows.



Seasonal Charlie Dyke releasing Alewives into Darrow Pond. The fish were congregated once again below the dam and we netted up a bunch and tossed them into the pond. This kind of ‘fish rodeo’ was done annually below the Wallace Dam on the Quinnipiac River before we built the Haakonsen Fishway.



Gregg Dancho from the Beardsley Park Zoo sent in this photo of Black Crowned Night Herons congregating below the Bunnells Pond Dam, waiting for the evening Alewife run. They appear to be social-distancing on the fishway railing.