

CONNECTICUT WEEKLY DIADROMOUS FISH REPORT

Report Date: April 19, 2011



This is a report generated by the Connecticut Department of Environmental Protection/ Inland Fisheries Division- Diadromous Program. For more information, contact Steve Gephard, 860/447-4316. For more information about fish runs on the Connecticut River call the USFWS Hotline at 413/548-9628 or 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	SEA-RUN TROUT	AMER. EEL
Rainbow (Farmington)	0	0	0	0	0	0	0*	0	0
Leesville (Salmon)	0	-	-	0	-	-	0***	0	0
Moulson Pond (Eightmile)	0	-	1,000s	0	0	0	0***	0	-
Mary Steube⁺ (Mill Brook)	-	-	2,226	-	-	-	-	-	-
WestSpringfield (Westfield- MA)	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Holyoke (Connecticut- MA)	0/0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Turners Falls (Connecticut- MA)	0/0	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	-	0
Wilder (Connecticut- VT)	0/0	-	-	-	-	-	0	-	0
Other (all sites)	0/0								
TOTALS=	0/0	0	>3,000	0++	0	0	0	0	0
(last year's totals)	50/10	168,430	10000s	92++	370	297	44,711	5	542

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.

* The number before the slash indicates the total number of salmon seen at the fishway that were not counted at downstream fishways. The number after the slash is the number of those fish that were allowed to continue upstream of the dam. The others were captured for breeding.

**Many of these species move at night. There is a video camera that records overnight passage when staff is not present. So this count is a combination of real-time counts and video counts. 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. ++This total does not include the imprecise estimates at Moulson Pond Fishway.

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.

COMMENTS:

The Connecticut River is higher than we've seen it in recent years. It was just about at 90,000 cfs and has now come back down to around 75,000. It was the first time in many years that the pier behind the Goodspeed Opera House in East Haddam was overtopped. Of course, all the usual flooding occurrences are happening: Rt. 17A in Portland, Salmon River boat launch, Wethersfield, Rocky Hill, Glastonbury Great Meadows, and along Pleasant Street in Windsor. This is way too high to operate the Holyoke Dam Fishlift, so that is being delayed. This is clearly going to be a late spring. According to NOAA, there are still areas in the Presidential Range and parts of northern VT that have over a foot of snow on the ground. Still no reports of shad. I snorkeled the Salmon River late last week and the alewives had backed out after the heavy rains but there were plenty of white suckers, a few yellow perch, and two darters. This is consistent with other reports. The Lyme Land Conservation Trust reported hundreds of alewives in the lower fishway and alewives spawning above the fishway earlier in the week but they dropped back with the added rain, too. Perch and suckers are common and they even saw a chain pickerel in the fishway. While it must have been in the lower section of the fishway since pickerel can't handle a steep pass style fishway, it is still fun to see it. The Mary Steube Fishway in Old Lyme counted 1,217 alewives this past week, more than doubling its seasonal total.

The latest spate on the Salmon River was a 2 year flood and overtopped the fishway, clogging all of the gates and depositing a mess on top of the protective grates. Bruce Williams and his crew was scheduled to stock salmon fry on Monday but the streams were so high, that could not be done, so they changed course and went to Leesville and cleaned it up and got it operational again. The fry stocking schedule has been disrupted by the streamflows. We can't stock fry in high water or else all fish would just be swept downstream. During these times, we often re-arrange our schedule and stock small brooks first since they come back down to normal levels sooner than the larger rivers. The Farmington is roaring along at around 4,000 cfs as the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers and the MDC continue to dump water from Colebrook Reservoir in an attempt to lower that water level by nearly five feet. Rainbow is spilling but keeping its boards. The Farmington River Power Company has already replaced most of the flashboards once this season. Tim Wildman and I were going to start sampling emigrating Atlantic salmon smolts at the Rainbow Dam bypass but the water is too high to do so. When the dam spills, all the smolts go over the dam rather than using the bypass, so running the sampler is pointless.

We logged a new species in the window at Rainbow. Alert seasonal employee Jessica Bell documented it in the photo below. We believe it swam into the exit pool from the headpond and got swept down the fishway. Unlike most birds, cormorants need a long "runway" to take off and the fishway pools are only 10 feet long and don't offer that. We netted the bird and showed it the door.



Hey, what's a fish report without a photo of fish! Alewives like these are slowly making their way up the Connecticut River and into tributaries. (Photo by Julie Larson Maher)



This is the viewing window of the Rainbow Dam Fishway, where we count salmon, shad, river herring, sea lamprey, and—oh yes—cormorants! A new species for Rainbow!

OTHER LOCATIONS WITHIN CONNECTICUT

FISHWAY (RIVER)	AMER. <u>SHAD</u>	<u>ALEWIFE</u>	<u>BLUEBACK HERRING</u>	<u>GIZZARD SHAD</u>	<u>STRIPED BASS</u>	<u>SEA LAMPREY</u>	<u>SEA-RUN TROUT</u>	AMER. <u>EEL</u>
Greeneville* (Shetucket R., Norwich)	0	150	0	0	0	0	0	0
Taftville* (Shetucket R., Norwich)	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Occum* (Shetucket R., Norwich)	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Versailles Pond (Little R., Sprague)	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Tunnel* (Quinebaug R., Preston)	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0
Kinneytown* (Naugatuck R., Seymour)	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Whitfords Brook (Whitfords Br., Groton)	0	none seen						
Trading Cove Brook** (Trading Cove Br., Montville)		76						
Latimers Brook+ (Latimers Br., E.Lyme)		181						
Gorton Pond (Pattagansett R., E.Lyme)		present (not enumerated, low numbers)						
Brides Brook** (Brides Brook, E.Lyme)		118,845						
Fishing Brook** (Fishing Br., O.Saybrook)		14						
Capello Pond (East River, Guilford)		50-60						
Branford Supply Pond Dam** (Queach Br., Branford)		705						
Bunnells Pond (Pegonnock R., Bridgeport)		hundreds						
Wood Dam** (Saugatuck R., Westport)		1,632						
Mianus River Pond** (Mianus R., Greenwich)		16,788	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= n.a. Taftville= n.a. Occum= n.a. Tunnel= 4/19. Kinneytown= n.a.

***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.*

+This location has a fish trap and fish are enumerated prior to release.

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, we reported that “no one is posting large numbers yet” and that we expected a big surge this week. We got it. Bride Brook had over 55,000 alewives come up this past week, including one 20,000 fish night. While there is no reason to believe last year’s culvert replacement at the Rocky Neck State Park beach will result in any more alewives returning in a given season, the larger capacity culvert may allow more fish to come up during one night, thus accelerating the pace of the entire run. Dave Ellis and his crew have not yet started trucking alewives, despite the large numbers, because they have been preoccupied with other opening duties and cleaning up after high water. Hopefully, the transplantation will begin soon. Joe reports that the Mianus Fishway got a few 2,000 to 5,000 fish nights and is now up to 16,788. Sally kept her fingers crossed that the high water on the Saugatuck River would not wash away her fish counter and it did not. The total for the Wood Dam fishway is now 1,632, which could be conservative since during the high water, some alewives could have swam right over the low dam, bypassing the fishway and counter. The floods made a mess of things on the Saugatuck and Sally and her crew from The Nature Conservancy and volunteers have been cleaning things up with a little help from us.

On the Shetucket River systems, fishways at Greeneville, Taftville, Tunnel, and Occum were all opened but Greeneville and Tunnel had to be shutdown due to high water and trash. They will reopen soon, as soon as the flows subside. Before closing, Bob Stira of FirstLight Power reported passing one alewife at Tunnel. We expect that Greeneville’s alewife total is much more than shown in the table above, but we have not had time to view the tapes. Lee Cutler from Norwich Public Utilities reports that resident species of fish are using the Occum fishway, but no alewives yet.

You can see other numbers posted in the table, including a good start at Branford, as reported by David Post from Yale University, and fish are moving through Capello Pond and Lower Guilford Lake Dam, as witnessed by intern Roy Slate and fishway monitor Vincent Samuolis. Gregg Dancho and Jim Knox from the Beardsley Park Zoo reports ospreys catching alewives at Bunnells Pond and our crew observed a good run of fish below that fishway on Monday. Other than that, most alewife observations were in the eastern part of the state this past week.

We got the Kinneytown Dam Fishway on the Naugatuck River in Seymour put back together and operating but we’ve had a weird glitch with a digital converter so we don’t have counting capability yet. Tim hopes to install a new converter there on Wednesday. We have another glitch at Fishing Brook. Apparently the images are being saved but we can’t access them yet. We hope to straighten these things out soon. Right now, the only eel pass operating is Fishing Brook and that has logged only 135 glass eels. The run will be late, due to the highwater.

The featured blog last week about the Bronx River was a photo of fishhead George Jackman holding up an alewife that had returned (and trapped) to the Bronx River in NYC. I guess the blogger figured no one would believe that wild anadromous fish runs are being restored to NYC! And to the east—congratulations to the Wood-Pawcatuck Watershed Association on receiving a Senator John Chaffee Conservation Leadership Award for its Lower Shannock Falls Dam Removal and Fish Passage Project of 2010. This has opened up important diadromous fish habitat on the Pawcatuck River!



The lower portion of the Mianus Pond fishway in Greenwich, at low tide. The entrance is under the orange life ring. Flow in the upper ramp is coming toward the camera (located at the turn pool) and flow in the lower ramp is flowing away from the camera. (photo by Julie Larson Maher).



The exit of the Trading Cove Brook Fishway in Montville showing the new counting weir in place. It is the wooden basket-like object attached to the upstream end of the fishway exit. The fishway passes down through a large highway culvert to the left. The dam extends to the left from the exit. The count in the table above represents the first day of operation of this counter.