

CONNECTICUT WEEKLY DIADROMOUS FISH REPORT

Report Date: May 10, 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	202	0	0	0	0	422*	1	0
Leesville (Salmon)	0	-	-	0	-	-	0***	1	0
Moulson Pond (Eightmile)	0	-	1,000s	0	0	0	0***	0	-
Mary Steube⁺ (Mill Brook)	-	-	9,044	-	-	-	-	-	-
WestSpringfield (Westfield- MA)	0	"a few"	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Holyoke (Connecticut- MA)	2/0	249	0	0	106	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=	2/0	>451	>10,000	0++	106	0	422	2	0
(last year's totals)	51/10	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 Holyoke Fishlift is finally operational! It began lifting on May 6th and captured its first Atlantic salmon that day. Connecticut River flows dropped to a seasonal 25,500 cfs with water temperatures at 11 C (52 F). Low numbers of shad and gizzard shad have been passed but clearly the runs are just beginning at the dam. The phone at the West Springfield Fishway on the Westfield River is apparently not working but Caleb Slater reports that fishway has been open since April 25 and has passed only a few shad to date. Rainbow Fishway has passed one wave of shad (see table) but as of yesterday afternoon, the tailrace was loaded with more shad and the next few days should be busy. Our Marine Fisheries Division and Ken Sprankle of the USFWS are netting shad in the lower river and finding them throughout the river. The commercial netters are out and apparently doing okay. Ron Heun of Kleinschmidt Associates reports that the first 4 shad were passed at the Conowingo Dam Fishlift on the Susquehanna River on Sunday—they're even later than we are! No news posted on the USFWS website about shad on the Merrimack River yet.

The switch-over from alewife to blueback herring on the Connecticut River seems to be occurring. This past week, Blaine Anderson, David Molnar (CTDEP Marine Fisheries) and our own staff reported seeing Wethersfield, Keeney, and White Oak coves full of herring. Salmon River, Sumner Brook (Middletown), and Roaring Brook (Glastonbury) all had fish as did Pewterpot Brook, which saw more fish this last week than it may have in years. We were unable to sample all of these locations but our best judgment is that most of these fish were bluebacks. Jim Tripp of the Tributary Conservancy in Old Lyme reported seeing spent alewives leaving Mill Brook and we expect the pull the fish counter at the Mary Steube Fishway soon due to lack of numbers and increased beaver activity in the headpond. The Lyme Land Conservation Trust saw river herring at the Moulson Pond Fishway on two days last week but numbers were pretty low.

This is the time of year when the lampreys are running pretty heavy but you only see them if you are at a fishway with a viewing window. Lampreys swim right through sorting gates in traps intended to retain larger fish for counting and inspection. We know we're passing lamprey on the Salmon River at Leesville but the trap is dominated by white suckers. Two days ago at Leesville, I passed a ~6 pound brown trout (built like a football), with a bead-head nymph pattern fly embedded in its dorsal fin (which I removed). Someone must have had a wild fight before that broke off! Today, I passed a 16-inch shiny sea-run brown trout at Leesville.

We sampled salmon smolts at the Rainbow Dam Bypass last Thursday and got very few and were thinking that most of the run may be over. But last night, Tim and I ran the sampler again and were overwhelmed with smolts: 796 in a couple of hours. We had to shut down the sampler early to prevent us from being there all night. There were still a lot of hatchery fish in the sample and they are looking exceptionally good for hatchery fish. See the photos below and also go the CRSA website (<http://www.crsalmon.org>) to see the Video of the Week of salmon smolts coming out of the sampling plane and dropping into the holding tank prior to us handling them. Maine DMR reports pretty good smolt runs occurring now on the Narraguagus and Sheepscot rivers. For adult salmon, the Penobscot has counted only 4 at Veazie since opening on May 2 and the Narraguagus has passed one.



Last night, the sampling tank was full of migrating Atlantic salmon smolts. These fish were using the bypass facility at the Rainbow Dam to avoid the turbines and we lowered a sampling plane to intercept them and bring them into this tank before measuring and releasing them.



This is an underwater shot of the sampling table shown in the photo to the left. The water comes from a larger sampling tank and flows down the length of the table, supporting these retained salmon smolts until we can measure them and collect other data. Once sampled, these fish are released to resume their downstream migration.

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)	133	189	0	15	0	0	0	1
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	4	0	0	0	0	0	0
Kinneytown* (Naugatuck R., Seymour)	0	0	0	0	0	10	0	0
Whitfords Brook (Whitfords Br., Groton)	0	nothing this week						
Trading Cove Brook** (Trading Cove Br., Montville)		907						
Latimers Brook+ (Latimers Br., E.Lyme)		2,570						
Gorton Pond (Pattagansett R., E.Lyme)		present (not enumerated, low numbers)						
Brides Brook** (Brides Brook, E.Lyme)		177,439						
Fishing Brook** (Fishing Br., O.Saybrook)		101						
Capello Pond (East River, Guilford)		30 with even more counted at the next upstream fishway						
Branford Supply Pond Dam** (Queach Br., Branford)		1,890						
Bunnells Pond (Peqonnock R., Bridgeport)		low numbers this week						
Wood Dam** (Saugatuck R., Westport)		1,965						
Mianus River Pond** (Mianus R., Greenwich)		43,237	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= 5/9 Taftville= 5/1 Occum= 4/28 Tunnel=5/1 Kinneytown= 5/6.

***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:

The alewife run at Bride Brook had another good week but the last few days have been slow and post-spawned fish are being seen circling the pond. We suspect that the run is winding down and we will need to pull the counter soon to allow the spent fish to leave the pond and return to sea. Lots of dead eggs can be seen along the margin of the pond. From where we stand, it appears that the alewife run is winding down in eastern Connecticut. While many sites posted some good numbers early in this reporting week, all sites have slowed down the last few days. A few fish continue to come in at Poquetanuck Brook and low numbers were sighted on one day at Whitfords Brook and the Pattagansett River. Long-time observer and fishway neighbor Jack Vestali reports that this is the best run he has seen on the Pattagansett River in many years, with lots of birds working up and down the stream. Elsewhere in the state, the alewife run continues, although we're seeing lower weekly numbers at places like Mianus, Branford, and the Saugatuck. Fish continue to be seen in Sasco, Pequonnock at the Bunnells Pond Fishway, Hammonasset River, and Mill River in Hamden. Roy saw good numbers on the East River in Guilford, with hundreds stacking up in the Lower Guilford Lake Dam bypass channel. He continues to see small numbers of alewives using the Landon Dam Fishway on the West River, where an osprey has established a regular food line.

The Wallace Dam Fish Rodeo Farewell Tour continues in great fashion. On Mother's Day, the Quinnipiac River Watershed Association and its volunteers netted 566 river herring and 3 gizzard shad and passed them over the dam, bringing the seasonal total over 1,000 fish. While it is likely that both species were mixed in at this site, the photo below implies that the alewife run was still going strong. (Article at www.myrecordjournal.com)

At the Greeneville Fishlift, Norwich Public Utility staff report seeing lots of shad in the hopper as they lifted this morning. Wayne reports this morning's first lift had 50 shad in it along with a northern pike. We expect to work with NPU and Bob Stira of FirstLight Power on Thursday to place radiotags into captured shad for upstream studies. Shad trucking within the watershed should commence by next week. The shad run is late on this river but we're hoping this is signaling the start of large numbers. Bob Stira is struggling with some computer problems at Tunnel but hopes to solve it within the next hour or so. The lift is operating but there are no new data available at this time. An alewife was found in the lower Taftville Fishway but it is unclear whether or not any have made it to the top yet. Resident fish such as white suckers, smallmouth and largemouth bass, and trout continue to use the Occum Fishway and usage may improve after Thursday when NPU crews expect to install their flashboards.

We continue to have problems at the Kinneytown Fishway on the Naugatuck River. The hydro company is unable to install their flashboards and with the river dropping, the flows down the fishway are anemic. Tim and I hope to go over there tomorrow to pull 2 or 3 of the top Denil baffles. Power outages are turning off the camera so we are missing data, but you can see that we've already logged 10 lamprey along with 181 suckers, some bass, trout, and carp. The count at the Fishing Brook eel pass is up to 8,694 glass eels. Joe is seeing large numbers of glass eels climbing the eel nets at the Mianus Pond Dam next to the fishway.

Last year, I made mention of the book *Four Fish*, in which author Paul Greenberg wrote about the transition of cod, sea bass, tuna, and Atlantic salmon from wild food fish to predominately aquaculture species. I was pleased to join Paul in an event in NYC last fall focused on local food fish stocks. Last Friday, *Four Fish* won a James Beard award for writing and literature. The book will be coming out in paperback on May 31st. www.fourfish.org

As I write, the Governor of Connecticut is sending out lay-off notices to thousands of State employees due to budgetary problems. The current plan calls for some actions that will greatly impact the Inland Fisheries Division, the Marine Fisheries Division, and other DEP divisions. It is unclear how it will affect our Diadromous Fish Program. Stay tuned.



The Blodgett family helps the QRWA pass river herring over the Wallace Dam in Wallingford on Mothers' Day. Fish are crowded to shore using a seine in the plunge pool and then netted out with dipnets and placed in buckets so that they can be carried around the dam and released. (photo by Dave Zajac/Record-Journal)



CT doesn't have a monopoly on fish tosses. Here is a unique approach by Bill McWha, netting alewives below a dam in Wakefield, RI and lifting them over the top. Many may recognize Bill as a long-time volunteer at Connecticut River facilities like Holyoke, Rainbow, and Cronin. Bill has been a tireless advocate for anadromous fish and particularly river herring.