

CONNECTICUT WEEKLY DIADROMOUS FISH REPORT

Report Date: May 17, 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)	3	291	0	0	0	0	1,109*	3	0
Leesville (Salmon)	0	-	-	0	-	-	0***	2	0
Moulson Pond (Eightmile)	0	-	1,000s	0	0	0	0***	0	-
Mary Steube ⁺ (Mill Brook)	-	-	9,365	-	-	-	-	-	-
WestSpringfield (Westfield- MA)	0	2,403	0	0	0	0	516	0	0
Holyoke (Connecticut- MA)	11/0	90,212	0	0	276	11	1,002	0	0
Turners Falls (Connecticut- MA)	0/0	0	-	0	0	0	0	-	-
Vernon (Connecticut- VT)	0/0	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=	14/0	92,906	>10,000	0++	276	11	2,627	5	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:

What a difference a week makes. Last week the Holyoke Fishlift had only passed a couple of hundred shad, but reports on the river indicated a huge school of shad was working its way upstream just south of Hartford. This week, Holyoke has passed 90,000 shad!!! Over 25,000 were lifted on both Friday and Saturday. Caleb Slater of Mass Wildlife reported that the West Springfield Fishway passed 1,500 shad in one day, which is phenomenal for a relatively small Denil like that. The Turners Falls fishways are now opened and I would expect some shad to be passing there by next week. The Atlantic salmon run is ramping up as well. Thirteen were captured at fishways in the past week. Mickey Novak of the Cronin National Salmon Station (where they are held) reports that most fish appear to be large this year. Two, including the first one captured at the Rainbow Fishway, top 15 pounds! Bruce says that it is one of the largest salmon he's seen during all of his years at Rainbow. The second Rainbow salmon was a grilse. This is a good time to remind everyone that if you're fishing for stripers or shad in the river, you might hook a salmon. Not only must to release it, by law, but you must do so in a quick and safe manner. Don't take it out of the water!!! A good example of how to do this comes this week from alert angler Ryan Lunderville of Hebron. He was fishing for stripers near the mouth of the Farmington River and caught a shortnose sturgeon. He was able to photograph it in the water (see below) and then unhook it. It quickly swam off without ever leaving the water. Ryan admitted that he just had to touch the fish—always wondering what the sturgeon's boney scutes feel like.

We had another good night of sampling salmon smolts at the Rainbow Dam Bypass on Thursday, counting over 500 while staff stayed past midnight to finish the work. We were not able to sample last night due to a gate malfunction but the Farmington River Power Company is working on this problem right now and we hope to be back in action by Thursday. Flows are coming back up after all this rain and that will help these late-running smolts get out to sea quicker. The water temperature is still only 14 C (57F), which will also help the smolts even if it will slow down the shad. Most streams had dropped below seasonal averages (after such a wet early spring!) so this week's rain is actually welcome. However, VT got hit hard with rain and the Connecticut River has gone above 40,000 cfs, making it difficult to operate the Holyoke Fishlift.

Not a lot to report in regards to river herring in the tributaries. There are reports that the lower Farmington River is full of herring but none have ascended as far as Rainbow. We saw moderate numbers in the Coginchaug River and the folks at Moulson Pond Fishway reported small numbers at the fishway on a couple of days this past week. We are declaring the run over at Mary Steube Fishway in Old Lyme. Increased beaver activity has complicated fish counting there. There were herring at Leesville on the Salmon River for a few days but by the time I got in to snorkel, they were gone. Snorkeling observations were dominated by tessellated darters (spawning) and a huge run of spot tail shiners—more than I've probably seen there in 20 years. Of course, there was the normal large contingent of white suckers, quite a few smallmouth bass, a few sunfish starting to show up, and a handful of sea lampreys. (If you see 10 lampreys, there are probably 100 more hiding under the rocks.) Another sea-run brown trout passed through the Leesville Fishway.



Here's a sight you don't often see: a 30" shortnose sturgeon on the end of your line while fishing for striped bass. This is a federally endangered species and must be released unharmed, which is exactly what this alert angler did. Often, anglers who catch sturgeon and salmon hold the fish up out of the water, put them on a sandy beach, etc. which can lead to the fish's death days later, even if released. This angler never took the fish out of the water—just unhooked it and away it swam.



Recently there have been complaints about lots of logs and wood in the river, as seen in this photo, and people have been looking for someone to blame. This kind of woody debris is a natural phenomenon on rivers and is an important aspect to the ecosystem both in rivers and the ocean. While floating logs present hazards to boaters and care must be taken, there is nothing that can be done about this when the river goes into flood. In addition to what comes off the floodplains, hydroelectric dams just pass downstream whatever debris arrives from upstream.

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)	133	189	0	15	0	0	0	1
Taftville* (Shetucket R., Norwich)	2	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	9	0	2	0	0	0	0
Kinneytown* (Naugatuck R., Seymour)	0	0	0	0	0	20	0	0
Whitfords Brook (Whitfords Br., Groton)	0	<50						
Trading Cove Brook** (Trading Cove Br., Montville)		957						
Latimers Brook+ (Latimers Br., E.Lyme)		2,673						
Gorton Pond (Pattagansett R., E.Lyme)		present (not enumerated, low numbers)						
Brides Brook** (Brides Brook, E.Lyme)		184,847						
Fishing Brook** (Fishing Br., O.Saybrook)		118						
Capello Pond (East River, Guilford)		12 with even more counted at the next upstream fishway						
Branford Supply Pond Dam** (Queach Br., Branford)		4,080						
Bunnells Pond (Peqonnock R., Bridgeport)		low numbers this week						
Wood Dam** (Saugatuck R., Westport)		2,099						
Mianus River Pond** (Mianus R., Greenwich)		63,505	6,337	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= 5/16 Occum= 4/28 Tunnel=5/16 Kinneytown= 5/11.

***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:

Downrunning (post-spawned) alewives are showing up at the weir at Bride Brook and we had to pull the counter yesterday to let them out. While a few uprunners may persist, we are declaring the run over, after setting a modern day record of 185,000 fish. In the east, we saw low numbers of alewives at the Pattagansett River, Poquetanuck Brook, and Whitford Brook on several days. Midcoast, we received reports from Roy of small to moderate numbers in the East and West rivers in Guilford, and Dave Post and Tom Cleveland saw fish below the Branford Water Supply Pond Fishway (which passed over 2,000 fish this week). Most of the reports came from the west where moderate numbers were reported from the Housatonic, Sasco, Whitney, and Poquonnock. Some of these fish were likely blueback herring. Joe from Greenwich reports sampling fish from the Mianus Pond Fishway and 70% were blueback herring. In summary, we feel that the alewife run on the Connecticut River is over, east of the River it is about over, and west of the river it is hanging in but mingling with blueback herring.

The Quinnipiac River Watershed Association continues to have a great year for its annual Wallace Dam Fish Rodeo: it netted and passed over the dam 1,445 more river herring (species uncertain), 3 white perch, and 2 gizzard shad. Mary Mushinsky knows how to recruit volunteers! Her newest recruit is none other than DEP Commissioner Daniel Esty! I'm wondering if there were wet footprints on the carpet outside the Commissioner's office that day.

On the Shetucket River, we're behind on our counts for the Greenville Fishlift. We hope to have a lot more data next week. In the meantime, Norwich Public Utility (NPU) staff report lifting a lot of shad. During the past week, the CTDEP, NPU and FirstLight cooperated to tag some shad at Greenville for upriver fishway studies. Four radiotagged shad have arrived at Taftville Dam and one at Tunnel Dam but none have passed yet. We hope to start trucking shad on the Shetucket any day but the cold rain may knock back the run and we'll have to wait.

We are now starting to generate some fish counts at the Kinneytown Fishway on the Naugatuck River. In addition to the diadromous counts above, we've counted white suckers, smallmouth bass, brown trout and one carp going through the fishway. The count at the Fishing Brook eel pass is up to 15,540 and 126 at the eel pass at Lake Whitney. Joe reported seeing a grackle gobble down an eel ascending the Mianus Pond Eel Pass—all part of the Big Picture. The Tunnel Dam Eel Pass has already passed 1,200 eels.

Last week I closed with a news brief that the Governor of Connecticut sent out lay-off notices to thousands of State employees due to budgetary problems. These pink slips have been rescinded as the employee unions vote on a concession package negotiated between the Governor's Office and the union leadership. Membership will now vote to ratify this package. I've attached a couple of other interesting news articles to the accompanying email. The article about a judge getting tough with a notorious fish poacher comes from Ed Baum, retired salmon biologist from Maine.

The Nature Conservancy (TNC) and the Aquarion Water Company (AWC) have been working to improve fish passage at the Wood Dam Fishway (which AWC owns) on the Saugatuck River. Sally Harold of TNC built and inserted a constricting footboard to duplicate design conditions at most steep pass fishways. The improvement in flow is more noticeable in person than in photos, but look below and see if you can see the improvement.



The entrance of the Wood Dam fishway without 'footboard' inserted. Note the lack of strong current issuing out of the fishway. Bubbles from the spillway flow are crossing over in front of the entrance, indicating poor attraction flow (photo by Sally Harold, TNC).



The entrance of the Wood Dam Fishway with a constricting 'footboard' inserted. It throttles down the opening from 24 to 14 inches and has a 24" submerged lip on the bottom. Note there is now a 6" drop in the fishway entrance, creating a stronger flow field issuing out of the fishway entrance, providing better attraction for migrating fish (photo by SH, TNC).