

CONNECTICUT WEEKLY DIADROMOUS FISH REPORT

Report Date: May 24, 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)	4	272	0	0	0	0	1,773*	2	0
Leesville (Salmon)	0	-	-	0	-	-	0***	3	0
Moulson Pond (Eightmile)	0	-	1,000s	0	0	0	0***	0	-
Mary Steube⁺ (Mill Brook)	-	-	9,080 (final count)	-	-	-	-	-	-
WestSpringfield (Westfield- MA)	0	2,408	0	0	0	0	526	0	0
Holyoke (Connecticut- MA)	11/0	97,694	0	30	279	12	2,173	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=	15/0	100,374	>10,000	30++	279	12	4,472	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:

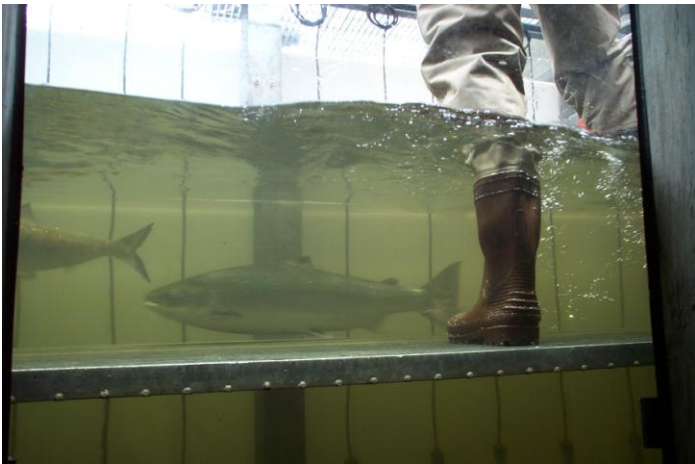
The previous week has been slow in terms of fresh fish. The Holyoke Fishlift was shut down for a few days due to high water but is now back in action. The river is still high (32,000 cfs) and also cool—13 C (55 F) at Holyoke. That is quite cool for this time of year. The Turners Falls (MA) and Vernon (VT) fishways have opened for business but no shad or other species have been reported passing through them yet. The cold, high flows of this past week would have slowed down their ascent but it may also lengthen the season and increase the number that is ultimately able to use these upstream fishways and penetrate into New Hampshire. Shad stop migrating when it is time to spawn and the timing of spawning is dictated by water temperature. The longer it stays cool, the longer they have to migrate prior to stopping. Connecticut is scheduled to start trucking shad out of Holyoke this week but that will depend upon the number of shad being passed. With 97,000+ already passed and June just a week away, we need to act quickly if we are to get the fish we have targeted for trucking. We never know how many fish will pass through the fishlift until the season is over. The Rainbow Dam Fishway had some problems this past week when the trap's motor stopped working. A CTDEP electrician fixed it and we were able to trap salmon #4 yesterday. The count for Holyoke salmon is now 11. Yesterday, I thought for a moment that I had the first salmon of the season for Leesville in the trap but it turned out to be a ~8 lb. sea-run brown trout. It was a very nice fish that I released upstream into the Salmon River. Good luck to anglers landing that baby! I passed another large brown trout there today but that one was a hatchery broodstock. Other trout were seen leaping at the dam, so fish are starting to move—even if they have problems finding the fishway in high water. Other salmon counts from the region include 19 at the Essex Dam Fishlift (Merrimack River, Lawrence, MA) and 37 at the Veazie Dam Fishway (Penobscot River, north of Bangor, ME).

Last Thursday, we only captured 11 salmon smolts at the Rainbow Dam Bypass during our semi-weekly sampling. We missed sampling last night due to a problem with the entrance gate. We hope that will be fixed by Thursday so we can resume monitoring. However, last week's low count and the calendar date would suggest that the run is winding down. Data from Maine implies that the smolt run on many of their rivers have also peaked. For an article on shad tagging on the Connecticut River conducted by the Connecticut River Coordinator's Office, go to: <http://www.courant.com/news/breaking/hc-shad-study-20110520,0,5176195.story>. It sounds like some netters believe that some of the female shad in the river are smaller than average this year.

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Rainbow Dam Open House- June 4. This annual event is a popular attraction for all—young, old, angler, non-angler. The Rainbow Fishway on the Farmington River in Windsor is the largest fishway in Connecticut and is located around a hydroelectric dam. The grounds are normally opened daily but visitors cannot come inside the fences nor go down the stairs and look through the underground viewing window. During the Open House, they can do this and watch shad, lamprey, bass, and more swim past. In some years, adult Atlantic salmon are captured and handled. Staff will be on hand to explain how the fishway works. The event is free of charge; come any time between 10 am and 3:30 pm. Exit 40 off of I-91; take Rt. 20 as if you're going to Bradley Airport but take the exit labeled "Hamilton Road South". Turn left at the end of the ramp and in a short distance turn right onto Rainbow Road. Drive about a ¼ mile and look for the entrance on the left. There will be signs.
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Since there has been so much water this year, it seems appropriate to pull out a stock photo of the Holyoke Dam during high water. For those who have never been there, this gives you an idea of what high flows look like. There are two fishlifts at the dam and the entrance to the spillway lift is below the area with the railing. Not many fish can locate the entrance to the spillway lift during such high flows like this.



This shows the partially raised trap at the Holyoke Fishlift. All fish lifted via both lifts must swim past this window to continue upstream. This shows a shad moving past as an adult salmon rests. The worker in the boots is preparing to remove the salmon from the trap for transporting to the Richard Cronin National Salmon Station.

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)	550	248	0	51	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	6	0	4	0	0	0	0
Kinneytown* (Naugatuck R., Seymour)	0	0	0	0	0	20	0	0
Whitfords Brook (Whitfords Br., Groton)	0	none this week						
Trading Cove Brook** (Trading Cove Br., Montville)		957						
Latimers Brook+ (Latimers Br., E.Lyme)		2,673						
Gorton Pond (Pattagansett R., E.Lyme)		none this week						
Brides Brook** (Brides Brook, E.Lyme)		196,996						
Fishing Brook** (Fishing Br., O.Saybrook)		134						
Capello Pond (East River, Guilford)		none this week						
Branford Supply Pond Dam** (Queach Br., Branford)		4,476						
Bunnells Pond (Peqonnock R., Bridgeport)		large numbers this week						
Wood Dam** (Saugatuck R., Westport)		2,099						
Mianus River Pond** (Mianus R., Greenwich)		64,395	7,844	0	0	0	1	-

**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= 5/17 Taftville= 5/9 Occum= 4/28 Tunnel=5/14 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:

Many alewife runs (particularly in the east) are over. Counters have been pulled from Bride Brook (5/16) and Mary Steube (5/17). The counter will likely be pulled from Branford Water Supply Pond Fishway soon. Our crew did a thorough job of scouting most of the key streams this past week and in New London County, the only place where herring were seen was Oil Mill Brook in East Lyme, where less than 50 were seen. In the Connecticut River, a few blueback herring were seen in the Salmon River and Roaring Brook (Glastonbury) but in no other tributaries. West of the Connecticut River, runs were still strong with sightings from the Housatonic (could be bluebacks), and Pequonnock River at Bunnells Pond (see photo below) and smaller numbers at Mill River (Hamden), Mill River (Fairfield) and Sasco Brook (Fairfield/Westport). Most of the herring sampled out of the Mianus Pond Fishway were bluebacks although some alewives continued to run there. No sampling was done on the small run on the Saugatuck. Joe from Greenwich reviewed the video record at Mianus and saw a sea-run brown trout go up that fishway.

On the Shetucket River, we're still a bit behind on our counts for the Greeneville Fishlift but we're seeing more shad being lifted there in the last few days. The run here is quite late. We hope to begin shad trucking from Greeneville this week and break in a new rig operated by the City (Norwich Public Utilities), which purchased a transport tank and has mounted it on one of their utility trucks. A lot of large striped bass have been reported below the Greeneville Dam. Not much for new reports from the Taftville and Tunnel fishways although resident species have been seen using these fishways and there is a backlog of video to go through for Tunnel.

I have no update on eel numbers for this past week. Jim Turek of NOAA sent along this link to an article about the elver fishery in Maine. It is over a week old so I hope it is still posted:

<http://lincolncountynewsonline.com/main.asp?SectionID=1&SubSectionID=75&ArticleID=51785>

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Humans who walk on fishways are subject to legal enforcement action, but we wink at it for birds. This is the entrance of the Bunnells Pond Dam Fishway on the Pequonnock River in Bridgeport with 10 black-crowned night herons perched on the railings. This fishway has passed many alewives since its construction and a good run has built up. This relatively shy species targets river herring and can be quite effective when the fish are thick. Here at Bunnell's, they can't get at the fish once they enter the fishway, but some fish overshoot the fishway and try to approach the spillway where they are vulnerable to predation. Restoring river herring runs is important for many species. They are an important food source for colonial nesting birds like herons, which are still recovering from what humans did to the populations and their habitat years ago. This photo is a sign of success from river herring restoration. "Build it (a fishway) and they will come." (photo by Matt Shirley, CTDEP).