

CONNECTICUT WEEKLY DIADROMOUS FISH REPORT

Report Date: June 1, 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/r5cnc. 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)	7	313	0	0	0	0	3,006*	3	0
Leesville (Salmon)	3	-	-	0	-	-	1***	5	0
Moulson Pond (Eightmile)	0	-	1,000s	0	0	0	0***	0	-
Mary Steube⁺ (Mill Brook)	-	-	9,080 (final count)	-	-	-	-	-	-
WestSpringfield (Westfield- MA)	1	4,080	0	0	0	0	1,310	0	0
Holyoke (Connecticut- MA)	20/6	174,758	0	129	288	20	10,808	0	0
Turners Falls (Connecticut- MA)	0/0	0	-	0	0	0	0	-	-
Vernon (Connecticut- VT)	0/0	0	-	0	0	0	3	-	-
Bellows Falls (Connecticut- VT)	0/0	0	-	0	0	0	0	-	0
Wilder (Connecticut- VT)	0/0	-	-	-	-	-	0	-	0
Other (all sites)	1/0								
TOTALS=	32/0	179,151	>10,000	129++	288	20	15,124	8	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 river is staying relatively cool despite hot weather and rains are keeping it from dropping too quickly. Both shad and salmon continued to come in as well as a big slug of sea lamprey. A dropping river that is clearing up and warming up is perfect for getting the fish moving upstream. You'll see the number of blueback herring passed at Holyoke (as pathetic as it is) is a bit higher than recent years. Our staff observed small numbers of river herring (suspected bluebacks) in the Salmon River, Salmon Brook, and Eightmile River. Ken Sprankle collected less than 200 bluebacks in Wethersfield Cove for tissue sampling and reported the fish are not nearly as thick in the cove as they were last year. The number of shad passed at Rainbow is higher than in recent years, as well. Shad trucking is in full swing and we've begun bringing some shad back into Connecticut. Dave Ellis reported being at Holyoke when the power company inflated the weir on top of the dam (high tech version of flashboards) and when the spill ceases, you could see hundreds (thousands?) of sea lampreys clinging to the apron of the spillway. Jay McMenemy reports passing 3 lamprey at Vernon but he says that the river is up and muddy and it is possible more may have moved through. Ted Santos-Castro from the Lab reports lots of shad passing through the Turners Falls fishways but we have not received any data from FirstLight Power yet. Hopefully, we'll have some numbers for lamprey, shad, and released salmon for next week. With the weather forecast, we should continue to have good conditions for moving fish. As of this morning, Holyoke is shut down due to high water. West Springfield continues to pass a lot of shad, the lamprey run has picked up, and that fishway just captured its first salmon of the year. Flows at Rainbow and Leesville are coming back down very quickly after a Memorial Day downpour. We picked up a grilse at Leesville the day after. We are now expecting heavy thunderstorms coming through today, which might send the rivers back up once again. It has been a strange wet spring. Conditions should be great over the weekend and into next week for passing fish and trapping salmon.

Some explanation may be helpful for salmon this week. As many of you know, we plan to release 10% of all salmon trapped at Holyoke. The other 90% are taken to the Cronin National Salmon Station to awaiting breeding. The fish that are part of the 10% release are all outfitted with radio-tags so that we may track them as they continue to migrate upstream throughout the watershed. We'll report on their whereabouts later in the season. We tag them in groups of ten, so we may be under or over the 10% mark at certain times. You'll see in the table above that we have released 6 salmon so far (a bit more than 10% to date). However, one of them was not tagged. It slipped through before being tagged. We had an exciting day last Wednesday on the Salmon River. We got a call from an angler telling us that he had a salmon on his line and asked what we wanted him to do with it. We authorized him to hold it for us and we went up to get it. All of our transport trucks were in use so we threw a fish box on the back of my personal pick-up truck and went up to the Rt. 16 bridge crossing. Obviously, this fish had skirted the Leesville Dam Fishway by leaping over the dam. The angler, Troy Gesswin, had the fight of his life and had never taken the fish out of the water (see first photo below). The fish—which was a grilse (one winter at sea)—was in good shape and we transferred to my truck, then to the holding tank at Leesville, then to Cronin National Salmon Station, where it appears to be doing well. In the fish counts above and elsewhere, this fish is reported at "Other" since it was not associated with any fishway. When we finished putting that fish in the tank, we decided to check the Leesville Fishway trap again. In the trap were two additional salmon. This was the busiest day on the Salmon River in many years. A personal digression about that on the next page. The fishway continues to pass a few white suckers, trout, smallmouth bass, and sea-run brown trout (see second photo below).

Troy is to be commended for his response to catching the salmon—he did it right. He called us immediately and did nothing to harm the fish, keeping it quiet and cool in flowing water at all times. He never held it out of the water to take its picture.

We were not able to sample for smolts last week due to a malfunctioning gate. Tim sampled last night with former seasonal employee and current UMass graduate student Amy Koske and no salmon smolts were captured. Given the date and the water temperature of 23 C (73 F), we are declaring the smolt run to be over. TransCanada is monitoring smolts at the Moore Dam on the Connecticut River in the Northeast Kingdom of Vermont and that run is still going on. But the water is a lot cooler up there. They've counted over 1,200 smolts so far this season. The data coming from Maine DMR about Maine rivers indicate the smolt run is still going on but it certainly appears to be tapering off.

* * * * *

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 $\frac{1}{4}$ mile and look for the entrance on the left. There will be signs.

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This week, we're adding an extra page for photos...



Angler Troy Gesswin of Connecticut with a grilse Atlantic salmon near the Comstock Covered Bridge on the Salmon River. Troy was fishing for trout when this fish grabbed his hook and gave him a fierce battle. Shown with Troy is Steve Gephard of the CTDEP, Inland Fisheries Division, which took possession of the fish for breeding. Troy was a fan of the program before but is a true believer now.



This is a cell phone photo of a sea-run brown trout trapped at the Leesville Dam Fishway this past week. The fish was released upstream—to head up where Troy caught the salmon (photo to left). The trout used the fishway, as intended. The salmon decided to skip the experience and just jumped over the entire 10 foot high dam!



PERSONAL DIGRESSION- I'll claim author's privilege to include a personal note. My mother, Margery Gephard, died on May 26. She was a big fan of the Connecticut River and the program to restore its fish runs. She was particularly excited about salmon returning to the Salmon River, a stream in which she had canoed and swam all her life. Hours before she died, we captured more salmon on that river than we have in any one day for many years. At the exact time of her death, there was a mature bald eagle, an osprey, and a great blue heron slowly circling low overhead at the Leesville Fishway. It was almost as if the river was saying goodbye to an old friend. This photo was taken last year: my mom swimming in the Connecticut River at age 90. It is a good time to reflect on why we work hard to protect, conserve, and restore natural resources of our rivers. It is more than just about the fish. Many people—such as my mom—recognize the importance of these runs, the historical connection between the runs and humans, and the thrill of sharing clean rivers with fish and wildlife. It is about these people and our communities, to which these diadromous fish runs are special. Every year we lose some of these supporters. So every year we need to educate, inform, and expose twice as many people to these wonderful resources.

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)	805	248	0	81	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	265
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	55	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)		2,679						
Gorton Pond (Pattagansett R., E.Lyme)		none this week						
Brides Brook** (Brides Brook, E.Lyme)		196,996	(FINAL)					
Fishing Brook** (Fishing Br., O.Saybrook)		147						
Capello Pond (East River, Guilford)		none this week						
Branford Supply Pond Dam** (Queach Br., Branford)		4,476	(FINAL)					
Bunnells Pond (Peqonnock R., Bridgeport)		large numbers this week						
Wood Dam** (Saugatuck R., Westport)		2,099	99					
Mianus River Pond** (Mianus R., Greenwich)		66,041	20,349	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= 5/30 Taftville= 5/9 Occum= 4/28 Tunnel=5/14 Kinneytown= 5/26.

***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:

As reported last week, most alewife runs are over. Joe from Greenwich reported that 8 out of 9 herring sampled from the Mianus Pond Fishway were bluebacks and bluebacks were sampled at the Wood Dam Fishway on the Saugatuck, too. But alewives could still be mixed in at many Fairfield County streams, especially Sasco Brook where a dead one was found and the Mill River in Fairfield, where the photo of the gizzard shad below was taken. Pretty strong numbers of herring below the Derby Dam on the Housatonic River and we suspect that most of them are blueback herring. Gizzard shad are running here and there and lampreys are putting in a strong showing through the Kinneytown Dam Fishway on the Naugatuck River.

We are up-to-date on our counts for the Greeneville Fishlift and it appears the shad run is not that strong this year, with a cumulative count of 805 at this time. We see no good reason for that but wonder if all the high water pouring out into Long Island Sound from the Connecticut River might have hijacked some of the Shetucket River's fish. The Norwich Public Utilities has begun shad trucking—augmenting upstream passage by moving shad from the Greeneville trap to above upstream dams where fish passage is lagging behind. On May 27 they trucked 92 shad upstream of the Occum Dam. We'll try to get updated numbers and photos for next week. No updates are available for Taftville and Tunnel fishways.

Glass eels continue to come in at the Fishing Brook Eel Pass—the total is now 19,968. Lee Cutler from NPU provided the data shown above for the Occum eel pass. We are still setting up other eel passes. A strong run of elvers has arrived inland, at the head-of-tide of many Connecticut River tributaries and we hope to have more to report on that next week.



An underwater shot of a gizzard shad below the Samp Mortar Dam on the Mill River in Fairfield. Note the elongated last ray of the dorsal fin tilted toward the camera. Outlines of other fish are seen in the background but the only other one that is distinguishable appears to be a bluegill or maybe a redbreast sunfish just beyond and a bit downstream of the gizzard shad. (photo by Matt Shirley, CTDEP).



The Versailles Pond Dam Fishway was opened for the season two weeks ago. This is on the Little River in Sprague.