

CONNECTICUT WEEKLY DIADROMOUS FISH REPORT

Report Date: July 7, 2011 **(FINAL)**



This is a report generated by the Connecticut Department of Energy and 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/r5src. 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)	15	274	0	0	0	1	6,507*	5	190
Leesville (Salmon)	9	-	-	0	-	-	1***	6	0
Moulson Pond (Eightmile)	0	-	1,000s	0	0	0	0***	0	-
Mary Steube ⁺ (Mill Brook)	-	-	9,080 (final count)	-	-	-	-	-	-
WestSpringfield (Westfield- MA)	9	5,018	0	0	0	0	1,589	0	28
Holyoke (Connecticut- MA)	71/11	244,037	0	138	420	181	19,136	0	0
Turners Falls (Connecticut- MA)	0/7	16,592	-	0	0	0	2,032	-	-
Vernon (Connecticut- VT)	0/9	46	-	0	0	0	329	-	-
Bellows Falls (Connecticut- VT)	0/6	1	-	0	0	0	74	-	0
Wilder (Connecticut- VT)	0/2	-	-	-	-	-	0	-	0
Other (all sites)	2/0								
TOTALS=	106/11	249,329	>10,000	138++	420	182	27,233	11	218
(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:

Three more salmon have been captured since the last report. We chased around another salmon on the Salmon River upstream of the Leesville Dam but were unable to catch this one. I won't tell you where it is but if any of you hear a report of a salmon in that river, let me know ASAP. Jay McMenemy reports that two untagged salmon have passed through the Vernon fishway. Since they were untagged, they were probably undetected and uncounted at Holyoke. They are not yet added to the count until the Technical Committee has a chance to review the situation.

Jay has been trying to locate radio-tagged fish upriver but for the most part, you can discern the general area they are hanging out by looking at the fishway counts. We have one hanging out in the Deerfield River, one somewhere below there, Nothing detected yet in the West River or at the Townshend Dam. One fish nosed into the Black River but has now departed. A more detailed accounting may come later in the summer. The second fish through Wilder is breaking news—via Jay's cell phone at 4:30 pm!

Maine Rivers seem to all be doing well now for salmon returns. Penobscot (Veazie)= 2,787 at a rate of 19 fish per day. The website had a higher number but this number is from Oliver's email. Narraguagus (Cherryfield)= 106, Saco (Cataract)= 82, Androscoggin (Brunswick)= 46, Kennebec (Lockwood)= 44, Dennys (tidewater weir)= 7. On the Merrimack River, the trap catch at the Essex Dam in Lawrence is at 378. Initial reports from the Miramichi River in New Brunswick are good, which is encouraging since I am headed up there tomorrow with my fly rod.

As the Connecticut River season winds down, what can we say about it? The salmon returns have not been as good as they have been farther north but our number is still more than twice the count of last year. Like further north, the salmon this year have been larger than normal and we've seen more grilse than we typically see. The shad run was way up from the last several years while the blueback herring run remains dismally low (although Holyoke numbers were inconsequentially better than in 2010). Gizzard shad and striped bass numbers at Holyoke were about the same; sea lamprey numbers were lower at Holyoke but higher at Rainbow. Due to flow conditions, we may not be able to do nest counts on the Salmon and Eightmile rivers to estimate the run size on those rivers. It was a good sea-run brown trout year—probably due to the high flows.

MILESTONES: With July, our Department officially changes its name to the Department of Energy and Environmental Protection—from DEP to DEEP. The DEP was created in 1972 as an umbrella agency that consolidated many environmental-oriented commissions like the State Board of Fish and Game and the Water Resources Commission, etc. Meanwhile, all of Connecticut State agencies are anticipating widespread lay-offs to help balance the state budget as mandated by the State Constitution. While decisions on lay-offs will likely be made in the next week or so, actual lay-offs may not occur until September. If there are viable behind-the-scenes discussions to avoid this, we have no idea. We'll likely learn about things as they happen. The Inland Fisheries Division and this program may look a lot different next spring when these reports resume. Or not.

Finally, it is with regret that we bid Jay McMenemy of Vermont Fish and Wildlife goodbye and wish him well in his retirement. He has announced he will retire this fall and this will be his last fish run. Jay's contributions to the Technical Committee of the Connecticut River Atlantic Salmon Commission cannot be overstated. He was a long-time chair of the Committee and current longstanding chair of the Salmon Studies Subcommittee. He was the main force coordinating the annual fry stocking effort basinwide (quite a challenge) and was the guy who chased the radio-tagged adult salmon released from Holyoke around the upper watershed, verifying their movements. He was responsible for monitoring fish passage through the Vernon, Bellows Falls, and Wilder fishways. Most importantly, perhaps, was his keen mastery of data and sharp mind that help guide the program with sound science. He will be greatly missed.



Jay McMenemy contemplating a fry stocking plan at the Iron Horse Café.

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)	992	248	0	103	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	669
Versailles Pond (Little R., Sprague)	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Tunnel* (Quinebaug R., Preston)	13	6	0	20	0	0	0	0
Kinneytown* (Naugatuck R., Seymour)	0	0	0	0	0	56	0	0
Whitfords Brook (Whitfords Br., Groton)	0	no counts; hard to characterize						
Trading Cove Brook** (Trading Cove Br., Montville)		1,208 (FINAL)						
Latimers Brook+ (Latimers Br., E.Lyme)		2,679 (FINAL)						
Gorton Pond (Pattagansett R., E.Lyme)		no counts but a strong year						
Brides Brook** (Brides Brook, E.Lyme)		196,996	(FINAL)					
Fishing Brook** (Fishing Br., O.Saybrook)		164	(FINAL)					
Capello Pond (East River, Guilford)		no counts this year but likely a good season						
Branford Supply Pond Dam** (Queach Br., Branford)		4,476 (FINAL)						
Bunnells Pond (Peqonnock R., Bridgeport)		no counts but overall a good season						
Wood Dam** (Saugatuck R., Westport)		2,103	104 (FINAL)					
Mianus River Pond** (Mianus R., Greenwich)		66,521	25,753	(FINAL)	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= 6/24 Taftville= 6/05 Occum= 4/28 Tunnel=6/13 Kinneytown= 6/21.

***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:

With the river herring runs ended, the only fish run left along the shoreline that we are focusing on is the eel run. Counts include:

Fishing Brook (Old Saybrook)- 236 this past week, seasonal total of 23,795

Mill River (Hamden)- 166 this past week, including 23 glass eels, seasonal total of 1,162

Trading Cove Brook (Montville)- 35

Occum- 863 (all older yellow eels)

Tunnel- 6,507 (all yellow eels; this number not updated since June 20)

We were doing summer shutdowns and repairs on the Saugatuck River yesterday with Sally, Cynthia, and Mark from The Nature Conservancy and saw a cluster of sea lamprey nests between the Dorr's Mill Dam Fishway and the Low's Dam Fishway. There are probably more nests upstream but just these nests are evidence of an increasing sea lamprey run on that river since the fishways have been constructed.

Most fishways are closed for the season except for small fishways that do not impact headpond levels (like Clarks Pond Dam Fishway in Milford). Eel passes will continue to operate and we will soon be installing eel passes that have been out-of-action for one reason or another. For example, the Greeneville Dam eel pass was damaged by floods last year and we were unable to fix it and get it back in during the spring with all of its high flows. We will take advantage of low summer flows to re-install it this summer. Other repairs we expect are Kinneytown Dam in Seymour (next week) and Lower Millpond Dam in Old Lyme after that. Next week after the Rainbow Fishway is shutdown for the spring, we will install an eel pass inside the fishway and this has been very effective in collecting eels for hand carrying around the dam. Eels move up during the summer so even an installation in July will allow quite a few of them to get over dams this year.

Mature eels move downstream between September and November to spawn in the ocean. We hope to continue our work with Aquarion Water Company this summer to improve the passage rate of downrunner silver eels at the Aspetuck Reservoir Dam. We also will be working with the New London Water Company on the construction this summer of a similar facility to get silver eels around its reservoirs on the Latimer Brook and Oil Mill Brook systems.

Remember, many other fish pass through these fishways than we report in this diadromous fish report. Occum and Kinneytown fishways, for example, pass a lot of non-diadromous species. In addition to what is posted, Kinneytown Fishway passed 45 brown trout, six Atlantic salmon (broodstock), three tiger trout, 56 smallmouth bass, one largemouth bass, 21 carp, and 206 white suckers.

At the end of the season, it is tempting to issue some broad sweeping conclusions of the runs. It is difficult for us to do that at this time since we have not had the time to critically examine our data. My sense, however, is that the 2011 alewife run was similar in scope and size to the 2010 run—which was the best year in many. This year was not any better (perhaps not quite as good) but it was in the same range. For any year, you'll have some that are much better (e.g. Bride Brook with a record 196,000+) and some that are much worse (e.g. Branford Water Supply Ponds with 4,400 following last year's 50,000+). For blueback herring, it does not appear we moved the needle much from last year. Numbers at the Mianus Pond fishway may have inched up a little along with Wood Dam (Saugatuck River) but in most streams the species remains 'missing in action'. The shad run in the Shetucket River was very disappointing (even as the run in the Connecticut River was quite good) and the lamprey run in the Hammonasset River was better than usual. We hope to have more coastal fishways reporting data in 2012 when these reports resume. Have a good summer!



This sea-run brown trout 'post-smolt' was netted by the DEEP's Marine Fisheries staff in the Thames River last month. It is about 8 inches long and is missing its adipose fin, suggesting that it is one of the fish we released in the Shetucket River this spring (photo Jacques Benway).