

CONNECTICUT WEEKLY DIADROMOUS FISH REPORT

Report Date: April 17, 2012



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/r5scr. 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	2	0	0	0	0	0*	0	0
Leesville (Salmon)	0	-	-	0	-	-	0***	0	0
Moulson Pond (Eightmile)	0	-	>7,000	0	0	0	0***	0	-
Mary Steube⁺ (Mill Brook)	-	-	10,946	-	-	-	-	-	-
WestSpringfield (Westfield- MA)	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Holyoke (Connecticut- MA)	0/0	1,800	0	0	0	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=	0/0	1,802	>19,000	0++	0	0	0	0	0
(last year's totals)	111/11	249,329	>10,000	138++	423	184	27,233	11	14,502

These figures adjusted after last year's report ended and does not include 3 shortnose sturgeon passed over the summer.

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:

Fish traffic at the Holyoke Fishlift is starting to pick up. They are now lifting about 1,000 shad per day and that is sure to increase quickly. The data listed above is from last week and perhaps more than 1,000 were on track for yesterday. The season's first salmon was captured at Holyoke on April 15—which is likely the earliest on record. It was a 9 pound, multi-sea winter fish. The water temperature is still only 13 C (55 F) and the flows are incredibly low. The gage at Thompsonville, CT is recording 11,000 cfs. The Holyoke dam is not spilling! At the Rainbow Fishway on the Farmington River, shad are starting to move into the tailrace and up the fishway, although as of yesterday we had only passed two shad. Lots of white suckers and quite a few smallmouth bass are using the fishway. We operated the bypass sampler for salmon smolts for the first time on April 12 and got two smolts. Last night, we operated it again and counted 70—both hatchery-reared and fry-stocked. Many did not have strong smolt characteristics yet. We are seeing some very large wild smolts (220 - 270 mm)—good growth conditions last summer?

We have been stocking fry into targeted streams. During most of last week the cold overnight temperatures kept the water temperatures moderate. With the hot weather we are having now, it is a challenge. With the drought and the low water levels, some streams may start the day at 12 C (54 F) and end the day at 22 C (72 F). It is difficult to manage the holding water to avoid thermal shock on the fish.

A big mystery for us is the alewife run in the Connecticut River. Two tributaries—Mill Brook in Old Lyme and Eightmile River in Lyme—have been experiencing strong runs. The count at the Mary Steube Fishway (Mill Brook) is a facility record but that is confounded a bit by improvements made to the site and the area by both us and the neighbors at the Tributary Mill Conservancy. However, alewives have yet to appear in significant numbers in any other tributaries, including the Salmon and Coginchaug rivers and the various brooks that normally host runs. The only other stream where alewives were seen this past week was Pattaconk Brook, where we saw just a handful. The tributaries have extremely low flows. Are alewives having problems detecting them? Are they just spawning in the mainstem? We don't know but maybe we'll have more clues as the season progresses. For more on curious observations of alewives, see the coastline report below.

As reported last week, we continue to be plagued with beaver. The low water is prompting them to build dams on top of dams and in fishways to keep the water levels from dropping lower. In some locations, we may have to give up and close fishways if we don't get rain soon. With record numbers of alewives going up Mill Brook, I did some undercover operations in Lower Millpond over the weekend in hopes of letting the fish get farther upstream (see photo below). There were seven ospreys fishing in the pond downstream of the beaver dam.

Connecticut River shad are now in the local fish markets! Grill outside for a Rite of Springtime!!!!

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Removing beaver dams doesn't often work since the beaver usually rebuild immediately. This beaver dam on Upper Millpond in Old Lyme is very low with hardly any water surface differential between the two sides. I'm hoping that this small breach will be tolerated by the beaver union and allow alewives to continue upstream to the Upper Millpond Dam Fishway.

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)	16	173	0	0	0	0	0	0
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	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Kinneytown* (Naugatuck R., Seymour)	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Whitfords Brook (Whitfords Br., Groton)	0	low numbers seen						
Trading Cove Brook (Trading Cove Br., Montville)		low numbers seen						
Latimers Brook+ (Latimers Br., E.Lyme)		5,400						
Gorton Pond** (Pattagansett R., E.Lyme)		10,338						
Brides Brook** (Brides Brook, E.Lyme)		114,373						
Fishing Brook** (Fishing Br., O.Saybrook)		5						
Lower Guilford Lake (East River, Guilford)		fish seen throughout week						
Branford Supply Pond Dam** (Queach Br., Branford)	13							
Bunnells Pond (Pegonnock R., Bridgeport)		a few fish seen this week						
Wood Dam** (Saugatuck R., Westport)		1,446						
Mianus River Pond** (Mianus R., Greenwich)		53,378	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= 4/09. Taftville= 4/14. Occum= 4/14. Tunnel= n.a. Kinneytown= n.a.

***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 story along the coast has been the New London County alewife runs. In fact, it is even more restricted than that: the runs between the Thames and Connecticut River. Bride Brook is not setting records but is on its way to another strong year. We've never had a counter on Gortons Pond Fishway (Pattagansett River) previously but that 10,000+ run looks stronger than in recent memory. We don't have a counter on Jordan Brook but we've seen more fish there then in recent years and over on the western edge of New London County we have the Mill Brook and Eightmile River runs, reported on above. But what in the name of all that is fishy is going on in Latimer Brook? The alewives are just piling into that small, drought-stricken stream. The count for last week stood at 5,400, twice the previous record but I can tell you that the stream was so full of fish yesterday that we sent a crew over there to open the trap to relieve the downstream traffic jam. Dave Ellis opened the gate and sat there for four hours counting over 7,000 fish passing through the fishway! And the stream remained full of fish at the end of the day when he closed the gate. Today he is installed an electronic fish counter on loan to us from Sally Harold and The Nature Conservancy. Now we plan to stop counting by using the trap and just leave it open and let the electronics count the fish, like we do at Bride Brook and elsewhere. Already today it has tallied over 1,000 fish. We have no idea why the fish are crowding into this little stream. There have been no changes to passage or habitat in the last 5 years so it is hard to imagine it is being driving by the stream itself. Furthermore, it is a mystery why the alewives are NOT appearing in other local streams. The count on the Shetucket River—the third largest in the state and right around the corner—is still less than 200. We've seen a few in Poquetanuck, Whitfords, and Trading Cove Brook in the east, and to the west the Mianus is posting good numbers (11,000 this past week), with moderate numbers on the Saugatuck and low numbers on the Housatonic, and low numbers at Bunnells Pond, Branford Water Supply, Lower Guilford Lake, Hammonasset, and Fishing Brook. For most of the state, it is business-as-usual or very low numbers. It is almost as they're all headed to Latimers and adjoining watersheds. We hope to have some new video from Latimers Brook posted on the CRSA website for you next week.

Some housekeeping notes: last year we had our rotating fish counter at Capello Pond on the East River in Guilford. That counter is now at Gorton Pond. I've replaced Capello Pond on the list above with Lower Guilford Lake Fishway, which is about a half mile upstream from Capello Pond, since Vince and others are able to monitor Lower Guilford Lake better. I'll add a double asterisk to Latimer Brook next week to indicate the electronic fish counter. The new Wallace Dam Fishway will be dedicated on Saturday and it will be officially added to the list for next week's report. It will have a camera that will help us identify and count fish. We will feature it in next week's report. <http://meriden.patch.com/articles/fish-migration-project-finally-makes-hurdle-over-wallace-dam>

Not a lot to report on the Shetucket. Our counts for Greeneville are as of April 9 with little passed as of then. Bob Stira of FirstLight reports very little action at Taftville this past week and says they hope to have the Tunnel Fishlift operational soon. Lee Cutler of Norwich Public Utilities reports that suckers continue to use the fishway at Occum, with 106 ascending just on the 14th.

The glass eel run: 15,816 this week at Fishing Brook and 324 at Lower Millpond (Mill Brook, Old Lyme) and more observations at Clarks Pond (Indian River, Milford) by Ray Baldwin who dragged out an old rug to do an emergency plug at a leaking weirboard at that fishway. (This fishway is scheduled for mid-summer repairs this year!)

Saturday is Opening Day of fishing season in Connecticut. Many DEEP staff—including Commissioner Esty—will be out on the streams, meeting the public, and talking about not only the good fishing that is available in Connecticut but the value of outdoor recreation to kids. Many of us will be at the Wallace Dam Fishway; hope to see many of you!



Alewives have been seen using the Jordan Brook Fishway in Waterford, although not this past week.



The water below the Gorton Pond Fishway is thick with alewives.