

CONNECTICUT WEEKLY DIADROMOUS FISH REPORT

Report Date: May 29, 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)	4	134	0	0	0	1	699*	9	0
Leesville (Salmon)	6	-	-	0	-	-	0***	0	0
Moulson Pond (Eightmile)	0	1	>8,000	>7,000	0	0	0***	0	-
Mary Steube ⁺ (Mill Brook)	-	-	17,057 (FINAL)	-	-	-	-	-	-
WestSpringfield (Westfield- MA)	3	8,715	0	0	267	0	283	0	0
Holyoke (Connecticut- MA)	24/9	434,435	0	38	267	65	13,617	0	0
Turners Falls (Connecticut- MA)	0/0	3,760	-	0	0	0	0	-	-
Vernon (Connecticut- VT)	0/0	4,760	-	0	0	0	208		
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=	37/9	443,285	>25,057	>7,035++	534	66	14,599	9	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:

Things really started happening around May 17 and 18 and that trend continued this week with warming temperatures. The big news is the shad at Holyoke. They are having one big day after another. With the seasonal total running at 434,000+, you need to go all the way back to 1992 to find a year when Holyoke lifted more shad. Their best year in the last 20! The West Springfield Dam Fishway on the Westfield River is also having a good year, having far surpassed last year's figure. Poor Rainbow Fishway continues to struggle but we know that fishway is no good for shad. (We hope to start designing a fishlift for that dam very soon.) Last year, we reported a baffle problem in the Vernon Fishway and that fishway passed very few shad. That problem was fixed and we're back in familiar territory with Vernon passing more shad than reported passed at Turners Falls. Of course, that is not actually true, but counts by FirstLight at Turners Falls are quite a ways behind and the visibility at Turners Falls typically is not as good as at Vernon so some shad may pass undetected.

Speaking of shad, we bought a mess of fresh fillets from Hales in Rocky Hill and hosted VTFW retiree Jay "Cheetos" McMenemy down for snorkeling at Leesville and grilled shad. The shad was fresh and delicious. If you haven't had your shad dinner yet, it's not too late. Snorkeling was good; we don't go into details in public reports, but we saw a lot. However, the sucker run is just about over and other early cool-water fish like darters are ramping down. We were surprised to see a handful of channel catfish (not that common at Leesville) and pleased to see more white perch than we have seen in many years. It also coincided with the next wave of blueback herring at Leesville. There were only a few hundred—not that many—but it's always fun to swim with them. I also saw some bluebacks up at the Enfield Dam (Suffield side) last week, tucked into the eddies. Other than that, the only other bluebacks seen were a few in Porter Brook in the East Hartford area.

The sea lamprey run seems to be just about over in Connecticut—with lots of empty nests and not many fish coming up through Rainbow. It has not been a particularly good year for them. However, Holyoke passed over 10,000 last week so maybe the run will continue upriver. The river is warming very quickly and the runs could end soon for many species. Shad will be spawning rather than migrating soon.

The Haddam Shad Museum now has a website: www.haddamshadmuseum.com. The Secretary of the Interior just visited Hartford to announce the designation of the Connecticut River as the nation's first National Blueway:

<http://www.wtnh.com/dpp/news/connecticut/connecticut-river-watershed-designated-for-conservation>

Anglers in the Salmon River should know that our agency began phase II in the Lyman Viaducts project on Dickinson Creek, which will fill in a large scour hole below the twin culverts and restore fish passage after 50+ years. But in dumping stone in the brook, some turbidity is inevitable and anglers are asked to be patient as a turbidity plume may extend all the way down to Comstock Covered Bridge. When completed, this will be a huge benefit for Dickinson Creek, diadromous fish, trout, and the Salmon River.

Reminder: **Rainbow Dam Fishway Open House** this Saturday, June 2, 10 am until 3:00 pm. 400 Rainbow Road, Pequonnock section of Windsor. Look for signs. Take Hamilton South exit off Rt. 20, turn south, and then right on Rainbow Road. Free of charge, go below and look through the viewing window. Great for families.



Last week, we ran a photo of the Cabot Station Powerhouse at Turners Falls at the downstream end of the power canal. Here we show you the Spillway ladder at the upstream end of the canal. Fish that overshoot the Cabot Ladder down by the powerhouse come up to the dam and can use this fishway, seen beyond the Rt. 2 bridge.



This photo shows a close-up of the Spillway Ladder—an Ice Harbor type pool-and-weir fishway. When the amount of water spilling over the dam is low, few fish come up this far to use this fishway. Fish that use this ladder still must pass through the Gatehouse ladder to get out of the canal and into the headpond. (Both photos courtesy of Ken Sprankle, USFWS.)

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)	2,570	251	0	108	1	42	4	74
Taftville* (Shetucket R., Norwich)	5	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Occum* (Shetucket R., Norwich)	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Tunnel* (Quinebaug R., Preston)	35	1	0	0	0	0	0	0
Kinneytown* (Naugatuck R., Seymour)	26	1	0	35	0	35	9	0
Whitfords Brook (Whitfords Br., Groton)	0	none seen this week						
Trading Cove Brook (Trading Cove Br., Montville)		none seen this week						
Latimers Brook+ (Latimers Br., E.Lyme)		22,154	(FINAL)					
Gorton Pond** (Pattagansett R., E.Lyme)		96,014	(FINAL)					
Brides Brook** (Brides Brook, E.Lyme)		275,686	(FINAL)					
Fishing Brook** (Fishing Br., O.Saybrook)		5	(FINAL)					
Lower Guilford Lake (East River, Guilford)		none seen this week						
Branford Supply Pond Dam** (Queach Br., Branford)		610						
Haakonsen Fishway* (Quinnipiac R., Wallingford)	1	501	116	5		12	1	
Bunnells Pond (Pegonnock R., Bridgeport)		none seen this week						
Wood Dam** (Saugatuck R., Westport)		3,063	58					
Mianus River Pond** (Mianus R., Greenwich)		119,335	12,227			Present below feeding on downrunners		

**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= 4/25. Occum= 5/14. Tunnel= 5/08 Kinneytown= 5/18. Haakonsen= 5/20

******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:

No river herring were seen in eastern Connecticut this past week. As reported above, only a few bluebacks were seen in the Connecticut River. In western Connecticut, we saw a few here and there: alewives in the Quinnipiac, Mill, Sasco, and East as well as good numbers spawning in the Housatonic at Derby (see photo below, left). We also saw bluebacks in the Quinnipiac River. We cannot distinguish alewives from blueback herring in the window of the Haakonsen Fishway on the Quinnipiac River so we sample the collection of river herring below the spillway and determine what percentage of the sample is alewife and what is blueback herring. We then apply that ratio to the counts we make from the window video. Joe does a similar thing at the Mianus Fishway (dipping from the resting pools) and we also apply that ratio to the run reported by TNC at the Wood Dam (Saugatuck River), since the runs there seem to follow what goes on at Mianus. Joe reports that he passed over 8,000 bluebacks this past week, most on Tuesday when a local boy scout troop was touring the fishway. What a great show for them!

Volunteer Ray Baldwin is not sampling river herring at the Clarks Pond Fishway in Milford but I suspect that all of the four fish he saw on Saturday were alewives. The habitat upstream is ponded and typical habitat for alewives and I'm not sure we've ever reported blueback herring from that system.

In the Connecticut River section, we mentioned the good year that it has been for shad. That's true for coastal systems in Connecticut, as well. The record run of shad going up the Naugatuck River through the Kinneytown Fishway continues with that number up to 26. Yeah—it's tiny compared to the Connecticut but you have to start somewhere. I remember when the alewife run at Latimer was zero. This year it surpassed 22,000. Even the Haakonsen Fishway with just one shad—that's better than many fishways for their first year. And the Shetucket River is doing well. Greenville hasn't achieved a record, but it has lifted over 2,500 shad and Bob Stira reports 35 have been lifted at Tunnel—a facility record! Data for Taftville is lagging behind due to problems with the crew. Hopefully when they get caught up with their video, we'll see that number of 4 go up as well. Progress is being made!

Norwich Public Utilities made one more trucking run from Greenville before putting away their truck for the season, bringing their total effort to around 350 shad. Sharp-eyed seasonal Jolene Spencer noticed that shad (and other species) in the Greenville window were showing signs of physical injury so we investigated alongside NPU. An errant bolt was discovered protruding from the fishway entrance wall about 2 feet below the water level and it appears that fish are contacting it and gouging themselves. Plans have been made to grind that down and address some other related issues.

Eels- Fishing Brook Trap only logged 477 eels this past week and the count is up to 29,940. Greenville stands at 343; Tunnel has collected less than 10 (yet to really get going there); Mill River starts out the season with 85; the count for the new eel pass on the Byram River is up to 11. Joe is seeing glass eels and elvers at the eel pass at the Mianus Pond Dam; Ray is seeing some at Clarks Pond Fishway; Bengt has not seen any yet at the Branford Water Supply Ponds. We're just starting to see a few at the Leesville Dam (Salmon River) but not much for this time of year.

I will be away the next two weeks, attending the annual NASCO meeting. Tim Wildman will take over this report. Please email reports to him at timothy.wildman@ct.gov.



Underwater photo of alewives spawning in the tailrace of an old mill on the Housatonic River below the Derby Dam. (Photo by Matt Shirely).



Are you getting tired of grainy viewing window photos yet? This is an American shad passing up the Kinneytown Dam fishway—missing the upper lobe of its caudal fin. This has been a record shad year for this fishway.