

CONNECTICUT WEEKLY DIADROMOUS FISH REPORT
 Report Date: April 30, 2014



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.ctiversalmon.org.

CONNECTICUT RIVER LOCATIONS

FISHWAY (RIVER)	ATLANTIC SALMON*	AMER. SHAD	AMER. ALEWIFE	BLUEBACK HERRING	GIZZARD SHAD	STRIPED BASS	SEA LAMPREY	SEA-RUN TROUT	AMER. EEL
Rainbow (WFMD) (Farmington)	0	2	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Leesville(WFMD) (Salmon)	0	-	-	0	-	-	0***	0	0
StanChem**(WFMD) (Mattabesset)	0	2	110	0	0	-	8	0	1
Moulson Pond** (Eightmile)	0	0	11	0	0	0	5	0	-
Mary Steube*(WFMD) (Mill Brook)	-	-	849	-	-	-	-	-	-
Rogers Lake+(WFMD) (Mill Brook)	-	-	0	-	-	-	-	-	-
WestSpringfield (Westfield- MA)	0/0	114	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Holyoke (Connecticut- MA)	0/0	13	0	7	0	0	0	0	0
Manhan River** (Manhan- MA)									
Turners Falls** (Connecticut- MA)	0/0	0	-	0	0	0	0	-	-
Vernon** (Connecticut- VT)	0/0	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	131	970	7	0	0	13	0	1
(last year's totals)	92/4	397,486	9,597	3,228	824	208	24,939	18	16

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. **There is a video camera that records passage. 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.

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. (WFMD)- Tours or open house for World Fish Migration Day, May 24 (<http://nature.org/ctfish>)

COMMENTS:

The flow of the Connecticut River went down to 25,000 cfs (at Holyoke) this week and fish runs began to move up. You can see that Rainbow, Holyoke and West Springfield started passing low numbers of **American shad**. But the tributaries were pretty quiet, in terms of alewife runs. You can see we passed a handful at Steube, Moulson, and StanChem and saw a few at Leesville, but not what we would expect for this time of year. This is consistent with what is happening along the shoreline, too. The runs just don't want to really get going—probably due to water temperatures that are much lower than normal for this time of year. The cold nights are keeping them low. Normally the water temperatures of the tributaries are around 10 C (50F) by April 1. It's almost May 1 and the temperatures are still just a hair above 10/50. Ken Sprinkle of the USFWS was sampling Connecticut River sites this past week and already found more blueback herring in the Farmington and Mattabeset rivers than alewives. And we've already past a few bluebacks at Holyoke. In past years, bluebacks typically don't enter the river until May 1 and take a while to move up. Even in this cold, late spring, they seemed to have arrived and ascended early, continuing a trend we've noticed the last few years. Likely a result of climate change.

For the last 35 years, adult **Atlantic salmon** that returned to the Connecticut River as part of the restoration program have been captured at fishways and taken to special facility for breeding. Due to changes in the program and the unavailability of suitable facilities, salmon will no longer be captured. Effective immediately, all salmon that appear in the traps of the fishways will be released and allowed to continue to migrate upstream. This means there will be adult salmon in portions of our state where they have not previously been found. Anglers may incidentally catch one, see them jumping at dams, or even see them spawning in the fall. It is important to know that despite the changes, it is still illegal to possess salmon and if you catch one, you must release it unharmed as quickly as possible. It is hoped that these salmon will spawn naturally in the streams in the fall. Before releasing salmon at the fishways, biologists will attach a yellow tag to the fish's dorsal fin that will identify it as a salmon and list a phone number to call to report the fish. The tag should be left on the fish. Anglers should write down (or photograph) the tag with the phone number and fish ID number quickly with the fish still in the water and then release the fish and call it in. To assist in identifying salmon, we are including a sketch that compares Atlantic salmon with brown trout. Salmon are silver only in the spring when they are fresh from the ocean. Once in freshwater for a while, they turn brownish and resemble a brown trout. Salmon are generally around 30 inches long. Any fish that looks like a brown trout but is that large should be suspected of being a salmon, tag or no tag (some tags will fall off). Salmon will be released from the Leesville Fishway on the Salmon River in East Haddam and could be seen in the Salmon, Blackledge, and Jeremy rivers. They will also be released from the Rainbow Dam Fishway on the Farmington River in Windsor and could be seen in the Farmington River as far upstream as Collinsville (they might jump the lower dam) and both branches of Salmon Brook in Granby and East Granby.

The big news this week was the discovery of a dead 7-foot long **Atlantic sturgeon** on a beach in Lyme, CT. A family down on the river found it Saturday afternoon and may have dragged it up on shore a bit but an excursion boat called it into the CTDEEP Dispatch, who called me. I rushed to the site with Inland Fisheries Division Director Pete Aarrestad and long-time fish groupie Nick Zackeo just in time to grab it before the tide took it out. We delivered it to the Old Lyme Marine Headquarters and covered it in ice until Tom Savoy, a sturgeon biologist with the CTDEEP's Marine Fisheries Division could examine it. This is a federally endangered species and not just anyone is authorized to possess much less poke and prod these fish. Tom removed bony parts for aging the fish and did an internal examination, for which he gets a badge for courage—this fish was already quite odiferous (it stunk!). Tom's conclusions: he has to wait for a few weeks to age it (parts need to dry out) but he suspects it is over 15 years old, an immature female, never been tagged or handled by biologists previously, and no idea how it died. Afterwards, Tom towed it out in Long Island Sound for the ceremonial burial at sea. Atlantic sturgeon is one of two sturgeon species we find in Connecticut, both are listed as "endangered" under the federal Endangered Species Act. While the more common shortnose rarely grows longer than 40 inches, Atlantics have been known to reach 12 feet in length and were the subject of an intensive commercial fishery (particularly in the Portland-Cromwell area) up until around the First World War. There is a spawning population of shortnose sturgeon in the Connecticut River (only place in CT) but the status of the Atlantic sturgeon is unknown. We assume that most Atlantics seen around here are from the Hudson River and in the area for feeding. This is the time of year that people see (or occasionally catch) sturgeon. Remember—you may not possess these fish, dead or alive. If you catch one, release it unharmed right away (that means no 10 minute photo sessions!). If you find one dead, do what these people did, drag it up out of the way of the tide and call it in to the DEEP right way (860-424-3333). Many carry internal tags that we need to check for.



This Atlantic Sturgeon washed up on a river beach in Lyme, CT on Saturday. It measured 7-feet long and took three men to lift it onto the tailgate. To the left is CTDEEP Inland Fisheries Director Pete Aarrestad and to the right is yours truly Steve Gephard. It was not quite the smelliest fish I have ever handled but it was the largest.



The carcass was relatively untouched. I guess the gulls did not have a cutting torch to get past the bony scutes that cover sturgeon. This fish was found about eight miles up the river but we have no idea how far up it went, where it died or how it died.

OTHER LOCATIONS WITHIN CONNECTICUT

FISHWAY (RIVER)	AMER. SHAD	ALEWIFE	BLUEBACK HERRING	GIZZARD SHAD	STRIPED BASS	SEA LAMPREY	SEA-RUN TROUT	AMER. EEL
Greeneville* (WFMD) (Shetucket R., Norwich)	0	550	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
Tunnel* (Quinebaug R., Preston)	0	4	0	0	0	0	0	0
Kinneytown* (Naugatuck R., Seymour)		out of order	0	0	0	5	0	0
Hallville Pond* (WFMD) (Poquetanuck Br. Preston)	-	17	0	0	-	0	0	0
Latimers Brook** (WFMD)- (Latimers Br., E.Lyme)		15,120						
Gorton Pond (Pattagansett R., E.Lyme)	-	0	0					
Brides Brook** (Brides Brook, E.Lyme)		233,183	0					
Clarks Pond (Indian River, Milford)		6	0	-		-	-	
Branford Supply Pond Dam** (WFMD) (Queach Br., Branford)		965	0	-	-	-	-	
Landon Dam** (West River, Guilford)		363	0	-	-	-	0	0
Haakonsen Fishway* (WFMD) (Quinnipiac R., Wallingford)	0	462	0	0	0	25	2	
Bunnells Pond* (WFMD) (Peqonnock R., Bridgeport)		910	0	0	0			
Wood Dam** (Saugatuck R., Westport)		out of order	0	0				
Mianus River Pond* ** (WFMD) (Mianus R., Greenwich)		17,118	0	0	0	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= 4/22 Taftville= n.a. Occum= n.a. Tunnel= 4/26 Kinneytown= 4/12 Haakonsen= 4/28 Hallville= 4/27.

**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. (WFMD)- Tours or open house for World Fish Migration Day, May 24 (<http://nature.org/ctfish>)

COMMENTS:

A quiet week—fish continued to trickle in but nothing like we would expect for this time of year. The water temperatures are still cold. Our fish counter data are up-to-date as are our video reviews for Hallville and Haakonsen but we are behind on Greenville and Bunnells, both which were passing more fish by week's end. We've heard of people catching shad below the Greenville Dam but Norwich Public Utilities has not yet lifted any in the fishlift, at least not as of our review dates. Sally Harold (TNC) is still having technical issues with her counter at the Wood Dam, we're still out of action at Kinneytown due to water damage of the camera (hope to be back up by the weekend), and Bob Stira of FirstLight is reporting problems with the camera at Taftville. These systems take a lot of maintenance and care and subject to all sorts of problems, especially during high water. We all spend a lot of effort trying to keep these systems operational to provide these data. Bride Brook went from a 30,000 night to a zero to an 11-fish night, and then last night we had over 15,000 again. Many fishways are passing many non-diadromous species, too. For example, Haakonsen on the Quinnipiac has already passed 814 white suckers, 3 carp and 3 smallmouths. Greenville has passed 14 yellow perch; Hallville has passed 7 brown trout and 11 brook trout, including a couple of real hefty ones.

Miscellaneous field reports of river herring were similar to last week: a few in Mill Brook, Old Lyme, Gorton Pond Fishway in East Lyme, Sasco Brook and Mill River in Fairfield, Greenwich Creek in Greenwich. Ray Baldwin reports the run has begun at the Clarks Pond Fishway on the Indian River in Milford. Yellow perch are also running there. Fish were in and out on the Pequonnock River in Bridgeport all week (see photo below).

Other activities this week included the beginning of our **alewife trucking** program. We've hauled fish from Bride Lake to the East Branch Eightmile River and the Quinebaug River (Aspinook). You may recall we did not transplanting last year because our truck broke down. It is back in operation. We also installed **guidance booms** on the Saugatuck River, retrieved a **dead osprey** from the Latimer Brook Fishway, took possession of the **dead sturgeon** (see Connecticut River report) and responded to a complaint about **dangling fishing line** on the Hammonasset River threatening ospreys diving for alewives. Today have staff scrambling all over the state pulling **electronics** out of the fishways in anticipation of high water due to a forecasted 4-inch rain. FirstLight is pulling its experimental eel traps below the Stevenson Dam for the same reason. We can't afford to lose more equipment like we did at Kinneytown. Work progresses on the Tingue Dam Fish Bypass channel on the Naugatuck River in Seymour.

Glass eels- the run is picking up. Fishing Brook = 5,073; Mill River Eel Trap= 82; Greenville Eel Lift= 43, Lower Millpond (Lyme)= 9,259. Joe Cassone reports seeing eels climbing the eel pass at Mianus. The eel passes on the Byram River are installed but no eels yet. More eels observed at the Branford Water Supply Pond Dam this week, as well.

<http://www.kjonline.com/outdoors/As-alewife-populations-recover-a-new-economy-emerges.html?pagenum=full>
<http://www.animalplanet.com/tv-shows/cold-river-cash>

A couple of personal notes: **Joe Cassone** has been working for the Greenwich Conservation Commission for a number of years but has accepted a new position with a private consulting firm doing fisheries survey work on the Hudson River. Joe operated the Mianus Pond Fishway and eel pass and set up a great eel trap & pass on the Byram River, also in Greenwich. He recently got his Masters Degree at Sacred Heart where he did a thesis on silver eels, helping Aquarion and The Nature Conservancy on a project trying to keep eels out of the water distribution system. Yesterday was Joe's last day at Greenwich, although he has generously agreed to continue to help with the fishways on a voluntary basis, and we wish him well. We are saddened by the passing of **Jim Brockman** an engineer and a principal of Macchi Engineers in Hartford. Jim began working at Macchi for his uncle when Macchi designed the original Rainbow Dam Fishway and was involved in several projects including the Bunnells Pond Dam Fishway in Bridgeport and the current project to design a fishlift for Rainbow. Jim will be missed.



Three alewives passing the window at the Hallville Pond Fishway on the Poquetanuck Brook in Preston.



One alewife coming up the Bunnells Pond Fishway on the Pequonnock River in Bridgeport that didn't quite make it. A cormorant entered the fishway exit at the headpond and grabbed this alewife just as it passed the window and got its picture taken.