

CONNECTICUT WEEKLY DIADROMOUS FISH REPORT

Report Date: April 26, 2016



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 visit the USFWS website at www.fws.gov/r5crc. 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	10	0	0	0	0	1	0	0
Leesville (Salmon)	0	- moderate		few	-	-	0***	1	0
StanChem* (Mattabesset)	0	23	160	0	7	-	4	0	0
Moulson Pond* (Eightmile)	0	0	52	25	0	0	16	0	-
Mary Steube* (Mill Brook)	-	-	0	-	-	-	-	-	-
Rogers Lake+ (Mill Brook)	-	-	0	-	-	-	-	-	-
WestSpringfield (Westfield- MA)	0	25	0	0	0	0	22	0	1
Holyoke (Connecticut- MA)	0	5,704	0	0	19	0	17	0	0
Manhan River* (Manhan- MA)	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Turners Falls* (Connecticut- MA)	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
Wilder* (Connecticut- VT)	0	-	-	-	-	-	0	-	0
Other (all sites)	0								
TOTALS=	0	5,762	212	25	26	0	60	1	1
(last year's totals)	22	416,355	237	11,822	93	21	24,573	9	20,305

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.

*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.

COMMENTS:

Last week the Connecticut River was 6.5 C (44 F) at Holyoke. This week it is 11 C (52 F), thanks to that warm weekend. The river is still very low and today's rain will help. Last week the local shad bushes were just buds; this week they're in full bloom. Shad are showing up at Holyoke (1,100 lifted on Sunday) and West Springfield and the netters in the river are reporting a good year so far. But they are a bit concerned because they are already seeing some of the females running ripe and that seems very early. They're hoping it does not signal a quick end to the run. Two shortnose sturgeon were lifted this past week at Holyoke and released downstream. NOAA has not given permission to pass this endangered species upstream out of concern of what might become of them as they turn around and go back downstream (turbines). The new downstream bypass facility that I highlighted in an earlier report is intended to provide safe passage to sturgeon and silver eels and so perhaps a decision is pending. The news with river herring is that the blueback herring are already in the river and at least as far upstream as the Farmington River where Ken Sprankle (USFWS) sampled both alewives (many spent!) and bluebacks, with bluebacks dominating. Volunteer Denis Walter reported a notable school yesterday in Wethersfield Cove yesterday. We snorkeled Leesville again and realized that some of the fish that we thought we alewives last weekend were likely blueback herring, although alewives still dominate that site. But this is a continuing trend of bluebacks entering the river earlier and earlier. We observed alewives spawning at Leesville with bluebacks in the schools. Genetic studies have shown a surprising rate of hybridization and this time and space overlap is contributing to that. We are finding that the streams are so low that alewives may be spawning at the heads-of-tide where there is sufficient depth. The flow coming down the brooks may be too low to draw them up. Examples of this are Mill Brook in Old Lyme and Eightmile River in Lyme (although Moulson Pond has passed both alewives and bluebacks). The sucker run continues strong at most reporting fishways, including Holyoke, West Springfield, StanChem, and Leesville. We passed a nice sea-run brown trout at Leesville on Sunday. I still have not heard of many striped bass in the river. However, Stu Winquist of our volunteer crew for the Salmon River-Pine Brook area gets the prize for the best sighting of the week. He saw a harbor seal in the Salmon River at Sunrise State Park on Saturday. We occasionally see seals on the Connecticut River as far upstream as Middletown but I have never heard of a seal in the Salmon River. The Turners Falls fishways were opened on April 21. The Milford fishlift on the Penobscot River (Maine) was opened on the 15th and they have already passed 421 alewives. A number of partners including Princeton Hydro and the Connecticut River Watershed Council will be sponsoring a kayak flotilla for World Fish Migration Day (WFMD), Saturday May 21. Save the date! The paddling event will take place in the lower Connecticut River and we hope to have a large turn-out to bring attention to the plight of migratory fish. More details will be provided in this report in the coming weeks both on this event and others such as fishway open houses for the WFMD. I begin a weekly radio/internet talk tomorrow morning on iCRV (www.iCRVradio.com). I'll know more later but I think it will run throughout the day and be posted.

I'll conclude my reports on the dam removals done during the summer of 2015 with this this week's featured project: **Straight Pond Dam Removal**. The dam was the second barrier in Poquetanuck Brook (also known as the stream with five names) in Preston. The first dam is the Hallville Pond Dam and several years ago the Eastern Connecticut Conservation District (ECCD) built a fishway at that dam. That provided access to the headpond, which is good spawning habitat for alewives but the small Straight Pond Dam that is located right where the stream flows into Hallville Pond prevented fish from going further upstream and accessing miles of habitat up to Avery Pond. The dam is owned by the DEEP and is part of the Rose Hill Wildlife Management Area. After gaining approval from the DEEP's Wildlife Division and State Dams program, we put together a project in which the ECCD received a grant from the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service to notch the dam. Much of the work was done by staff from the USFWS's Stewart B. McKinney National Wildlife Refuge. It took us one day to set the siphons and draw the pond down and another day for crews from the Refuge, ECCD, and our Diadromous program to complete the notch in the dam. The notch was favored over a complete removal to maintain a pool of water behind the dam for wildlife and fire protection purposes and to avoid complications with the nearby bridge. This is a good example of how small dams can block fish runs and not all fish passage projects need to be big, expensive projects contracted out to private firms. DIY fish passage.



The pond behind Straight Pond Dam was drawn down using siphons (long black hoses) and then the jackhammering began.



The dam as it looks this spring. A nice smooth tongue of water flows through the notch allowing fish from Hallville Pond to swim up through the notch and into Straight Pond and beyond.

OTHER LOCATIONS WITHIN CONNECTICUT

FISHWAY (RIVER)	AMER. SHAD	ALEWIFE	BLUEBACK HERRING	GIZZARD SHAD	STRIPED BASS	SEA LAMPREY	SEA-RUN TROUT	AMER. EEL
Greenville* (Shetucket R., Norwich)	346	681	0	0	0	3	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	1	0	0	0	0	0	0
Kinneytown* (Naugatuck R., Seymour)	0	2	0	0	0	1	0	0
Hallville Pond* (Poquetanuck Br. Preston)	-	7	0	0	-	0	0	0
Trading Cove Brook** - (Trading Cove Brook, Montville)	-	0	0	0	-	-	0	-
Jordan Brook** - (Jordan Brook, Waterford)	-	29	0	0	-	0	0	0
Latimers Brook** - (Latimers Br., E.Lyme)	-	3,204	0	-	-	-	0	-
Brides Brook** (Brides Brook, E.Lyme)		118,800						
Clarks Pond - (Indian River, Milford)	-	1		-		-	-	
Branford Supply Pond Dam** (Queach Br., Branford)	416		-	-	-	-		
Lower Guilford Lake** (East River, Guilford)		2,005	-			-	0	
Haakonsen Fishway* (Quinnipiac R., Wallingford)	0	286	0	0	0	0	1	
Bunnells Pond* (Peqonnock R., Bridgeport)	-	17	0	0	0			
Wood Dam** (Saugatuck R., Westport)		0	0			Fish counter not operational		
Mianus River Pond* ** (Mianus R., Greenwich)		5.478	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:

Greenville= 4/20 Taftville= n.a. Occum= n.a. Tunnel= n.a. Kinneytown= 4/24. Haakonsen= 4/24 Hallville= 4/24

**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:

At this point, we are discouraged about the alewife runs. Last week they were still low but we were seeing them in most places and assumed that with warm weather, the runs would really pick up. We had that warm weather over the weekend and temperatures shot up but the runs did not. We passed 5,000 fish at Bride Lake over the weekend (low) and have yet to have a strong day (tens of thousands). Some of the smaller fishways picked up a few hundred fish over the weekend but nothing spectacular. We have provided alewives to RI DEM for restoration work in Rhode Island but our trucking was delayed for a day due to a split pipe on our transport truck. We hope to start tomorrow.

With reports of alewives already spawning and the fact that the runs normally peak by now, things are not looking encouraging. On the other hand, the yellow perch are incredibly late. We're seeing many still gravid perch—they should have spawned by now—and the white suckers are still going strong. For the most part, the streams are very low so we'll keep our fingers crossed that this rain will draw some fish in. However, flows in eastern Connecticut are not as bad and Ray at Clarks Pond reports flows on the Indian River are okay. Rain has been spotty so some watersheds are doing better than others.

All fishways are opened but some may not be real effective soon if the rains don't start. The fishway at Taftville is operating but due to a computer glitch, First Light lost some video files so we don't have counts for that site yet. Most fishways are all passing white suckers. Trout and smallmouth bass are showing up in some fishways but Greenville is lifting a variety of fish including white perch, channel catfish, all three species of sunfish, black crappie, and largemouth bass. Danielle with New York City Parks and Rec reports the Bronx River Fishway is up and running a passing a few white suckers. Strong herring runs are reported in the Hudson, Long Island and in the upper Cape but perhaps not so strong in the lower Cape.

EEL PASSAGE: Fishing Brook= 2,984 glass/95 yellow; Mill River= 1 yellow; Greenville= 7 glass/136 yellow. Glass eels seen at other locations, too. We decline to disclose unprotected locations for fear of poaching.



Two alewives are captured on video as they swim past our camera on the Moulson Pond Fishway on the Eightmile River, Lyme, CT.



A day's catch of young-of-year eels from the Fishing Brook eel trap. Staff will enumerate and subsample to take biological data as required by the Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission and release unsampled fish back to the stream.