

CONNECTICUT WEEKLY DIADROMOUS FISH REPORT
 Report Date: April 14, 2009



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/r5cr. 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 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0* | 0 | 0 |
| Leesville (Salmon) | 0 | - | - | 0 | - | - | 0*** | 0 | 0 |
| Moulson Pond (Eightmile) | 0 | - | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0*** | 0 | - |
| Mary Steube+ (Mill Brook) | - | - | 9 | - | - | - | - | - | - |
| WestSpringfield (Westfield- MA) | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| Holyoke (Connecticut- MA) | 0/0 | 0 | 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 | 0 | 9 | 0++ | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| (last year's totals) | 141/11 | 156,4926 | ----- | 89++ | 110 | 551 | 66,521 | 8 | 213 |

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:

Spring is slow to arrive and it is reflected in the river. Temperatures in Connecticut have reached 48 F (9 C) but may not be that warm now. Ponds in the valley in Massachusetts had skim ice this morning. Shad normally enter the rivers at 50 F (10C) and I have not seen any sign of them yet. A local fish market reports that "their guy" isn't even going out onto the river for another 5 days. The River was up, due to snowmelt and rain but it is back down to levels that are a bit low for this time of year—25,000 cfs at Thompsonsville. Last week there was still some snow in higher elevations in Vermont but I don't know if that still exists now. The Holyoke Fishlift is reported to have been tested and operated and is ready to go for the season but probably will not lift routinely for another couple of days until things warm up. The Rainbow Fishway normally is opened for the season today but it cannot be opened yet due to necessary maintenance work. We are waiting to receive repaired parts to the headgate and a new transformer to provide power. As soon as those things arrive, we will open the fishway. All fishways farther downstream are opened.

As you will read in the next section for the coastal area, the alewives are running, but not particularly strong yet. They have entered the river and have been observed at our most downstream fishway in Old Lyme, Mary Steube, but the numbers are low. Valinn with the Lyme Land Conservation Trust reports alewives in the Eightmile as far up as the head-of-tide but not up to the Moulson Pond Fishway yet. I snorkeled the Salmon River at Leesville in East Haddam on Friday and there were no signs of alewives there. (Just lots of white suckers in spawning colors!) Since the river is not particularly high, the lack of upstream ambitious by the alewives can probably be attributed to the cold temperatures. Yellow perch are also running in the Eightmile but I didn't see any of them or darters at Leesville. Striped bass are already on the job in the river and tributaries.

We stocked this year's crop of hatchery-reared Atlantic salmon smolts in the Farmington River during the week of March 23. About 41,000 smolts from the Pittsford National Fish Hatchery and about 2,000 smolts from the Berkshire National Fish Hatchery were stocked into several sections of the lower Farmington River and can be expected to start moving toward the sea at any time. Fry stocking of Atlantic salmon into the Farmington, Salmon, and Eightmile river watersheds will begin this week. We had a great response from our volunteer meeting hosted by the Farmington River Watershed Association.

It has been a very busy early spring for us. Hiring our normal crew of seasonal workers has been delayed and so our permanent staff has been scrambling to try to cover all of the bases. We are excited that the Department has announced grant awards to a number of parties to work on habitat and fish passage improvement along the Farmington River and we look forward to working with them on those efforts. The Department has worked with the Governor's Office to apply for some large economic stimulus grants from NOAA to improve fish passage in the state, including proposals on the Farmington (Rainbow Fishway), Naugatuck, and Scantic rivers. Although it was unclear from some of the reports in the newspapers, these funds have not yet been allocated but have been applied for under a competitive process. We'll keep our fingers crossed.

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) | 0 | 0 | 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 | no report | | | | | | |
| Trading Cove Brook (Trading Cove Br., Montville) | | none seen | | | | | | |
| Latimers Brook+ (Latimers Br., E.Lyme) | | present (not enumerated) | | | | | | |
| Gorton Pond (Pattagansett R., E.Lyme) | | present (not enumerated) | | | | | | |
| Brides Brook** (Brides Brook, E.Lyme) | | 9,162 | | | | | | |
| Fishing Brook (Fishing Br., O.Saybrook) | | none seen | | | | | | |
| Branford Supply Pond Dam** 17 (Queach Br., Branford) | | | | | | | | |
| Clarks Pond (Indian R., Milford) | | no report | | | | | | |
| Bunnells Pond (Peqonnock R., Bridgeport) | | present (not enumerated) | | | | | | |
| Wood Dam** (Saugatuck R., Westport) | | 104 | | | | | | |
| Mianus River Pond** (Mianus R., Greenwich) | | 1,752 | 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= 4/04. Taftville= n.a. Occum= n.a. Tunnel= n.a.. Kinneytown= ??

***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:

Alewives have been slow to pick up speed. The Brides Brook run is the earliest run of the season but is lagging behind its typical numbers for this time of year. This morning, we counted 2,766 alewives in the trap from over the weekend. We assume the low water temperatures is the reason. We are not trapping alewives at Latimers this season due to a lack of seasonal employees so we have no exact numbers but alewives have been seen moving through on three of the five times we've visited. Alewives have also been observed in Poquetanuck Brook and the Shetucket, Pattagansett, Pequonnock, and Quinnipiac rivers. No alewives have been lifted at Greenville yet, but the fish are in the river and we hope to see some lifted soon. Fish counters on the Mianus and Saugatuck rivers and Queach Brook all document alewives but at lower than expected numbers. We have not received a report from Ray at Clarks Pond in the Indian River in Milford but I assume he is on the job because a big log that was wedged in the fishway on Thursday was gone when our crew arrived yesterday to remove it.

The folks at the Bronx River in NYC have documented alewives returning to that river – the first report in decades! This is three years after the first transplantation of alewives from Brides Brook and we assume they are off-spring from those first spawners. This is great news and proof of progress on restoring runs to this urban river. See http://www.nycgovparks.org/sub_newsroom/press_releases/press_releases.php?id=20818 for more information.

The only other fish report comes from the Quinnipiac River at the Wallace Dam where UConn grad student Ben Gahagan reports seeing sea lamprey. This is very early for sea lamprey, which enter the estuaries in late winter but usually are not seen in upstream areas by fishways until late April or May. However, they were seen at Wallace Dam this time last year, too, so maybe this is a particularly early run.

At this point, all fishways should be open (except for some upriver hydro sites). If your fishway is not opened, please open it. If you need help, please let us know.

This week's featured fishway is the **GROSSMAN FISHWAY** on the Aspetuck River in Westport. This fishway was built last fall by The Nature Conservancy using a grant from the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation. It is on the first dam up from where the Aspetuck River flows into the Saugatuck River. All downstream dams on the Saugatuck have fishways. This fishway targets river herring, sea-run trout, American eels, and perhaps sea lamprey. The fishway was designed by Curt Orvis of the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service and built by a local contractor. The dam and property is private and not opened to the public but it is fantastic that the property owners agreed to have the fishway built on their property to benefit the public and the aquatic resources.



The completed Grossman Fishway as seen from the far bank. This photo was taken in high water and the dam looks passable but at typical flows, this dam blocks fish runs. The right bank fishway allows fish to pass while blending in to the surrounding landscape.



There is a six-inch drop at each of the wooden weirs inside the Fishway. The wooden gate to close the fishway is resting on top of the fishway. One can see the stone façade added to cover the concrete walls.