

# CONNECTICUT WEEKLY DIADROMOUS FISH REPORT

Report Date: May 19, 2015



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/r5crc](http://www.fws.gov/r5crc). For more information about Atlantic salmon, visit the Connecticut River Salmon Association at [www.ctriversalmon.org](http://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)	1	244	0	14	0	0	1,234	2	0
Leesville (Salmon)	0	-	-	0	-	-	0***	0	0
StanChem* (Mattabesset)	0	7	29	10	4	-	46	4	0
Moulson Pond* (Eightmile)	0	12	65	3,913	0	0	9	0	-
Mary Steube* (Mill Brook)	-	-	134	-	-	-	-	-	-
Rogers Lake+ (Mill Brook)	-	-	0 (but all 134 from Mary Steube trucked to Rogers Lake)-			-	-	-	-
WestSpringfield (Westfield- MA)	0	1,494	0	1	0	0	130	0	0
Holyoke (Connecticut- MA)	3	240,938	0	38	17	3	8,557	0	0
Manhan River* (Manhan- MA)	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Turners Falls* (Connecticut- MA)	1	22,499	-	0	0	0	794	-	-
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								
<b>TOTALS=</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>242,695</b>	<b>228</b>	<b>3,976</b>	<b>21</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>9,976</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>0</b>
<b>(last year's totals)</b>	<b>31</b>	<b>374,232</b>	<b>1,549</b>	<b>942</b>	<b>475</b>	<b>61</b>	<b>27,585</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>17</b>

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:

The river is extremely low for this time of year. It's about 9,000 cfs and it would normally be up over 20,000 cfs. The water is also still fairly cool, averaging 17 C (63 F). These conditions may not be so bad for shad. The low flows make it easier to swim upstream and easier to find the fishway entrances and the low temperatures will prolong the migration season before they have to spawn. On the other hand, a good rain would likely draw in more fish, especially Atlantic salmon. I'm not sure if this drizzle we seem to be having today will add up to any increased run-off. You can see we're up to four salmon for the season—the first one at Rainbow arrived on Friday. See photos below. It was a 31" long, male—bright from the ocean. Often it is hard to determine the sex of fish fresh from the sea. The secondary sex characteristics (beard, deep voices...☺) don't appear until they've been in freshwater for a while. However, this one had a snout that was a bit elongated and a fairly large adipose fin. It's not often easy but that's what I'm guessing. No wounds, no scale loss—in excellent condition.

Shad continue to pass upstream but at a much slower rate than we saw the previous week. The cooling off of temperatures are probably the cause. But yesterday, the Holyoke daily count went into double figures again with 11,605 shad lifted. The same can be said for blueback herring. They were found in many of the tributaries in strong numbers at the beginning of the week but by mid-week when the air temperatures went down, the fish had pulled out. A few bluebacks came back into Leesville by yesterday but with today's rain, they could drop back again. Similarly, on the Eightmile River, there were lots of fish early in the week and they were back by Sunday afternoon, with Emily Bjornberg reporting temperatures dropping from 23 C (73F) down to 19C (66F). We think the bluebacks crowd into the river and stay there much of the season and when water temperatures shoot up, they enter the tributaries to spawn, as far up as they can go. When a cool off occurs, they drop back down again. If it warms up after today, we could see another wave of fish move in. A good number of bluebacks passed at Moulson but I wonder what's going on with sea lamprey there. We're not real sure what governs the movements of sea lamprey. On May 8, there were plenty of lampreys at Leesville, moving up the bedrock right up to the base of the dam. On May 15, there was not one to be seen, even though we know the run is not over. The lampreys are moving up Rainbow Fishway at a good clip. We are collecting lampreys for two different research teams, including one at Wesleyan University. We're also collecting dead shad for a Masters student at Southern Connecticut State University. Bruce reports seeing lots of elvers moving up Rainbow, too. The number of stripers in the river continues to rise. Some nice sea-run brown trout moving up the StanChem Fishway on the Mattabeset.

Lots of menhaden in the lower river. The osprey are loving it. Menhaden are not anadromous but worthy of mention since they are important forage base for many species, including stripers. Furthermore, we get a lot of calls about them and some people confuse them with river herring. See photos in the "Other Locations" section of this report. We heard a rumor of someone catching shad on rod and reel in the Farmington River above Rainbow Dam. Anyone know anything about that?

What's happening elsewhere in the Northeast? On the Susquehanna, the number of shad passed at the first dam (Conowingo) is 7,631—less than last year so far—but the numbers passed at the upstream dams at Holtwood, Safe Harbor, and York Haven are all higher than last year. On the Merrimack River, they've passed 10,840 American shad and 92,447 river herring (and no salmon yet) at the Essex Dam Fishlift. The river herring are probably mostly alewives due to past trucking up to headwater lakes. They've also passed 2,199 sea lamprey. In Maine, the runs are just getting going. Only the Penobscot has logged any salmon so far—15 at the Milford Dam Fishlift. They've also passed 55,000 alewives. Over 17,000 alewives have gone up the Saco (Cataract) and 780,000 have passed Benton Falls on the Sebasticook (tributary of the Kennebec).

**ANNUAL RAINBOW DAM FISHWAY OPEN HOUSE-** May 30, 10 am until 3 pm. 400 Rainbow Road, Windsor (Poquonnock section).

**SHAD FISHING NIGHT ABOARD THE RIVERQUEST-** June 4, 7:30 pm. \$45. See [ctrivermuseum.org](http://ctrivermuseum.org).

**ANNUAL ESSEX ROTARY CLUB SHAD BAKE-** June 6, 3:00 pm until 6.30 pm. Connecticut River Museum at the Foot of Main Street.

Eels: Fishing Brook= 7,296/76 elvers; Lower Millpond= 4,667 glass eels/142 elvers (no additional reports this week). Glass eels continue to be seen at Mianus.



*The first salmon to return this year to the Rainbow Dam Fishway. Even a good photo doesn't do justice to the subtle, complex colors. If you're looking at this electronically, blow it up to a close-up. This fish, fresh from the ocean, had a spectacular purple hue along its back. Pardon the thumb over the eye but it is a good trick to keep the fish calm while it has its picture taken. (Photo Sally Harold, TNC)*



*Rather than just open the fish trap and wait for the fish to leave, we remove the salmon from the trap and release it in the next upstream pool so we know that it has left the trap. Here, I submerge the handling sling into the fishway pool and open the sling and let the salmon shoot out. Its yellow numbered Floy tag can be seen on its dorsal fin. (Photo S. Harold)*

## OTHER LOCATIONS WITHIN CONNECTICUT

FISHWAY (RIVER)	AMER. SHAD	ALEWIFE	BLUEBACK HERRING	GIZZARD SHAD	STRIPED BASS	SEA LAMPREY	SEA-RUN TROUT	AMER. EEL
<b>Greeneville*</b> (Shetucket R., Norwich)	625	418	0	0	2	1	0	0
<b>Taftville*</b> (Shetucket R., Norwich)	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
<b>Occum*</b> (Shetucket R., Norwich)	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
<b>Tunnel*</b> (Quinebaug R., Preston)	2	20	0	0	0	0	0	0
<b>Kinneytown*</b> (Naugatuck R., Seymour)	0	1	0	0	0	127	0	0
<b>Hallville Pond*</b> (Poquetanuck Br. Preston)	-	31	0	0	-	0	5	1
<b>Latimers Brook**</b> (Latimers Br., E.Lyme)	-	4,812	0	-	-	-	0	-
<b>Gorton Pond-</b> (Pattagansett R., E.Lyme)	-	no more coming up but schools of alewives seen spawning in the pond						
<b>Brides Brook**</b> (Brides Brook, E.Lyme)		218,076	<b>FINAL</b>					
<b>Clarks Pond</b> (Indian River, Milford)	-	34			-	-		
<b>Branford Supply Pond Dam**</b> (Queach Br., Branford)	465		-	-	-	-		
<b>Lower Guilford Lake**</b> (East River, Guilford)		2,187	-			- 0	0	
<b>Haakonsen Fishway*</b> (Quinnipiac R., Wallingford)	2	1,082	0	13	0	184	0	
<b>Bunnells Pond*</b> (Peqonnock R., Bridgeport)	-camera is malfunctioning!			0	0			
<b>Wood Dam**</b> (Saugatuck R., Westport)		2,794	0		0			
<b>Mianus River Pond* **</b> (Mianus R., Greenwich)		7,186	2,293	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= 5/7 Taftville= n.a. Occum= n.a. Tunnel= 5/12 Kinneytown= 5/17. Haakonsen= 5/17 Hallville= 5/12

\*\*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 are pretty much over for New London County (east). A few more straggled into Latimers and Hallville. As reported last week, the spent alewives were pouring out of Bride Lake and down the brook. We got a call from Vallin and others that as the tide went down, the fish were having problems getting out into Long Island Sound over a sand bar that had formed over the winter off the mouth of the brook's culvert through the beach. Once again the great staff at Rocky Neck State Park came to the rescue with shovels and dug an emergency channel through the sandbar that allowed them to escape (see photo below). While the problem may not be totally over, we have heard of no further emergency actions so I think the worst is over. In the midcoast, Lower Guilford Lake Fishway had another good week of passing alewives, Branford added a few, and the runs through Haakonsen Fishway on the Quinnipiac are picking up but not many shad yet. Don Mysling reports that viewing conditions farther upstream at the Hanover Pond Dam Fishway have not been conducive to seeing fish there. The Clarks Pond Fishway in Milford seemed to have had a good weekend with Nick Baldwin counting 34 fish over four days. This is a hard fishway to count fish at so don't assume only 34 fish went up. This is just an indicator of the fish that actually go up that pool & weir fishway. Nick reports that the herons are consistently present at the fishway. At the Mianus Pond Fishway, the Greenwich Conservation Commission has been sampling the herring from the fishway pools to determine how many are alewives and how many are blueback herring. For the last two weeks, the ratio has been 33% bluebacks and 66% alewives. I've corrected the count this week to reflect those estimates. Nearby, the Wood Dam may not be putting up huge numbers but we're pleased with the quality control of the counts this year. Sally Harold and her team from The Nature Conservancy overhauled the fish counter weir at this Aquarion Water Company fishway and the system seems to be performing well this season.

The shad run continues to pick up on the Shetucket River. Norwich Public Utilities has trucked 362 shad upstream in addition to the numbers we show in the table above. That count is still twelve days behind due to our staff limitations. The actual number must be much more than that. Hopefully, we can shave down that backlog of video by next week. We received no report from First Light Power this week so cannot update counts at Taftville and Tunnel. We have not begun to view video at Occum. We have begun trucking shad out of Holyoke and have made one run to the Naugatuck River so far.

In addition to the hundreds of white suckers going up many fishways, we're seeing increasing numbers of sea lamprey at the Kinneytown and Haakonsen fishways.

Thanks to the Rivers Alliance for sponsoring a talk on Sunday in Washington, CT by Dr. John Waldman of Queens College, NYC. John is the author of *Running Silver*, a book about diadromous fish runs of the East Coast and his talk at the library focused on the challenges and opportunities facing us as we try to restore these runs. I'll be speaking to the Thames Valley Chapter of Trout Unlimited in Bozrah in a couple of hours about the ongoing efforts to restore diadromous fish to the Shetucket River watershed (hurry—grab your jacket!). Then on June 19, Dr. David Post of Yale University, writer Richard Conniff, and I will share the stage for a talk at the Lyme Land Conservation Trust's annual meeting about the restoration of alewives to Rogers Lake in Lyme/Old Lyme.



*Spent alewives leaving Bride Brook at the beach in Rocky Neck State Park. This sand bar formed off the mouth of the culvert during the winter and makes it difficult for the fish to get out—and avoid gulls—at low tide and low stream flow.*



*Dead menhaden from the Quinnipiac River. Menhaden are related to shad and river herring but can be distinguished from them by their deeper body, larger head and mouth, and yellow tail fin.*