
# CONNECTICUT WEEKLY DIADROMOUS FISH REPORT

Report Date: May 27, 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. 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) | 1 | 224 | 0 | 16 | 0 | 0 | 1,269 | 2 | 2 |
| **Leesville** (Salmon) | 0 | - | - | 0 | - | - | 0*** | 0 | 0 |
| **StanChem*** (Mattabesset) | 0 | 10 | 29 | 16 | 5 | - | 46 | 4 | 0 |
| **Moulson Pond*** (Eightmile) | 0 | 13 | 65 | 7,857 | 0 | 0 | 10 | 0 | - |
| Mary Steube+ (Mill Brook) | - | - | 134 | **FINAL** | - | - | - | - | |
| Rogers Lake+ (Mill Brook) | - | - | 0 (but all 134 from Mary Steube trucked to Rogers Lake)- | | | | | **FINAL** | - |
| **WestSpringfield** (Westfield- MA) | 0 | 2,242 | 0 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 156 | 0 | 0 |
| **Holyoke** (Connecticut- MA) | 7 | 326,335 | 0 | 60 | 34 | 3 | 15,926 | 0 | 0 |
| **Manhan River*** (Manhan- MA) | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| **Turners Falls*** (Connecticut- MA) | 0 | 31,136 | - | 0 | 0 | 0 | 1,493 | - | |
| **Vernon*** (Connecticut- VT) | 0 | 5,820 | - | 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=** | 8 | 328,824 | 228 | 7,950 | 39 | 3 | 17,407 | 6 | 2 |
| **(last year's totals)** | **31** | 374,232 | 1,549 | 942 | 475 | 61 | 27,585 | 4 | 17 |

Fishways listed in gray font above are not yet opened for the season or closed 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 remains very low and cool for this time of year. It's about 7,000 cfs and 17 C (63 F) at Holyoke where most of the action is. The shad run is still doing well and we have a shot at surpassing last year's numbers. The river conditions are very good for encouraging shad to continue to migrate upstream prior to spawning and you can see from the table above that we are starting to see shad pass through the fishway at Vernon, VT. New Hampshire Fish & Game biologist Gabe Gries was fishing for shad below the Vernon Dam and having luck. One of his shad had a juvenile sea lamprey on it. (See photo below.) This merits a bit of explanation. The anadromous sea lamprey juveniles spend about five years in freshwater as filter-feeders in the streambed—almost like worms. They have no eyes or sucker-like mouths. They metamorphose into a 'transformant' with eyes and the distinctive sucker mouth in late summer and migrate to the sea. They don't start parasitizing fish until they're in saltwater. They rely on high stream flows in the fall to help transport them downstream. As we've reported here in the past, we've noticed that when there is a fall dry period (as there was in 2014), many transformants do not go out to sea but wait until the high water of the following spring before heading out. In streams with an Atlantic salmon smolt run (also going out to sea), we find many 'hitchhiking' sea lamprey transformants. They do not appear to be feeding but simply latching on for the ride because a smolt can get to sea a lot faster than the transformant. During those springs, we also see an increase in numbers of incoming adult shad and salmon bearing these young sea lampreys. I think the two groups pass each other in the estuary and the lamprey—desperate for a meal after 8 or 9 months of not feeding—latch on. But the joke is on them as their host immediately heads upstream to where the lamprey just came from. If you catch one of these shad or salmon, the lamprey often falls right off and it does not appear that they had initiated feeding. That was the case with Gabe's fish. Over the past 25 years, the public in Connecticut has gotten over its initial repulsion of sea lampreys and have learned the difference between the need to control them in the Great Lakes (non-native) and restore them along the East Coast (native). This uncommon phenomenon of lampreys on incoming shad and salmon is no threat and should not change anyone's mind. Although the video reviews at the Vermont fishways are still behind and no adult lampreys have been documented passing Vernon yet, VTFW biologist Lael Will reported seeing a lamprey at the Bellows Falls fishway last Thursday—so they're up there.

The blueback herring run is still going on but it is now clear that the run will not match last year's run that was the best we had seen in many years. We are still seeing some waves entering the tributaries. One appeared in the Salmon River over the past weekend. However, Ken Sprankle of the USFWS continues to electrofish the river and its coves and reports that the bluebacks are starting to get hard to find. Dave Ellis of our program has been trucking shad out of Holyoke to other locations in Connecticut.

My snorkeling indicates the white sucker run is winding down; the amazing 'run' of darters continues, the stripers (at least in some places) have already started moving out, I've seen more white perch than in recent years, and the elver run is already appearing at Leesville—a bit early! Bruce Williams reports that as our crew visits StanChem fishway to download video, they're cleaning the debris filter at the top of the eel pass and have been finding elvers every time. So that innovative eel pass continues to work well.

On the Penobscot in Maine, the water is still very cold and the season is starting slowly. The Milford Fishlift counts are up to 33 salmon, 2 shad, 181,000 river herring, and 71 sea lamprey. The Union River fishway has seen 219,000 alewives.

**Eels:** Fishing Brook= 8,081 glass eels/78 elvers; Lower Millpond= 4,667 glass eels/142 elvers (no additional reports this week). Mill River= 2 glass eels/24 elvers; Greeneville= 34 glass eels/642 elvers. No report this week from Mianus.

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

*We often talk about how the Rainbow fishway (Farmington River, Windsor) is bad for shad. This is because when they pass through the 10" wide slots, they strike the walls and lose scales. If you look at this shad from the Rainbow trap (pool #24), just above my right thumb, you'll see a patch of missing scales. To the left of my right hand is a patch of brownish fungus on the 'tail' that takes over the de-scaled areas and often leads to death. The DEEP is designing a fish lift to replace this fishway. (Photo Sally Harold, TNC)*

*Here is a photo of Gabe's rod-caught shad and its hitchhiking young sea lamprey in the net. (See text above) This is the size of young lampreys as they move out of our rivers and enter the ocean. Often they are not embedded deeply and feeding and fall off when handled. They are not a serious threat to our fish. (Photo Gabe Gries, NHF&G)*

# 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) | 1,382 | 491 | 6 | 3 | 3 | 1 | 0 | 1 |
| **Taftville*** (Shetucket R., Norwich) | 6 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| **Occum*** (Shetucket R., Norwich) | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| **Tunnel*** (Quinebaug R., Preston) | 32 | 17 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| **Kinneytown*** (Naugatuck R., Seymour) | 0 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 132 | 0 | 0 |
| **Hallville Pond*** (Poquetanuck Br. Preston) | - | 32 | 0 | 0 | - | 0 | 5 | 1 |
| **Latimers Brook**** (Latimers Br., E.Lyme) | - | 4,926 | 0 | - | - | - | 0 | - |
| **Gorton Pond-** (Pattagansett R., E.Lyme) | - | | | | | | | |
| **Brides Brook**** (Brides Brook, E.Lyme) | | 218,076 | **FINAL** | | | | | |
| **Clarks Pond** (Indian River, Milford) | - | 34 | | | - | - | | |
| **Branford Supply Pond Dam**** (Queach Br., Branford) | 513 | | - | - | - | - | | |
| **Lower Guilford Lake**** (East River, Guilford) | | 2,414 | - | | | - 0 | 0 | |
| **Haakonsen Fishway*** (Quinnipiac R., Wallingford) | 2 | 1,154 | 64 | 14 | 0 | 193 | 0 | |
| **Bunnells Pond*** (Peqonnock R., Bridgeport) | -camera is malfunctioning! | | | 0 | 0 | | | |
| **Wood Dam**** (Saugatuck R., Westport) | | 2,886 | 0 | | 0 | | | |
| **Mianus River Pond* **** (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= 5/21 Taftville= n.a. Occum= n.a. Tunnel= 5/26 Kinneytown= 5/24 Haakonsen= 5/24 Hallville= 5/24*

**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:

The shad run continues to pick up on the Shetucket River. We have over 1,000 shad above Greeneville and we're starting to see them pass at the next two dams. Bob Stira (First Light Power) reports 18 shad were lifted at Tunnel last Wednesday. I realize that those numbers seem very low compared to a place like Holyoke but we're still building this run and there have been challenges at Tunnel and Taftville so we're hoping this a sign of progress. The video at Taftville has not been reviewed but in cursory looks, Bob has seen shad on the Taftville video. The bluebacks are now starting to come in—still low numbers.

We don't generally report on salmon passage outside of the Connecticut River, where they are wild, sea-returns. But each fall we stock large broodstock salmon (never been to sea) into the Shetucket and Naugatuck rivers to support very popular fisheries in those streams. So far this year, nine of those have been lifted at Greeneville and six have passed up Kinneytown. These are fish that 'washed down' after the fall and have been living in the lower tidal areas. As the water warms, they are likely seeking cooler temperatures and avoiding saltwater and heading back upstream. I expect we'll see them going up Taftville and Occum when we get to review the backlog of video.

In general, the runs to the coastal streams have been low this year—perhaps related to low flows. Fewer shad and river herring showing up in the Quinnipiac and Naugatuck rivers. Haakonsen fishway on the Quinnipiac passed over 1,000 alewives but not much for blueback herring yet. This past week the river herring showed up below the Derby Dam on the Housatonic River in moderate numbers. You can see we picked up a few fish here and there along the shoreline—Branford, Lower Guilford Lake, Wood, etc. but the herring runs seems to be winding down. No report from the Mianus Pond fishway this week. The Baldwins report no fish sighting at the Clark Pond Fishway on the Indian River in Milford but they saw fish scales and otter tracks so there are probably a few fish still sneaking in. Speaking of the Lower Guilford Lake Fishway, see the photos below.

I mentioned the Rainbow Open House on this Saturday in the Connecticut River section but for those of you who jump right to the coastal section, I repeat it below along with some other stuff:

**RAINBOW DAM FISHWAY OPEN HOUSE, SATURDAY MAY 30**

400 Rainbow Road, Windsor (Poquonnock section, near Bradley International Airport). The timing is good this year for a chance to see shad, lamprey, and maybe even an adult salmon swim past the viewing window. A rare opportunity to go downstairs and see the window. A great family event. 10 am to 3:30 pm.

**BRADLEY ALEWIFE FESTIVAL, SATURDAY MAY 30**

For those of you who might be traveling to Maine this weekend, check out this event just north of Bangor. They built a great stone fishway on Blackman Stream at the Maine Forest and Logging Museum and the alewives have come back in force with 170,000 passed in its first year. The event goes from 9 am to 1 pm. Google the museum for details.

**DAMARISCOTTA FISHWAY**

Another not-to-be-missed fishway in mid-coast Maine if you're heading up there this spring. This is probably the oldest fishway in the U.S. (a stone beauty) and the alewives just clog it as they go up. I can't find a current count for it but their website says: "We're now at the real height of the run -- there are so many fish in you won't believe it!!! There are fish in the bay; the fish are thick by the fish house, in the ladder and in the harvesting area, and they're passing into the lake in great numbers! So….it's a great day to visit the fish ladder!" Check out this link for a video (it's not great but it gives you an idea): https://docs.google.com/file/d/0B2FM8ZffvB7YcjQwaXZ6UHV1V3c/edit

*Believe it or not, this is a constructed fishway. Tons of rock were brought into to build a series of pools and cascades that alewives can surmount in this nature-like Lower Guilford Lake Fishway (East River, Guilford). Alewives have used it each year since its construction and this year over 2,000 have climbed it to enter the pond.*

*Lower Guilford Lake Fishway- Fish need to climb one section of steeppass fishway at the top to get over the low dam. This year, we installed our 'roving fish counter' to get a one year snapshot of how many alewives use this fishway. Later next month, a UMass research team will sample the lake for young alewives to correlate those numbers to the numbers of adults counted passing through this fishway.*