

CONNECTICUT WEEKLY DIADROMOUS FISH REPORT

Report Date: June 30, 2020



This is a report generated by the Connecticut Department of Energy and Environmental Protection/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/r5crrc. 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	STURGEON/ TROUT++	AMER. EEL
Rainbow* (Farmington)	0	510	0	0	2	0	3,628	0	3
Leesville (Salmon)	0	1	-	0	-	-	0**	0	0
StanChem* (Mattabesset)	0	0	63	18	28	-	10	0	4
Moulson Pond* (Eightmile)	0	2	107	150	0	0	22	0	-
Mary Steube* (Mill Brook)	-	-	37,888	FINAL		-	-	-	- -
Rogers Lake+ (Mill Brook)			2,842	FINAL					
West Springfield (Westfield- MA)	0	5,477	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Holyoke (Connecticut- MA)	0	362,129	0	763	64	420	33,739	9	2,313
Manhan River* (Manhan- MA)	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Turners Falls* (Connecticut- MA)	0	34,042	-	3	0	0	12,495	-	-
Vernon* (Connecticut- VT)	0	1,745	-	0	0	0	117	-	0
Bellows Falls* (Connecticut- VT)	0	0	-	0	0	0	2	-	0
Wilder* (Connecticut- VT)	0	-	-	-	-	-	0	-	0
Other (all sites)	0								
TOTALS=	0	367,492	38,058	930	94	413	37,389	6	1,742
(last year's totals)	3	318,707	11,308	5,113	366	207	20,479	20/0	0

Fishways listed in gray font above are 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. ++Shortnose Sturgeon (Holyoke)/Sea-run Trout (other locations) 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. The same for Rogers Lake—they first pass through Mary Steube and therefore won't be counted as part of the total.

COMMENTS:

The flows in the Connecticut River are extremely low for this time of year and the upstream migrations of most species are pretty much over. The numbers reported for the Turners Falls, Vernon, and Bellows Falls fishways are still preliminary because not all the video files have been reviewed. The only action in Connecticut tributaries is the seaward migration of young-of-year. We are very pleased with the survival of fish from our trucking program. For example, this was the first year of operation of the Kensington Pond Dam on the Mattabesset River in Berlin. There are no indications that any Alewives ascended this fishway this spring. The downstream StanChem Fishway only passed 63 and there are many miles of habitat in between. But we stocked pre-spawned Alewives from Bride Brook into the pond above the dam and large numbers of very large and healthy young-of-year Alewives have been moving out of the pond using the fishway and the downstream bypass pipe (see the lower left photo below).

Sea Lamprey spawning the Connecticut tributaries is over but it continues farther north. Dan McKinley of the U.S. Forest Service (Green Mountains National Forest) reports lamprey spawning in the upper White River as far upstream as Alder Meadow Brook in Granville Gulf, with nests observed from Stockbridge to Granville. (See photo below, right.) I estimate that to be about 270 miles from Long Island Sound. This may be the farthest upstream the species gets in this watershed—and perhaps any watershed on the East Coast—someone should let us know about the Delaware. Retired Vermont biologist Jay McMenemy sent in this link of a CNN story on lampreys in Vermont: <https://www.cnn.com/2020/06/25/us/vampire-fish-vermont-trnd/index.html>

The one migration that is not ending—but actually picking up—is that of the Shortnose Sturgeon. A few more were lifted at Holyoke last week and those numbers are likely increase throughout the summer. If you haven't seen Tom Savoy's StoryMap that I mentioned last week, the link is: <https://arcg.is/LW1j0>.

For some thoughts on a summary of the season, see "Comments" in the next section.

At Milford Fishlift on the Penobscot River (from Jason at DMR): Salmon count is up to 1040; 110 fish have been sent to Craig Brook National Fish Hatchery for broodstock; 930 fish have been released to the river.

I will leave you with this: This evening I had to go check on my boat on its mooring in the river. It was a lull between all the rain we had in the lower river valley today. Towering thunderheads surrounded me to the west, north, and east but it was clear overhead with the half moon showing. The water was like glass and there were young-of-year alosines (species= ???) popping in the dusk as fog began to form. It seems early to me that they're popping already in the end of June. There was a big splash out in the channel. Sturgeon? It seems early for that, too. As the sun set, a Great Blue Heron and an Osprey winged overhead, heading to a nightly roost. The water was warm and clear. It was a great evening on the river. I wish you a good summer and hopefully you can get out on your favorite river—whether it be the Connecticut or some other stream—and enjoy the peace, beauty and ecological richness and maybe escape this craziness that we are living with if only for a while. Thanks for your interest in these reports. SG



A school of young-of-year Alewives searching for a way downstream along the spillway of the Kensington Pond Dam on the Mattabesset River. (Recommend that you zoom in on your computer screen to see them.)



A male Sea Lamprey in Alder Meadow Brook in Granville, VT. You can tell it's a male by the 'rope' along the top of the fish. Note the incredibly clear water. (Photo courtesy of Dan McKinley, USFS).

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)	3,174	133	4	38	12	3	0	5
Taftville* (Shetucket R., Norwich)	19	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Scotland* (Shetucket R. Windham)	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	51
Tunnel* (Quinebaug R., Preston)	7	0	4	0	0	2	0	31
Kinneytown* (Naugatuck R., Seymour)	0	0	0	0	0	8	0	0
Hallville Pond* (Poquetanuck Br. Preston)	-	51	FINAL CAMERA		0	0	0	
Jordan Brook ** (Jordan Brook, Waterford)	-	203	FINAL COUNTER OUT -		-	-	-	-
Latimers Brook** (Latimers Br., E.Lyme)	-	17,569	FINAL COUNTER OUT -		-	-	-	-
Gortons Pond* (Pattaganset R., E.Lyme)		71	FINAL COUNTER OUT					
Brides Brook** (Brides Brook, E.Lyme)		409,115	FINAL- COUNTER OUT					
Fishing Brook** (Fishing Brook, OSaybrook)		12,084	FINAL- COUNTER OUT					
Chapmans Pond* (Menunketesuck R., Clinton)		234	FINAL- CAMERA OUT		0	0	0	0
Branford Supply Pond Dam** (Queach Br., Branford)	187		FINAL- COUNTER OUT -		-	-	-	-
Lower Guilford Lake** (East River, Guilford)		373	FINAL- COUNTER OUT -		-	-	-	-
Haakonsen Fishway* (Quinnipiac R., Wallingford)	4	333	42	13	0	258	0	0
Hanover Pond Fishway* (Quinnipiac River, Meriden)		4	0	4	-	162	-	9
Bunnells Pond* (Peconnock R., Bridgeport)	<i>fish in fishway/no estimate (Operating but no videography this season due to COVID-19)</i>							
Mianus River Pond* ** (Mianus R., Greenwich)		3,661	3,287	FINAL- COUNTER OUT 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= 6/12 Taftville= 6/01 Occum= na Tunnel= 6/01 Kinneytown= 6/12 Haakonsen= 6/12 Hallville= 6/10 Hanover= 6/11

*Bunnells= na Chapmans= 6/01 **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.*

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:

We pretty much wrapped up this section last week. There were less than five fish added to the entire table this past week. As we've been saying, the runs are over. As you can see from the table above, all fishways are now closed except for Bunnells because we have not gone down there yet, but will soon. More eel passes are coming on line and you can see below we captured our first eels at the new Kensington Pond eel pass, that just began operation about a week ago. We continue to see young-of-year Alewives pour out of our streams. This week there was a big pulse coming out of Latimer Brook and Waterman Brook (lower Quinnipiac River).

The data are not final yet, but let's attempt a summary of the season. American Shad- a good year. The run on the Connecticut certainly was not a record but it was the best in several years and above average. It was early and the netters did well. We saw shad in places we often do not see them such as the Eightmile, the Salmon, the Moodus, as well as Whitford Brook. Alewives- another strange year. The runs in New London County were once again strong—some very strong, such as Bride Brook. But the runs in the central part of the state, particularly the Quinnipiac River, were disappointing. Blueback Herring seem like an unequivocal up year—except for the numbers at Holyoke, which were less than last year. But we saw some of the strongest runs in years in lower Connecticut River tributaries and in some other streams flowing into the Sound. We have to say that it was a good year, while not sure why that is not reflected in the Holyoke lift numbers. Many are looking for indications that the closure of the Atlantic Herring fishery off Block Island Sound and Montauk this winter resulted in more river herring entering our streams. I think there are some indications that this was the best year in many for both species both in Connecticut and Rhode Island, but the response was not overwhelming. However, the runs have been depressed for so long and the reproductive capacity of these fish have been reduced so much that we cannot expect instant recovery. So we'll watch over the next few years and hope for a meaningful rebound. Sea Lamprey- No doubt about it—the best run in many years, even as our European colleagues are complaining that their runs were very poor this year. We not only had a high count at Holyoke but we were seeing them spawning in many tributaries in larger than usual numbers. There were so many nests at Leesville on the Salmon River that they all morphed into about four giant community nests. We are very disappointed that we were not able to conduct our annual nest survey on the Salmon River due to COVID precautions, so we will never have an estimate of the number of spawners. The number of Striped Bass and Gizzard Shad were very similar to last year. The glass eel run was not nearly as strong as last year's good run but the elver run at inland locations was very impressive and may have benefitted from having some yearlings from last year's glass eel cohort.

Eel Counts- Fishing Brook = 13,059 glass/115 yellow; Chapmans Pond= 46,010 glass/867 yellow; Mill River Eel Trap= 44 glass/65 yellow; Hanover Pond= 1,472 yellow; Greeneville Eel Lift= 7 glass/34 yellow. Tunnel= 3,195 yellow eels; Kinneytown= 0; Occum= 2 yellow eel; Scotland= 32 yellow; Kensington Pond= 5 yellow.

Richard Hyman is a conservationist in Westport with an interesting past and now heads a group called Future Frogman, which is dedicated to education of youth (and others) and the world of water. His home stream is the Saugatuck River. He interviewed me for his podcast Blue Earth. Here are some links: Spotify: <https://open.spotify.com/episode/0IJtbdFZlesi6QLez5peyY>
Apple: <https://podcasts.apple.com/us/podcast/conserving-and-restoring-migratory-fish-habitats/id1517885837?i=1000480250941>

My weekly Diadromous Fish Radio show is live on iCRV (www.icrvradio.com) at 8:00 am on Wednesdays. Due to the COVID situation, I call in rather than sit in the studio. If you can't tune in at 8:00 am, listen to it at any time: www.icrvradio.com/programs/program/50. They archive the shows. **There will be no show this week. I will be on sporadically during the summer.**



This are young Striped Bass, captured by the Greenwich Conservation Commission at the Mianus Pond Fishway. The small fish in the middle is a young-of-year Alewife, which is probably what the Striped Bass are feeding upon. (Photo by B. Stanton)



We have been pleased to have a number of fine photos this year contributed by B. Stanton, a volunteer for the Greenwich Conservation Commission at the Mianus Pond Fishway on the Mianus River. We'll close out the season with this exceptional action shot of a Snowy Egret (yellow feet) grabbing a young-of-year Alewife. Thanks! (Photo by B. Stanton)