Connecticut River Conservancy

Connecticut River Migratory Fish

All fish are mobile, but none on the Connecticut River make longer journeys than the suite of migratory fish moving upriver from the Atlantic Ocean. These migrations have been taking place for thousands of years. The journeys of these species may take them through thousands of ocean miles annually, and nearly 200 miles upriver.


Shortnose Sturgeon

Diadromous fish are a fish species group that migrate between salt water and fresh water systems. Diadromous fish can be either anadromous or catadromous fish.

Anadromous fish are born in freshwater, swim to the sea to feed and mature, then return to the rivers of their birth to spawn.

Catadromous fish grow and mature in rivers and estuaries then return to spawn in the ocean.


American Eel

Shortnose Sturgeon

are anadromous and the only federally endangered migratory fish on the Connecticut River. They evolved in the age of the dinosaurs and are toothless and primitive looking—with bony plates instead of fish scales. Shortnose sturgeon are between 2 – 4 feet long and weigh up to 30 lbs.

American Eels

enter the Connecticut River as tiny, transparent, glass eels. They are born in the Sargasso Sea, then migrate to rivers and estuaries to mature. American eels are catadromous and will spend from 8 – 23 years feeding in the sediment and growing into 2 – 4 foot, silver-bronze adults before heading to the ocean to spawn.


Sea Lamprey

Learn more at migratoryfish.org

Sea Lamprey

are anadromous mottled brown 2-3 ft. long, eel-like fish that are born in freshwater rivers and spend 3 – 5 years in freshwater before heading to the ocean to feed and mature. Once in the ocean sea lampreys become parasitic, and drain nutrition from other fish. After spending 1 – 3 years as ocean parasites, sea lamprey head back to the closest freshwater river or stream to spawn and die.

Blueback Herring

are anadromous sleek, metallic-blue fish under a foot in length. Blueback herring return to the main stem of the Connecticut River from mid-April through June. Considered bait fish, these migrants travel as far upstream as Vermont's Vernon Dam, 134 miles from Long Island Sound.

Alewives

are anadromous and close relatives of the blueback herring making it difficult to distinguish them. Alewives are lighter in color and have larger eyes than bluebacks. They migrate into the Connecticut River and its lower tributaries each spring, moving to the slow waters and ponds where they will spawn between March and June.

Atlantic Salmon

are anadromous and over two feet long, weighing about 8 pounds when they return from the Atlantic to spawn for the first time. Born in freshwater rivers, they spend the first two years of their lives growing and feeding there. This coldwater species then heads to the sea to spend several years feeding off the Greenland coast before returning to the freshwater rivers of their birth to spawn.

American Shad

are anadromous and currently the most numerous migratory fish on the Connecticut River. Adult shad are green-gold, nearly two feet long and can weigh up to 5 lbs. Peak migration occurs during May, but the run continues through late-June. The vanguard of their upstream migration corresponds roughly with the blooming of the shadbush.


Alewife


Atlantic Salmon


American Shad

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