Concord River Alewife Restoration

2002 -- > 2017

Technical support from:

Mike Bailey, USF&WS
Eric Hutchins, NOAA
River herring, also called alewife, once ran so thick in the Concord River, that people said you could walk from one bank of the river to the other on their backs.
But dams constructed in the mid-19th century prevented the alewife from swimming upstream to spawn. The alewife native to the Concord River became extinct.
The Nemasket River in Middleborough and Lakeville has one of the largest Herring runs in New England. A small park along the River tells the fish’s story......
On April 4, 2002 ten volunteers collected 4,100 alewife from the Nemasket River in Lakeville.
Rivers project goes with the flow

Restoration will remove dams that keep fish from spawning

By MATT WICKENHEISER
Sun Staff

LOWELL — As the tiny alewife treks its spawning route from the ocean up Massachusetts' rivers, the one thing that can really ruin the trip is a dam. To help the alewife — and shad, salmon and other fish that live in saltwater but spawn in freshwater — a pilot program was unveiled yesterday in the city by the Department of Fisheries, Wildlife & Environmental Law Enforcement.

The plan, unveiled near Middlesex Community College on the banks of the Concord River, would remove old dams no longer needed or help repair those that still serve a useful purpose. One dam targeted for removal is the Middlesex Dam, visible from the Charles McCollough Volunteer who is helping with the Concord River alewife restoration project

River trip shows promise for fish restoration

Luring alewife back to the Concord

By Sally Heaney

Volunteers watch for signs that effort to restore fish to the river is working

Help sought to move alewives

The Concord River Alewife Restoration Project's transfer of 5,000 alewives from the Nemasket River in Middleborough to the Concord River or to the Sudbury River, its tributary, will take place on April 12, 13, and 15.

Alewives were once plentiful in the Concord River, which flows from Concord to Lowell, but vanished due to pollution and the building of impassable dams.

The Lowell Parks and Conservation Trust Inc. is seeking volunteers to net the alewives as they ascend a fish ladder in the Nemasket River on the way to their spawning grounds. The fish will then be transported in a US Fish and Wildlife Service truck to the Concord or Sudbury river to spawn there instead. For more information, call the trust at 978-934-0030.

SALLY HEANEY
River Herring - 2 types
• *Alewife
• Blueback Herring

Concord River = Alewives
Mystic River = Bluebacks
Diadromous Fishes
Migrate between fresh water & sea water

**Alewife**
Anadromous
(sea → freshwater for spawning)

**American eel**
Catadromous
(freshwater → sea for spawning)
American Shad & River Herring Commercial Landings

Source: NMFS Fisheries Statistics Division, 2014

- Orange: River Herring
- Blue: American Shad
Figure 7.1 Massachusetts commercial landings of river herring, 1887-2010.

Source: River Herring - River Herring Benchmark Assessment: Volume II (includes State/Jurisdiction-specific Stock Status Summaries) (May 2012)
You will learn how to recognize and count migrating alewife at the Centennial Island Fish Ladder (off Lawrence Street, Lowell).
Gatehouse & Fish ladder on Centennial Island
Data Collection

- **Supplies:** Data sheets, timers, clipboards, sunglasses and counters will be stored in a nearby gatehouse for you to access when you arrive.
- **LP&CT staff will collect the completed sheets from the gatehouse** – please leave them in the box.

### Counting:

- Count the fish going **UP** the ladder
- You can use the clicker counter to count by 1’s, 5’s, or 10’s (as needed)
While you are waiting for fish, other types of wildlife will show up to see what the fuss is all about.

- ducks
- turtles
- woodchucks
- great blues herons
- otters, and
- other species of fish (lamprey)
Safety Information

• If there’s an emergency, please call 911
• Safety equipment provided: Life jackets (PFD) and throw bag
• Do not climb into the fish ladder
• Youth aged 12-17 years old may participate in the program under the direct supervision of a guardian or parent and are required to wear a PFD
Field Training

Centennial Island
Fish Ladder at
Wamesit Falls

RSVP: info@LowellLandTrust.org
978-934-0030

LP&CT Staff:
Jane Calvin, Executive Director
Carolyn Meklenburg, Stewardship & Education Manager
Lisa Berezin, Alewife Volunteer Coordinator
Bora Poun, Environmental Educator
Kathy Hirbour, Environmental Educator
Stephanie Sullivan, UMass Lowell Intern