

**IPSWICH RIVER
WATERSHED
ASSOCIATION**

*Connecting
Communities from
Source to Sea*

The Ipswich River Watershed serves as the voice of the Ipswich River. Through outreach, education, monitoring, and advocacy, we seek to connect the people, communities, and ecosystems integral to a healthy watershed.

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Herring Count

Since 1999, the Ipswich River Watershed Association (IRWA) has organized spring herring counts at the fish ladder at the Ipswich Mills Dam in downtown Ipswich.

The purpose of the count is to estimate the returning population of river herring (*Alosa pseudoharengus* or alewife, and *Alosa aestivalis* or blueback herring) and record conditions under which river herring migrate into the Ipswich River.

Herring on the Ipswich River

Historically the Ipswich River supported a healthy population of herring. Herring was an important fish that helped to shape the culture of this region from pre-colonial times until the early 1800's. Since then, a combination of factors has virtually wiped out the population of herring in the Ipswich River.

While colonial fish weirs were required to allow fish passage, larger dams constructed in the 1800's blocked the annual spawning run of river herring and other migratory species. The elimination of spawning habitat has also greatly affected herring populations: historic spawning lakes and ponds, like Wenham Lake, have been changed into water supply reservoirs. Repeated low and no flow periods in the Ipswich River also prevent fish from accessing good habitat.

To restore herring to the Ipswich River, we are working to increase the amount of water in the river, and create fish passages at dams and culverts.

What have volunteers seen?

The number of fish returning to the Ipswich River has varied over the past ten years of the herring count. High numbers of returning herring were seen early in the decade, with numbers dropping off since then. 2007 was a particularly low year for returning herring, but 2008 has gotten off to a great start with high numbers of returning herring!

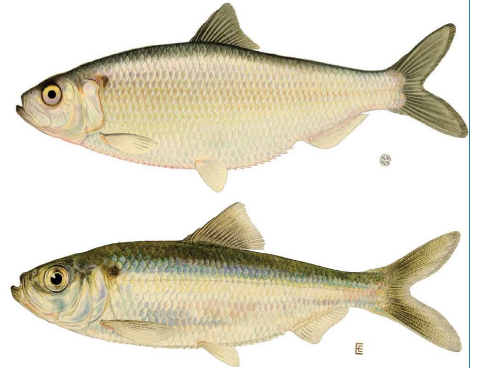
Other observations from past years' counts indicate that:

The herring run typically begins between April 9 – 15 and peaks from the last few days of April through mid-May.

Herring were not seen when water temperatures were below 8°C (46.5 °F). The largest numbers of migrating herring have been observed when temperatures were between 14 °C and 20°C (57 - 68 °F).

How you can help:

- ✓ Participate in our spring herring count!
- ✓ Support the Ipswich River by becoming a member of the Ipswich River Watershed Association!
- ✓ Join your local Stream Team and work to protect and restore the Ipswich River!
- ✓ Save water at home and in your yard – keep the Ipswich River flowing!



Blueback herring (top) and alewife (bottom) once filled the Ipswich River during their spring migration.

Images: NY State Dept of Environmental Conservation



Herring Count Results

Year	# of Herring Counted	Extrapolated Total Herring Population	DMF Fish Trap Results
1999	54	740	
2000	35	424	
2001	77	2102	
2002	72	2277	
2003	41	1001	
2004	55	1782	
2005	95	539	
2006	56	448*	377*
2007	15	133	158

*Counting stopped early due to mid-May flooding.

