

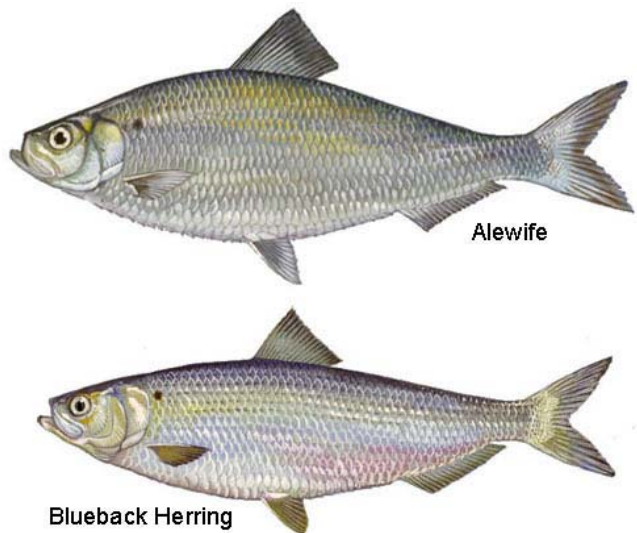
River Herring

River Herring are a type of fish that live their lives in the ocean and return to the freshwater streams they were born to spawn. These types of fish are called anadromous fish. They are considered a forage fish and an important part of the base of the food chain. Herring run upstream in April and May. They begin to return based on water temperature and are attracted to fast flowing water. It is thought that they find their natal streams by scent. The adults return to the ocean after spawning. The eggs hatch after a few weeks and then live in the ponds or rivers until the fall where they then make their way to the ocean. There are two different species, alewife, who spawn in ponds and still parts of rivers, and bluebacks, who spawn in flowing water.

The fish was so abundant historically that when the colonists arrived they named the many streams after them. In our watershed there is the First Herring Brook in Scituate, the Second Herring Brook in Norwell, the Third Herring Brook that is the town boundary between Norwell and Hanover and the Herring Brook in Pembroke.

The YMCA is actually located on an impoundment of the Third Herring Brook. The pond behind the YMCA is formed because of an old mill dam that was left over from when the brook was used as a source of power to run a saw mill in the 17th and 18th centuries. The YMCA and the North and South Rivers Watershed Association are working on removing the dam to eventually restore habitat for the herring to the Third Herring Brook.

There are many streams along the North and South Rivers and indeed up and down the East Coast, that used to provide spawning habitat for this species that are now unavailable to them because of obstructions such as dams. In some cases fish ladders have been built to allow the fish to pass over the obstructions to spawn but in many cases there are no fish ladders. Besides obstructions water withdrawals and improper water management is a suspected cause for the decline of this species in some areas. Other causes for the decline of this fish have been attributed to fishing off the coast that has inadvertently caught these fish in their nets, the term for this is called bycatch. The fish was recently listed as a Species of Concern under the Endangered Species Act and the North and South Rivers Watershed Association and others are working to restore the populations of these fish.



Alewife

Blueback Herring

Take walk to the Mill Pond in back of the YMCA – this is part of the Third Herring Brook. Now see if you can find the mouth of the Third Herring Brook when you paddle the North River.

At the Norris Reservation along the North River stop and get out and take a walk along the trails. Second Herring Brook flows into the North River through the Reservation. Note the dams along the brook.