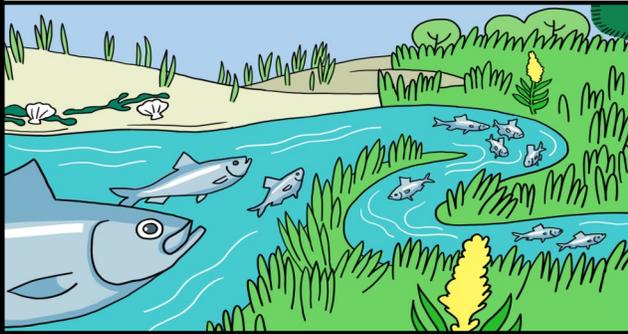


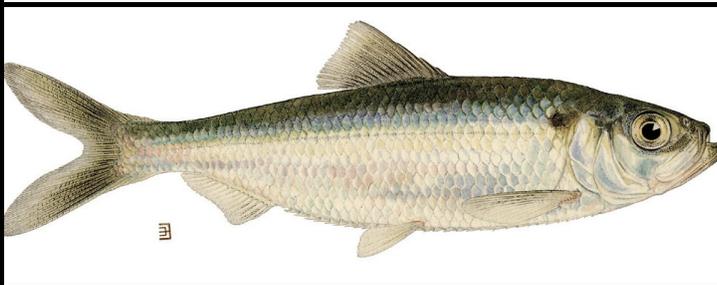


Herring Revival



Herring return to Cape Cod each year from the ocean making them one of a few species of anadromous fish in our region. Anadromous fish hatch in freshwater streams and ponds, spend most of their lives in the ocean, and migrate back to freshwater where they were hatched to spawn. Although there are numerous varieties of herring, the two types of herring common to Cape Cod are alewife and blueback.

In their life cycle, herring travel through salt marshes, which are tidally influenced, and through uplands, which are above average sea level. Human development and activities negatively affect salt marshes, restricting tidal flow and introducing non-native species. Restoring tide flow to salt marshes will allow the herring to migrate more easily and moderate the presence of non-native species.



(Left) Alewife herring are native to Cape Cod. Other common herring on the east coast might be called Atlantic herring, blueback, and shad

The number of herring returning to Cape Cod each year has dramatically decreased in the past two decades. Possible explanations for their decline include over-fishing and diminishing access to waterways. Currently, the state of Massachusetts prohibits the taking of herring, and numerous Cape Cod towns and conservation groups are working toward restoring herring runs. For example, there is an effort to restore the Herring River in Wellfleet to its natural state before it was diked over 100 years ago in a misguided effort to control the mosquito population. This restoration effort would rejuvenate the salt marsh creating critical habitat, not only for herring, but for hundreds of other organisms as well.

In addition to being a historically important fisheries species, herring are part of the food web for numerous other species, including striped bass, bluefish, whales, ospreys, and the endangered Roseate tern.

Herring runs remain a critical but largely underappreciated habitat of Cape Cod, despite local efforts. In order to raise awareness and recognition of herring runs, AmeriCorps Cape Cod members, in partnership with the National Seashore, have chosen to paint a mural of a herring run as they travel through the salt marsh to the freshwater ponds and streams of coastal uplands.

Mural artist: Aimee Wang, AmeriCorps Cape Cod, Year 11.