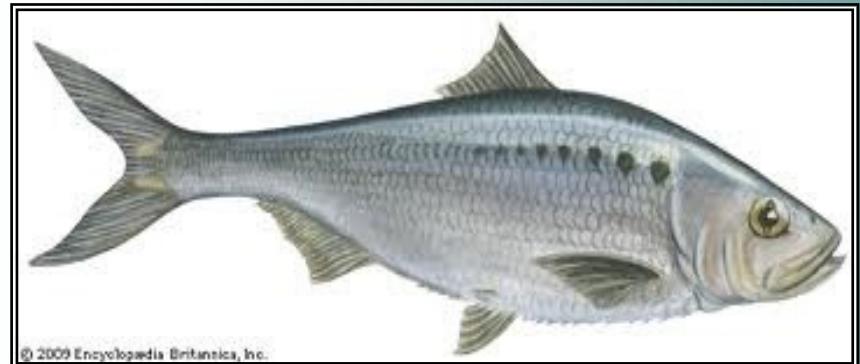


AMERICAN SHAD

Alosa sapidissima



RIVANNA CONSERVATION SOCIETY

108 5th St. SE Suite #206
Charlottesville, VA 22902
Mailing Address:
PO BOX 1501
Charlottesville, VA 22902

Phone: 434- 97-RIVER
(977-4837)
E-mail: exec@rivannariver.org
website: www.rivannariver.org

RIVANNA CONSERVATION SOCIETY

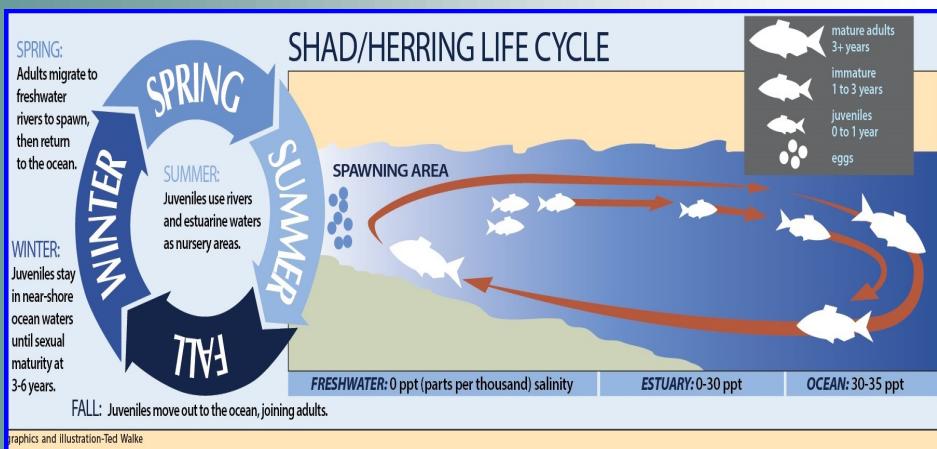


WHY IS THE AMERICAN SHAD IMPORTANT?

Shad are important to RCS because they play a vital role in the river/ocean ecosystem and the livelihood of many. Shad have been fished for thousands of years, from the Monacan Indians and Thomas Jefferson to the recreational and career fisherman of today.

Shad have seen drastic declines since the building of dams, pollution and overfishing. RCS has worked with state and federal governments to help bolster their numbers and return them, as close as possible, to the habitat and numbers they were at in the past. In 2007 the Woolen Mills Dam (built in 1870) was deconstructed and since 1999 over 2 million Shad fry have been released into the Rivanna by RCS and the Dept. of Game and Inland Fisheries.

In deconstructing the dam, 16 miles of the Rivanna river has been opened up for spawning and growth of shad fry.



WHAT ARE SHAD?

American Shad are fish that are a part of the Herring family. They are also called White Shad.

On average they reach a length of 12-24", but have been known to reach 30"

The average weight is 3lb, but there have been 5lb fish caught.

Woolen Mills Dam, before deconstruction



Woolen Mills, August 2007



WHAT DO THEY EAT ?

While growing in the river, the young Shad eat zooplankton and insect larvae.

As adults and when they are in the ocean, they still eat zooplankton, but add worms and small fish. However, when spawning, they barely eat at all!

IDENTIFICATION

Shad have silver sides with a bluish-green back and a silver-to-white belly. Scutes (sharp scales) cover the belly and are a distinguishing feature of these fish.

There is a row of dark spots on each side, from the back gill covers to midway down the fish.

When viewed head on, they are symmetrical and deep bodied, and when the mouth is closed the upper and lower jaws are the same length.

HABITAT

Shad roe are deposited in shallow river waters with sandy bottoms or fine gravel and hatch in the Spring. The fry drift slowly down the river until Fall, where they reach brackish estuaries.

The shad remain in brackish water for roughly one year before travelling into coastal regions. Here, they form schools and migrate off shore.

THREATS

Threats to the Shad include habitat degradation due to overfishing, the construction of dams, and pollution caused by humans and animals.

When the Shad mature they begin to make their way back up river in search of their birthplace to in order to spawn.

Spawning occurs in open waters where roe and milt are deposited and fertilization occurs. After eggs hatch, the hatchlings are called "fry". The fry slowly make their way down river into the ocean where they remain until fully matured.