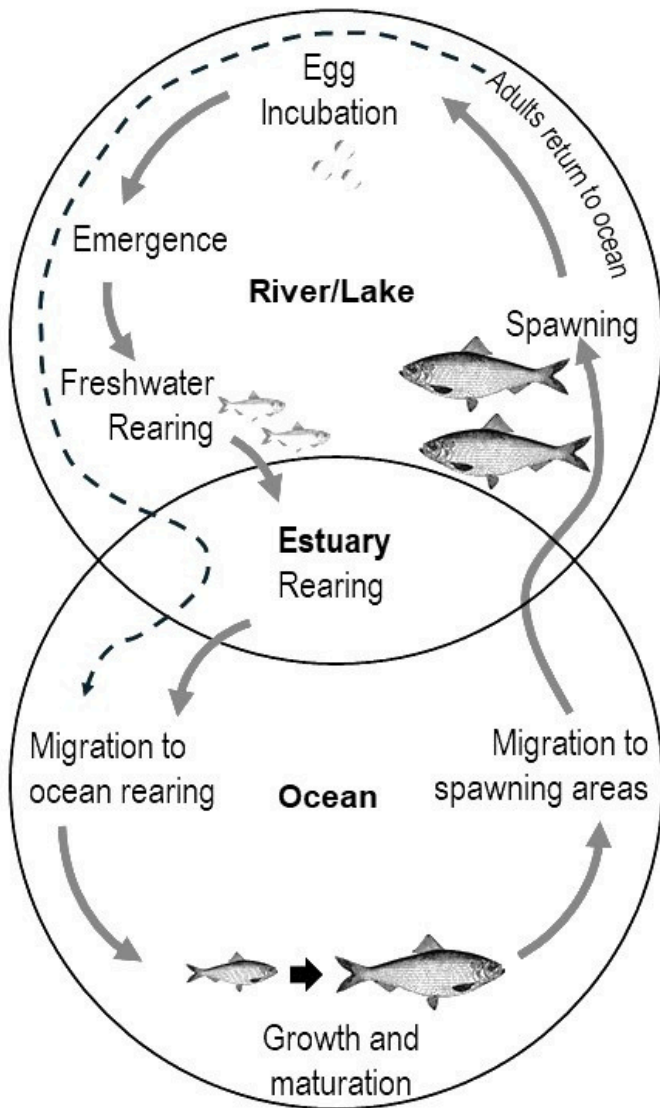


River Herring Life Cycle



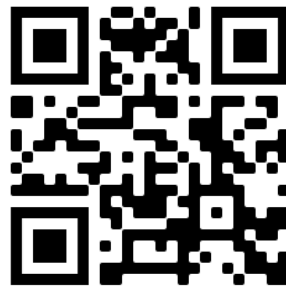
*Diagram courtesy of Maine
Department of Marine Resources*

About Friends of Herring River (FHR)

Incorporated in 2009 as a 501(c)(3) non-profit, FHR serves as an essential partner for Herring River Restoration Project (HRRP) which aims to restore 890 acres of degraded intertidal habitat / salt marsh.

The FHR team and volunteers ensure the HRRP stays on track by securing grant funds and permits, managing non-construction contracts, monitoring rare species, and leading events/communications to keep people informed.

Donations are needed & appreciated!
www.herringriver.org



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2024



River Herring

**An overview of the
special features,
remarkable
adaptations,
and life cycle of
Herring River's
iconic fish**

Barbara Brennessel, Ph.D.

The River Herring

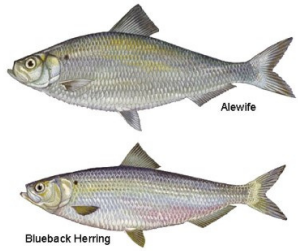


Diagram courtesy of
US Fish & Wildlife

The Herring River in Wellfleet, MA, was named after river herring, iconic fish that were once abundant all along the Atlantic coast. "River herring" refers to two related species of fish: alewives (*Alosa pseudoharengus*) and blueback herring (*Alosa aestivalis*). Unlike Atlantic herring, which are strictly marine fish, river herring are anadromous, meaning that they spend most of their lives in the ocean but migrate into freshwater ponds and lakes to spawn.



*The Sluice from Higgins Pond to
Gull Pond in Wellfleet, MA.*



*Wellfleet's Herring River &
Chequessett Neck dike/bridge*

Herring face many obstacles. Overfishing, habitat degradation, the construction of impediments to migrations such as dams and dikes, and bycatch in other fisheries have all contributed to their decline. Today, it is illegal to harvest river herring in Massachusetts.

On the local level, the restoration of the Herring River, the removal of man-made impediments, and overall improvements to water quality will result in an improved herring run - a marvel we can all enjoy.

Fascinating Facts

- River herring can osmoregulate, which means they can transition from salt water to fresh water and back again.
- The annual inland migrations of river herring are called "runs," and they are truly a spring spectacle.
- In Wellfleet, these fish expend a tremendous amount of energy traveling upstream for about 5 miles against strong currents to reach their final destinations: Herring, Higgins, Williams, and Gull Ponds. After spawning there, they return to the ocean.
- The young fish ("fry") spend their first spring, summer and early fall in the freshwater ponds. They emigrate to the ocean when the ponds become too cold and their food, zooplankton, is scarce.
- Both alewives and blueback herring are iteroparous: this means they are repeat spawners. After they mature at 3-4 years old, they will spawn every year throughout their lifetime (typically 8 years).
- River herring exhibit "natal homing", migrating to the same rivers, lakes and ponds every year.