

American Shad

Alosa sapidissima



American shad is an anadromous species indigenous to the western Atlantic Ocean and the east coast of the United States and Canada. American shad has been described as “the fish that fed the American nation's founders” due to its abundance in colonial rivers.

They are prized by sports fisherman for their fighting spirit. Adult shad weigh between 3 and 8 pounds, and have a delicate flavor when cooked. It is considered flavorful enough to not require sauces, herbs or spices. They are very high in [omega 3](#), containing nearly twice as much per unit weight as wild salmon. They are also very low in toxins like [PCBs](#), [dioxins](#), and [mercury](#) by EPA standards.

Adult shad inhabit the Atlantic Ocean eating saltwater plankton in preparation for spawning. They enter rivers in the spring to spawn, swimming upstream hundreds of miles. They do not eat during their return to freshwater, relying on stored energy to sustain themselves. Juvenile American shad, approximately one-inch-long, will begin to form schools in the fall for their downstream migration. After three-to-five years at sea, they will return in the spring to the river of their birth to reproduce.

The American shad is protected under the Anadromous Fish Conservation Act. The restoration of American shad in eastern Atlantic rivers is a cooperative effort between the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, other Federal agencies, State fish and wildlife Agencies, non-governmental organizations and the fishing industry. Management practices facilitating restoration include conservation stocking and habitat restoration, as well as the removal of stream and river barriers and the building fish of passage facilities.