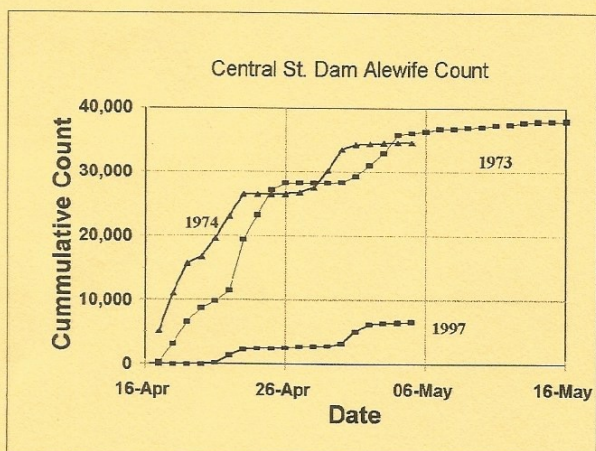
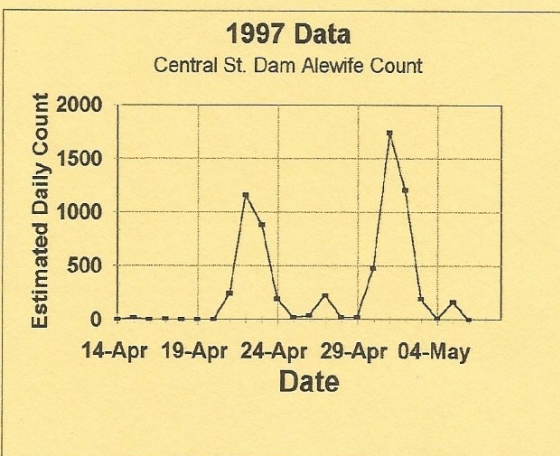


Parker River 1997 Fish Count Begins

Each spring river herring (alewives and blueback herring) return from the Atlantic to spawn in the Parker River and its tributaries. Beginning in April and continuing into May, alewives ascend the Parker River on their way to the head ponds of the Parker to where they were born. Their passage is impeded by 6 dams between Central Street in Byfield to Pond Street in Georgetown, but fishways provide a path around the dams and thousands of fish make the journey each year. Unfortunately many of these fishways were built in the 1930s and are in a poor state of repair. The impact of fishway condition on the reproductive success of the alewives is unknown and the last estimate of the alewife population was performed in the 1970s.

The Parker River Clean Water Association, in collaboration with the Essex County Sportsmen Association and the Massachusetts Audubon Society has started monitoring this year's alewife run to get an estimate of the number of returning fish. The results will be compared to counts from previous years. Based on previous data, we hope that 30,000 to 40,000 alewives will return during the spring run. Volunteers are needed to participate in the fish count in April and May. The counting procedure is to count fish at the Central Street fishway for 10 minutes every hour. You may sign up for as few or as many hours as you like. To volunteer or to get more information, call the PRCWA office at (508) 465-6280.



The 1997 daily count data are preliminary and are based on counts from our volunteers as they come in. Missing data have been estimated by interpolating between available data. Data collection started on April 15 and will continue into mid or late May.

This year's cumulative count is running considerably behind that reported in 1973 and 1974 for the same date. It remains to be seen if this is due to the run being delayed this year or to a major decline in the alewife population. For more information visit the Parker River Clean Water Association website.

Parker River Clean Water Association
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<http://engc.bu.edu/~dcm/prcwhome.html>