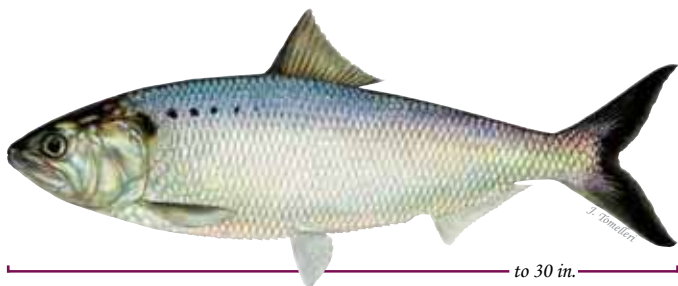


American Shad



American shad are

native to the Atlantic Coast and are an introduced species to the Pacific coast. They were first planted in the Sacramento River in 1871, with additional plants made for several years thereafter. They did remarkably well: by 1879 American shad were being taken in marketable quantities and by 1880 they had spread as far north as the Columbia River in Washington, where they had also been planted in 1885. American shad may currently be found off the entire coast of California, however they are not common south of Monterey.

In California, American shad have become established in many of the larger streams and rivers from San Francisco north. The greatest numbers are found in the Sacramento River, its delta and major tributaries. They may also be found in the San Joaquin River system, the Russian, Klamath, Trinity, Mokelumne, Stanislaus and Eel rivers, and occasionally in the Smith River. They are highly migratory, and may be found statewide.

Distinguishing Characteristics

Metallic blue along back, sides and belly bright silver. Dorsal fin situated at mid-back; ventral fins directly below the dorsal fin, each with a fleshy appendage at its base. No adipose fin. Belly with sharp-edged, saw-toothed scales called "scutes." No lateral line. Row of black spots along the upper front on the sides. Scales are large and easily lost.

American Shad

SCIENTIFIC NAME

Alosa sapidissima

OTHER COMMON NAMES

shad

RANGE & HABITAT

Fisheries exist mostly in freshwater rivers and deltas

LENGTH & WEIGHT

To 30 in. and 7+ lb.

LIFESPAN

To 11 years

DIET & SUGGESTED BAIT/LURES

Feeds on shrimp, small crustaceans & fish. Try fishing with flies and lures such as shad darts, small plastic worms, spinners, or spoons

Life History & Other Notes

American shad belong to the herring family. They are anadromous, although landlocked populations have survived (Millerton Lake, above Friant Dam, contains a reproducing population of American shad).

Young shad feed on small crustaceans and insect larvae while in fresh water, and shrimps other crustaceans when they are in estuaries. Adults feed on shrimps, crustaceans, and small fish. During spawning runs the adults actually eat little, but like salmon they will still strike at a fly or lure.

Shad spawning runs occur from late April to early July. In many spawning streams, shad go as far upstream as they are able, but unlike salmon, they do very poorly at ascending fish ladders and may be stopped even by a relatively low dam with a fish ladder. Spawning takes place where there is good current in tidal fresh water or farther upstream. Shad are broadcast spawners and do not make nests,

although most spawning occurs over gravel or sand bottoms well above all tidal action. One female may lay from 120,000 to over half a million eggs. American shad sometimes die after spawning, but many travel back to salt water and rejoin oceanic schools.

The eggs drift with the current near the bottom, usually hatching in 4 to 6 days, depending on temperature. Some young shad move downstream into brackish water soon after hatching, but large numbers remain in fresh water through November when they are 5 to 6 months old. By December, most have left fresh water for the ocean, where they live until they mature at around 3 to 5 years of age.

Fishing for American shad occurs in fresh water. The appeal of this fishery is enhanced by its proximity to centers of population. The extreme example is in Sacramento, where most residents can drive to good shad fishing waters in 10 to 20 minutes. The scientific name for this species, *sapidissima*, means "most delicious."