

*Have you seen
the Allis shad or
Twaite shad?*

WE NEED YOUR HELP

Allis Shad (Alosa alosa) and Twaite Shad (Alosa fallax)

Allis shad and Twaite shad belong to the herring family and are the only members of this family to be found in the fresh waters of the UK.

These species are distributed along the Atlantic coast of Europe and in the Mediterranean. Once widely fished, both species have experienced a decline in number in Europe, resulting in their absence from many UK rivers. There are no known spawning sites for the Allis shad and only a handful of sites of the Twaite shad.

The aim of the Essex Biodiversity Action Plan (BAP) is to conserve and increase biodiversity of locally and nationally important flora and fauna, such as these two species. The Essex BAP sets out what action is needed, by when and by whom, to secure a better future for these fish.

Ecology

Allis and Twaite shad are anadromous fish, meaning their adult life is spent at sea but they migrate into freshwater to breed. Spawning takes place around May for Allis shad and June for Twaite shad, and then the adults return to the sea. The juveniles of Allis shad spend two years in the fresh water before heading out to sea. The Twaite shad adults and juveniles spend more time in the lower reaches of rivers than the Allis, with juveniles spending a year maturing before moving out to sea.

Factors causing the national decline

The following factors have been attributed to the decline of these two species:

- Barriers in rivers, such as weirs and across estuaries may be preventing the migration of these species
- Removal of suitable spawning habitat
- Poor water quality is also being attributed to their decline in general

What you can do to help?

Very little is known on the distribution of these species in Essex. Your help is required to build up a better picture of their distribution and status in Essex.

- Photograph the specimen
- Record the location of the catch
- Record, if possible, the length and weight of the specimen

When we know more about these fish in Essex, we will be able to target our efforts to help them.

Send any information to:

Essex Biodiversity Project
Abbotts Hall Farm
Great Wigborough
Near Colchester
Essex CO5 7RZ
Or email clairec@essexwt.org.uk

Both species are protected by UK law. For both species, is an offence to "...intentionally or recklessly damage or destroy or obstruct access to any structure or place where any animal uses for shelter or protection, at any time, even when the animal is not there." Schedule 5 of the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981, implemented by the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister. In addition, it is illegal to kill, injure or take Allis shad.

Biological diversity – or 'biodiversity' – is the variety of life on earth and includes all plants and animals, together with the soils, rocks and water on which they depend.

Identification

Both species have:

- Large circular scales forming a toothed edge under the belly
- Large eyes and fleshy eyelids
- Small fins and forked tail
- Large dark blotch behind the operculum, or gill opening

Distinguishing features	Allis shad	Twaite shad
Number of spots present along the side	Very few spots	A row of 5 – 10 spots
Gill rakers of first branchial arch	Long and fine 60 – 90	Coarse and stiff 20 – 60
Length	30 – 50 cm	25 – 40 cm
Number of scales on the lateral line	70 and above	Less than 70
Weight of females	Around 3,000g	Maximum published weight is 1,500g
Weight of males	Around 2,500g	

The two species can look very similar. The best way to distinguish them is to lift up the gill cover and look at the gill rakers.



For more information, please contact The Essex Biodiversity Project
Or visit our website www.essexbiodiversity.org.uk

Essex Biodiversity Project, a group of more than 40 nature conservation organisations, statutory agencies, voluntary interest groups, businesses, community groups and local authorities working together for the biodiversity of Essex.

Funding members:



Brentwood Borough Council



The D J H Currie - Memorial Trust -



Supporting members: Braintree District Council • British Trust for Conservation Volunteers • Butterfly Conservation • Castle Point Borough Council • Colchester Borough Council • Conservators of Epping Forest • Dedham Vale & Stour Valley Project • Essex Amphibian and Reptile Group • Essex Bat Group • Essex Birdwatching Society • Essex Estuaries Initiative • Essex Field Club • Essex Farming and Wildlife Advisory Group • Game Conservancy Trust • Havering Borough Council • Lee Valley Regional Park • Peoples Trust for Endangered Species • Royal Horticultural Society • Royal Society for the Protection of Birds • Southend Borough Council • Thames Chase Community Forest • Thames Estuary Partnership • The National Trust • The Suffolk Coasts & Heaths Unit • Writtle College.

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