

Spring 2009 Alewife Monitoring Protocol

Monitoring Schedule

Monitoring will take place from April 1 to May 31. It is important that we spread our effort out over the survey sites and spawning period to get a better understanding of the dynamics of alewife runs in the individual tributaries.

To facilitate this we will encourage volunteers to coordinate their sampling effort with one another. We will also maintain a tentative survey schedule to help with this. We don't expect participants to commit to a rigid sampling schedule; your observations are valuable whenever you are able to make them but the more we can coordinate, the better.

Before you go out

Safety first! Dress for all weather conditions and wear bright clothing to make yourself visible to motorists if you are monitoring near a roadway. Make sure someone knows where you are headed and bring a partner if possible.

Don't forget to bring:

- Watch
- Pencil
- Data sheet and surface to write on
- Survey protocol
- Polarized glasses if you have a pair (reduce glare so it's easier to see fish)
- Thermometer (optional)
- Digital camera (optional)

At your site

Please record information on the data sheets provided. We ask that volunteers observe for periods of at least 15 minutes. Longer observation periods are certainly encouraged as it increases our overall effort, but 15 minutes is the shortest time that can qualify as a valid observation period. It is critical that volunteers carefully record the length of time spent observing because the conclusions we draw from the study will depend heavily on the observation time.

Do your best to estimate the number of fish observed. This may not be easy and it is more important that we document where and when the runs occur, but is important to know whether you see 3, 30, or 300 fish during your observation period. If you have a camera with you and see fish in the water or on the bank, or if you observe interesting animals or conditions, please take pictures. Also, please record water temperature if you have a thermometer and can safely lower it into the water. This is not mandatory, but it will add to our knowledge of alewife spawning conditions.

Make comments on your data sheets. Any interesting observations or conditions you observe are worth noting on data sheets; this is often how we learn things we didn't expect when designing the study.

Data response

Your data can be submitted online via the Google Docs form linked to the SSER website. We prefer this method of submission because it allows us to track progress during the survey and supplement observation effort when necessary. The more frequently you are able to enter your data, the more responsive we can be to the needs of the survey. If you are unable or do not wish to enter your data online, that's ok, let us know and we will provide you with a self addressed stamped envelope and you can send us hard copies.

Of course, work and personal schedules, weather, and other factors will affect how closely you are able to follow this protocol. We simply ask that you do your best, and we thank you for your participation. Without volunteers, a survey like this simply would not be possible. Good luck in your search for alewives!

If you have any questions while you are at your site, do not hesitate to call Brian Kelder (631) 626-1269 or Lou Siegel (516) 378-2451.