



Louisiana Department of Wildlife and Fisheries Natural Heritage Program

Alosa alabamae Alabama shad



Photo courtesy of www.nativefish.org

Identification: Laterally compressed body; color is predominately silver with a blue-green tint; belly has a distinct keel of scutes. The maxillary teeth are poorly developed. The upper jaw has a small notch at the tip and the lower jaw projects slightly beyond upper jaw.

Measurements: 20 inches long, 3 pounds.

Taxonomic comments: No subspecies.

Status: Global rank is **G3** and state rank is **S1**.

Habitat: Found along sand and gravel bars in medium to large freshwater rivers and at sea.

Range: Northern region of the Gulf of Mexico and its tributaries as far north as Tennessee, Missouri, and Arkansas.

Food habits: phytoplankton, aquatic insects, crustaceans, small fishes, and vegetation.
Spawning adults do not eat while in freshwater.

Life expectancy: Maximum reported age is 4 years but lifespan may be longer (see age at first reproduction).

Reproduction: Males begin reproducing at 3-4 years old and females at 2-6 years old. Adults ascend freshwater rivers in early summer to spawn on sand bars and then return to the Gulf of Mexico. Eggs are fertilized externally. After hatching, young remain in rivers for 6-8 months before descending to the gulf in late autumn/early winter.

Reason for decline: Migrating upstream is an essential life history component for this species. Locks, dams, and hydroelectric generators block migration routes, preventing this species from reproducing. As a result of blocked migration patterns, areas of the lower Mississippi have

become increasingly important habitat. Dredging and pollution diminish quality of the breeding habitat.

Interesting facts: In the early 1900s the Alabama shad was abundant enough to support a commercial fishing industry in the Ohio River. A total of 15,700 pounds of fish were harvested during 2 years. Over-fishing may have contributed to its decline.

Known distribution in Louisiana:



Dates of documented observations are: 1966, 1967, 1968, 1970, 1971, 1973, 1977, and 1982

References

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