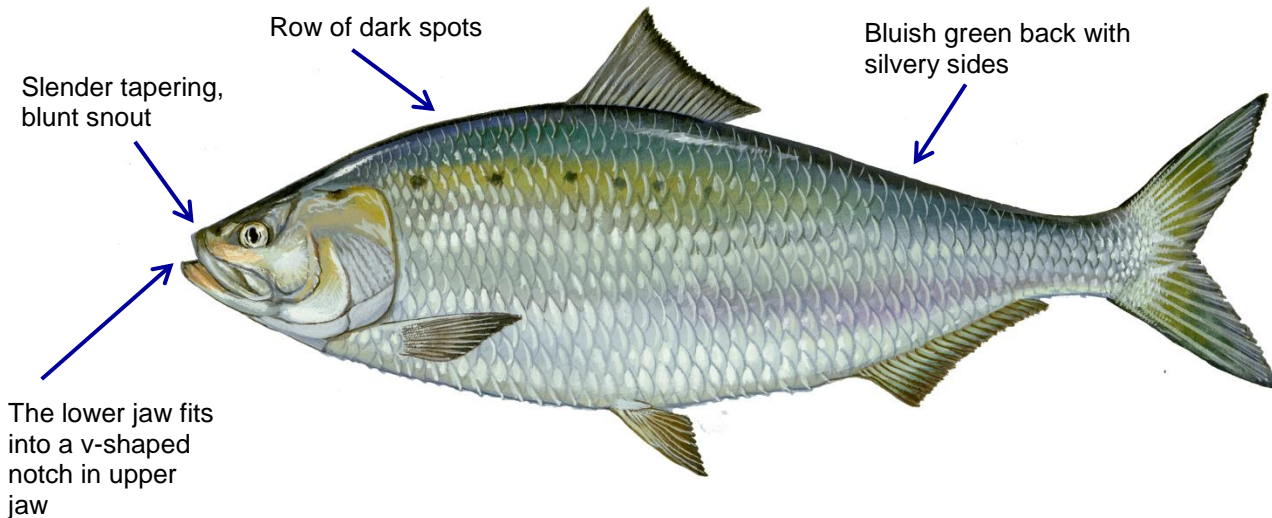




Delaware's Shad and River Herring A Recreational Anglers Guide

American Shad



- The American shad is the largest of the Delaware shad and herring
- Bluish green back with silvery sides
- At the upper side of the gill plate, a dark spot is present which is usually followed by a row of smaller distinct and circular spots along the upper side of the body
- Slender with a tapering, blunt snout
- Lower jaw has a pointed tip that fits into a v-shaped notch in upper jaw
- Adults common in the spring in the Delaware River, Nanticoke River and their tributaries
- Anglers often target American shad below dams in the Spring
- Commonly caught by Delaware anglers in the range of 20 to 24 inches in length
- **Ocean/Delaware Bay and Tributaries/Delaware River and Tributaries/Inland Bays**
 - **Season:** Open All Year
 - **Size Limit:** No Limit
 - **Daily Limit/Person:** 10 in any combination with hickory shad
- **Nanticoke River/Tributaries (PROHIBITED)**
 - **Season:** **CLOSED** – Both commercial and recreational America shad are closed to harvest on the Nanticoke River and their tributaries
- Delaware State Record: 6 pounds 12 ounces, Bayard Conaway, 1972



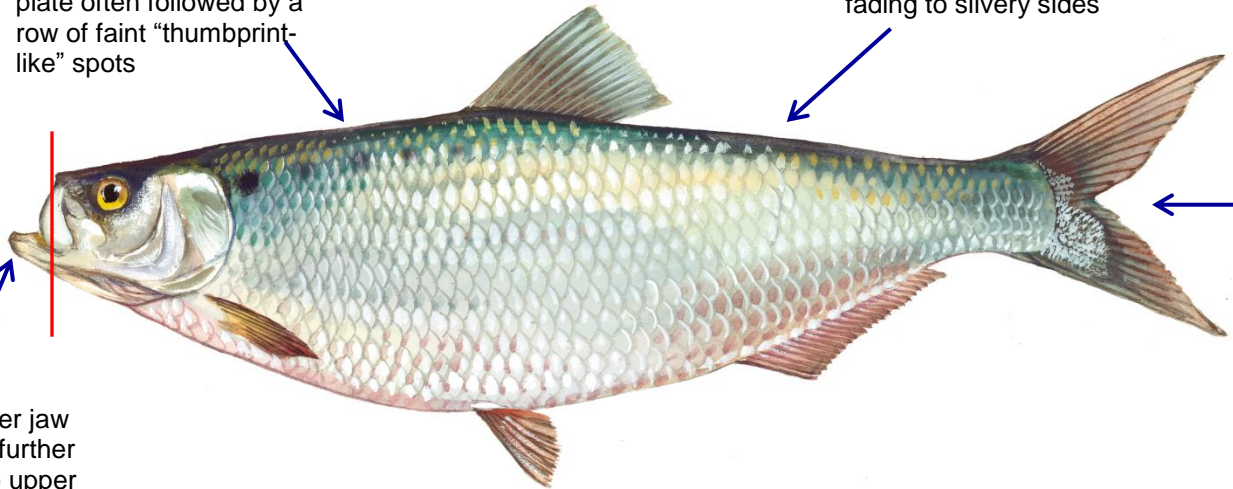
Hickory Shad

A spot behind the gill plate often followed by a row of faint "thumbprint-like" spots

Grayish green back fading to silvery sides

Deeply forked tail

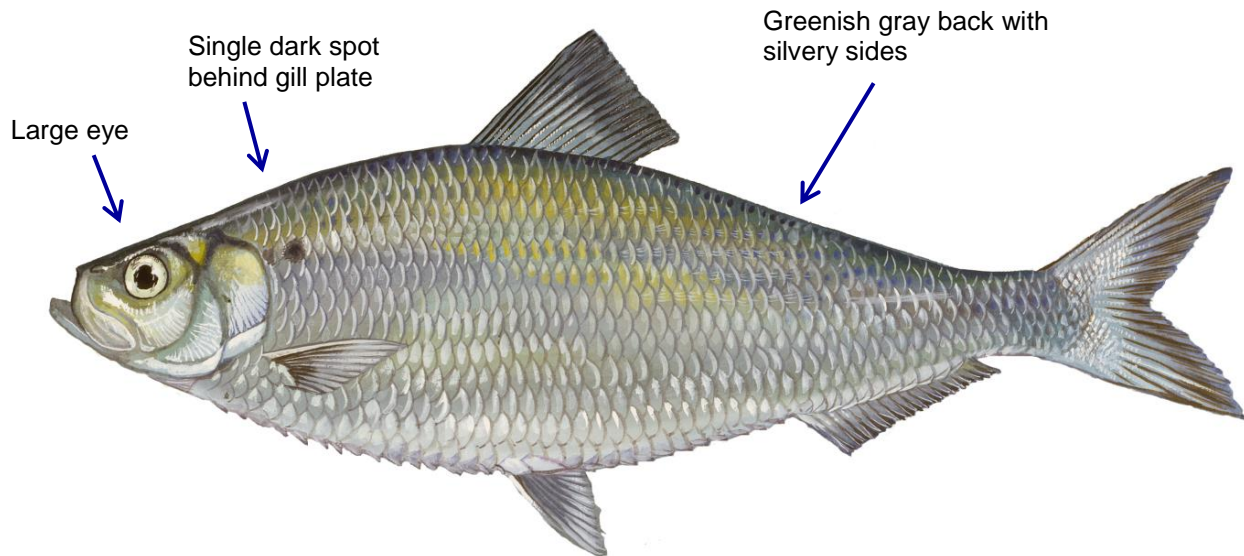
The lower jaw juts out further than the upper jaw



- Grayish green on the back and upper sides that fades to silver
- A spot behind the gill plate may be followed by a row of faint spots, often apparent as dark smudges or thumbprint-like marks
- The lower jaw juts out further than the upper jaw, a key identifying feature (see red line)
- Lower jaw can be darkly colored
- Deeply forked tail
- More slender than an American shad
- Adults common in the Spring in the Delaware River, Nanticoke River and their tributaries
- Anglers often target hickory shad below dams in the Spring
- Common in the Indian River Inlet June through December
- Commonly caught by Delaware anglers in the range of 12 to 20 inches in length
- **Ocean/Delaware Bay and Tributaries/Delaware River and Tributaries/Inland Bays**
 - **Season:** Open All Year
 - **Size Limit:** No Limit
 - **Daily Limit/Person:** 10 in any combination with American shad
- **Nanticoke River/Tributaries (PROHIBITED)**
 - **Season:** **CLOSED** – Both commercial and recreational hickory shad are closed to harvest on the Nanticoke River and their tributaries
- Delaware State Record: Hickory shad are not currently eligible for an individual Delaware record



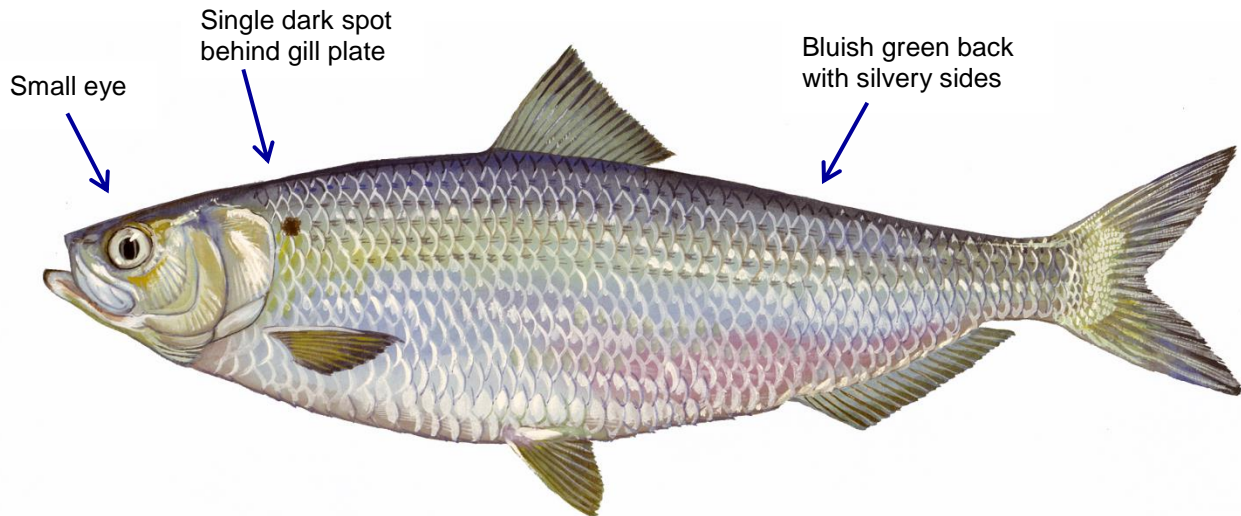
Alewife (River Herring) – PROHIBITED SPECIES



- The alewife and the blueback herring are almost identical looking with the alewife having larger eyes
- Alewife and blueback herring are collectively termed "river herring"
- Greenish gray back with silvery sides
- Usually one small dark spot located on the upper side of the body just beyond the gill plate
- Smaller in size than American and hickory shad
- Although similar in length to a blueback herring, the alewife's body is more compressed and less elongated giving it a wider girth than a blueback herring
- Adults most common in the Spring in the Delaware River, Nanticoke River and many of their tributaries
- Alewives can reach lengths of 14 inches
- **State Wide**
 - **Season: CLOSED** –Both commercial and recreational river herring (alewife and blueback herring) are closed to harvest State wide
- Delaware State Record: Alewife are not currently eligible for an individual Delaware record



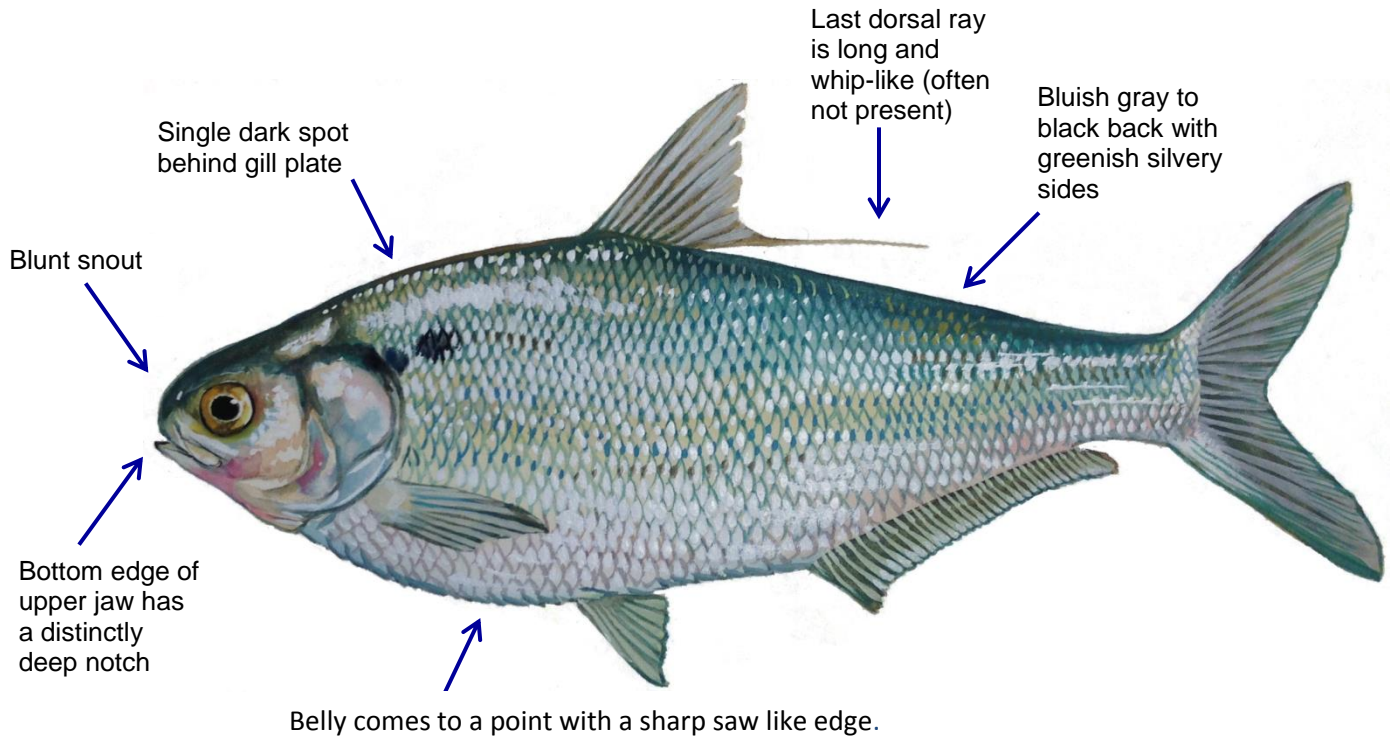
Blueback Herring (River Herring) – PROHIBITED SPECIES



- The blueback herring and the alewife are almost identical looking with the blueback herring having smaller eyes
- Alewife and blueback herring are collectively termed "river herring"
- Bluish green back with silvery sides
- Usually one small dark spot located on the upper side of the body just behind the gill plate
- They are smaller in size than American or hickory shad
- Adults present in the Spring in the Delaware River, Nanticoke River and many of their tributaries
- Blueback herring can reach lengths of 13 inches
- **State Wide**
 - **Season: CLOSED** – Both commercial and recreational river herring (blueback herring and alewife) are closed to harvest State wide
- Delaware State Record: Blueback herring are not currently eligible for an individual Delaware record



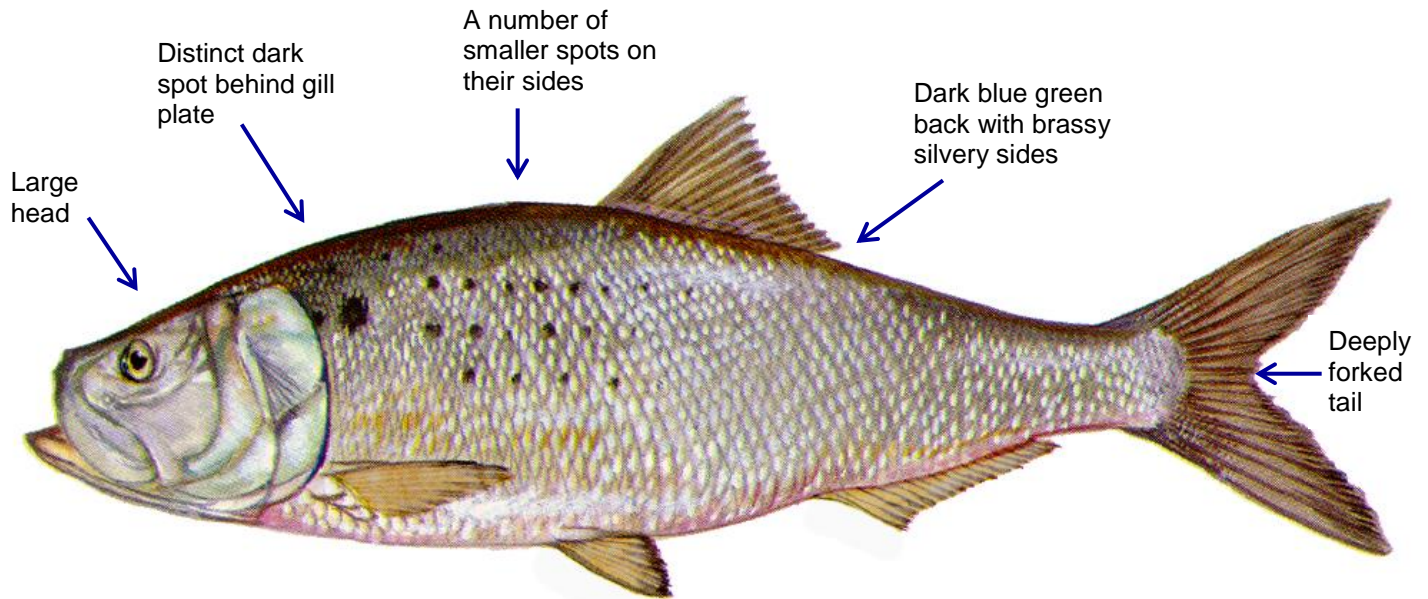
Gizzard Shad



- Bluish gray to black back with greenish silvery sides
- At the upper side of the gill plate, a dark spot is present
- Blunt snout
- Bottom edge of upper jaw has a distinct notch; mouth much different from other herrings listed here
- Last dorsal ray is long and whip-like, but is often eroded or not present
- Very slimy to the touch with strong fish smell
- Present year round in many Delaware ponds and Delaware River, Nanticoke River and their tributaries
- Gizzard shad can reach lengths of 18 inches
- **Statewide**
 - **Season:** Open All Year
 - **Size Limit:** No Limit
 - **Daily Limit/Person:** No Limit
- Delaware State Record: Gizzard shad are not currently eligible for an individual Delaware record



Atlantic Menhaden (Bunker)



- Atlantic menhaden is a member of the herring family
- Blue green back with brassy silvery sides
- At the upper side of the gill plate, a distinct dark spot is present
- A number of smaller spots on their sides, typically not arranged in a single row as with other species
- Large head
- Deeply forked tail
- Adults present in the Atlantic Ocean, Delaware Bay and Delaware River and juveniles present in nearly all tidal waters
- Atlantic Menhaden can reach lengths of 15 inches
- **Statewide**
 - **Season:** Open All Year
 - **Size Limit:** No Limit
 - **Daily Limit/Person:** No Limit
- Delaware State Record: Atlantic Menhaden are not currently eligible for an individual Delaware record



PROHIBITED SPECIES: All prohibited species must be immediately released to ensure maximum probability of survival.

No person shall fish with any type of net within 300 feet of any constructed dam or spillway on a tidal water river, stream, canal, ditch or tributary located in the state.

Please consult Delaware's online fishing guide for information regarding the current seasons, size, and creel limits, as well as a comprehensive list of prohibited species. The online guide is available by visiting: www.dnrec.delaware.gov.

When in doubt about the identification of a shad or river herring, please release it unharmed.

North Carolina Wildlife Resource Commission, Division of Inland Fisheries, "*Herring and Shad in North Carolina*"

Fish illustrations: *Duane Raver, Jr.*