

ALABAMA SHAD

Alosa alabamae

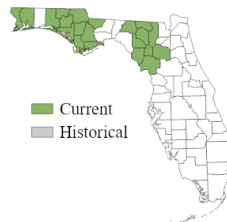
Order: Clupeiformes

Family: Clupeidae

FNAI Ranks: G2G3/S1S2

U.S. Status: none

FL Status: none



Description: Alabama Shad is blue-green dorsally, transitioning to silvery white ventrally. There is usually a blue-black spot behind the upper edge of the gill covers. The fins are slightly darker than other related shad. The profile of the mouth is less upturned than other Florida shads and has no teeth on the jaws. Gill rakers range from 42-48 on the lower limb of the first gill arch. Adults reach up to 20 inches.

Similar Species: Skipjack Herring (*Alosa chrysochloris*) has a cheek region that is longer than or about equal to its height giving the face a longer appearance. Skipjack Herring has a strongly upturned mouth profile as well as having only 20-24 gill rakers on the lower limb of the first gill arch. American Shad, Hickory Shad, and Blueback Herring are Atlantic species.

Habitat: To spawn, Alabama Shad move up rivers along the Florida Gulf coast. This includes the Apalachicola/Chipola, Choctawhatchee, Econfinia, Escambia, Ochlockonee, and Suwannee/Withlacoochee rivers (Beecher et al. 1977, NOAA 2017, Rider et al. 2021, Robins et al. 2018). Spawning occurs over coarse sand and gravel bottoms (Mills 1972).

Seasonal Occurrence: Beginning in February, fish migrate up coastal rivers to spawn. In Florida, spawning in the Apalachicola River was observed to peak in mid-March to mid-April (Ely 2008). Adults migrate downstream after spawning and young-of-the-year migrate to salt water before their first winter. Shad spend the remainder of their lives in Gulf coastal waters.

Florida Distribution: The Florida Panhandle east to, and including, the Suwannee River.

Range-wide Distribution: River systems in north Florida, Georgia, Alabama, Mississippi, Arkansas, Missouri, Tennessee, Kentucky, and Okalahoma. Considered

extirpated in Iowa and Indiana.

Conservation Status: This species has had drastic declines in the last century. The erection of dams creates barriers to anadromous migration. Previously considered a commercial resource, this species now occurs in small numbers throughout its range. Data from the Apalachicola River suggests population sizes have remained relatively stable for the last half century.

Protection and Management: Remove dams from river systems to restore natural hydrology and allow free passage of fish. Where dams are in place, installation of fish passage devices can help fish migrate farther up the waterway to preferred spawning grounds.

References: Ely 2008, Robins et al. 2018



juvenile, © D. Gray Bass, FWC



adult, © Steve Sammons