



BLUEBACK HERRING

Alosa aestivalis

Description:

- ◆ back bluish gray to dark blue with silver sides
- ◆ usually dark spot on shoulder
- ◆ black peritoneum (lining of the abdominal cavity)
- ◆ lower jaw equal to snout or just beyond
- ◆ upper jaw extends back to beginning of eye

Size:

- ◆ up to 15 inches; average 11-12 inches

Range:

- ◆ Cape Breton, Nova Scotia to St. John's River, Florida

Fact:

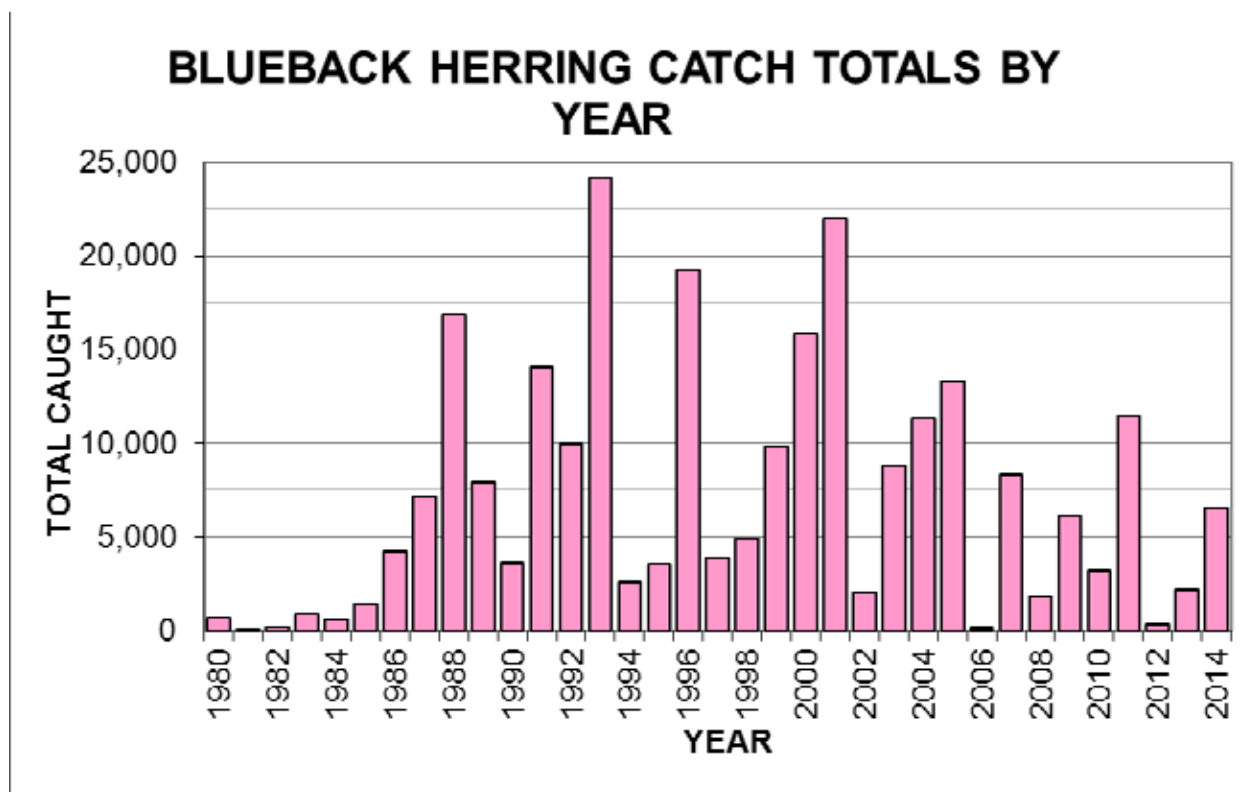
- ◆ spawn in coastal rivers during the spring
- ◆ young move out towards ocean waters at about 1 month of age
- ◆ lifespan about 8 years

- ◆ anadromous species (lives in saltwater, returns to freshwater to spawn)
- ◆ feed on plankton

During years of severe drought (2002), and severe flooding (2006), blueback herring catches tend to be lower than normal. In 2001, the average number of blueback herring caught per haul was 98 but in 2002, the average dropped to six fish per haul. This species is resilient, as it bounced back with abundance in alternating years.

Unfortunately, due to flooding in 2006, blueback herring population counts dropped to all-time lows of less than one fish per haul. Abundance remained low (26 fish per haul) for 2007, causing some concern for this species. However, an increase to 39 fish per haul occurred in 2011.

In 2013, the average number per haul of blueback herring was 6 fish. While these numbers are not as high as the averages of the 1990's, any increase is a welcome change. With new conservation guidelines in place, hopefully biologists will continue to monitor an increase in both population sizes.



For more information about blueback herring, please check out this article:

Last Call for River Herring

<http://www.njfishandwildlife.com/pdf/2011/digmar23-30.pdf>

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