

American Shad



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Chesapeake National
Historic Trail**



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Across the centuries, the people and animals of the Chesapeake Bay have relied on shad for food. Shad are "anadromous" – every spring, they migrate from the deep, salty waters of the bay and ocean up to freshwater rivers and streams. There, they lay their eggs. Predators upstream eagerly await the arrival of these flocks of fish in the spring. Larger fish, birds, and bears feast on shad, hungry from the long winter months. In turn, young shad feed on tiny zooplankton and insects. This makes the shad a link between the smallest and largest animals in the food web. Other "spring run" fish are striped bass, herring, sturgeon, and perch.