



<b>Common Name</b>	alewife
<b>Genus &amp; Species</b>	<i>Alosa pseudoharengus</i>
<b>Family</b>	Clupeidae (herrings and shads)
<b>Order</b>	Clupeiformes (herrings, shads, anchovies, sardines)
<b>Class</b>	Actinopterygii (ray-finned fishes)

**Diagnosis:** The alewife is characterized by having a blue-green colored dorsal area, large eyes and deep body. Scales in the lateral series range from 42-50. Dorsal fin rays are usually 13-14 (12-16) and anal fin rays are 17-18. Jaw teeth are weak and inconspicuous. Gill rakers on lower limb of first arch 38 or more in adults; can be as few as 25 in specimens less than 5 cm. Tongue teeth absent in this species. Alewife have a dull dark spot present behind upper operculum. Length of this species can be up to 38 cm, but usually less than 25 cm in landlocked populations.

**Ecology:** The alewife is principally an anadromous species which utilizes lentic waters of smaller streams and headwater ponds along the middle and northern Atlantic Coast as spawning habitat. This species has also adapted well to a landlocked existence in cooler lakes. Alewives are utilized as forage by large predatory species such as walleye and smallmouth bass in inland waters. Both young and adult alewives feed on microcrustacea, which are filtered by long gill rakers. Spacing, lengths, and total numbers of gill rakers increase with age to enable adult alewives to continue to feed on zooplankton. Spawning occurs from June through August. Landlocked females produce between 10,000-20,000 eggs and anadromous females produce up to 100,000 eggs.



**Habitat & Distribution:** The native range of the alewife includes the Atlantic Coast from Red Bay, Labrador, south to South Carolina. Alewives have been introduced into the Great Lakes and have established populations in all five lakes. This species was first collected in Lake Ontario in the 1870s and there is still debate as to whether this species is native to Lake Ontario. This species has been stocked as a forage fish in other interior lakes.

**Status:** The alewife is currently on the doorstep of the Chicago Sanitary and Ship Canal, as well as other inter-basin connections. Poor water quality in the Sanitary and Ship Canal may be one of the reasons that this species has not expanded into the Mississippi River basin via the Illinois River. If water quality includes in the future, this species may expand its range.

**USGS Fact Sheet:** <http://nas.er.usgs.gov/queries/factsheet.aspx?SpeciesID=490>