**HERRING SPECIES OF MASSACHUSETTS: EASY WAYS TO IDENTIFY THEM**

**American shad (Alosa sapidissima)**
Description: Body relatively deep, eye relatively small, 4-7 distinct dark spots behind gill cover, pale to silvery colored lining of body cavity
Size: Up to 30 inches and 13½ pounds
Habitat: Found in marine and fresh waters (coastal waters and in rivers with shallow water with moderate current speed)
Regulations: Six fish possession limit, no minimum size restrictions

**Atlantic(154,109),(398,305)
Description: Body elongate, dorsal fin is located closer to tail fin in comparison to the other herrings, moderate-size eye, no distinctive spots on body or fins, lining of body cavity is dusky, belly not distinctly sharp
Size: Up to 17 inches and 1½ pounds
Habitat: Found exclusively in marine (coastal and offshore) waters, with some populations entering brackish waters, not in fresh water
Regulations: No recreational fishing restrictions

**Alewife (Alosa pseudoharengus)**
Description: Gray to gray-green dorsal color, eye width greater than distance from front of eye to tip of snout, distinct round dark spot behind gill cover, lining of body cavity is light colored, belly sharp (saw-toothed)
Size: Up to 15 inches, generally larger than bluebacks
Habitat: Found in marine and fresh waters (rivers, lakes, and coastal waters – mainly in ponds and deep pools)
Regulations: **Illegal to take, possess or sell**

**Blueback herring (Alosa aestivalis)**
Description: Blue-black to blue-green dorsal color, eye width is equal to distance from front of eye to tip of snout, dark spot behind gill cover is less distinct, lining of body cavity is dark colored, belly sharp (saw-toothed)
Size: Up to 15 inches, generally smaller than alewives
Habitat: Found in marine and fresh waters (coastal waters and rivers with swift moving waters over hard substrate)
Regulations: **Illegal to take, possess or sell**

**Habitat:**
- Atlantic herring: Coastal and offshore waters.
- Alewife: Marine and fresh waters.
- Blueback herring: Marine and fresh waters.
- American shad: Coastal waters.

**Regulations:**
- **Illegal to take, possess or sell** for Alewife and Blueback herring.
- No restrictions for Atlantic herring and American shad.

*Art work by H.L. Todd*

**Marine Fisheries**
(www.mass.gov/marinefisheries)
A Commonwealth of Massachusetts Agency