

Dedicated to the Memory of Commissioner Enoch S. "Inky" Moore Jr.

PLAY



Pennsylvania • League • of • Angling • Youth

by Andy Desko



Jump into Shad Fishing!

Many of Pennsylvania's anglers will journey to their favorite trout streams, and other anglers will seek out panfish near lake and pond shallows. Can you think of any other fish you might want to catch in Pennsylvania?

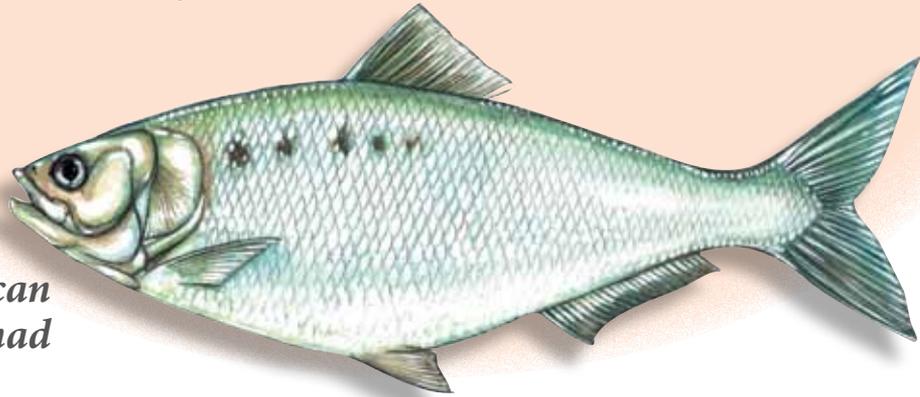
How about the fish pictured above? Can you identify it? Do you need a few hints? Native Americans and European

settlers relied upon this fish during its annual spring runs from the ocean. It was a source of food for them. It is the largest member of the herring family. The second part of its name rhymes with *Chad*.

If you think it is an American shad, you are correct. Turn the page to learn more about these awesome fish and how to catch them.

Shad Profile

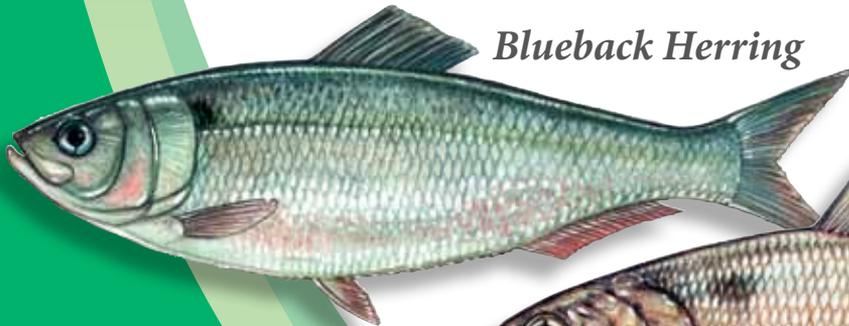
American shad migrate up the Delaware, Schuylkill, Lehigh and Susquehanna rivers each spring from the Mid-Atlantic to spawn. They are a member of the herring family and weigh between 5 and 8 pounds. The males are smaller than the females. American shad can grow up to 12 pounds and 30 inches long. Wouldn't you like to catch one?



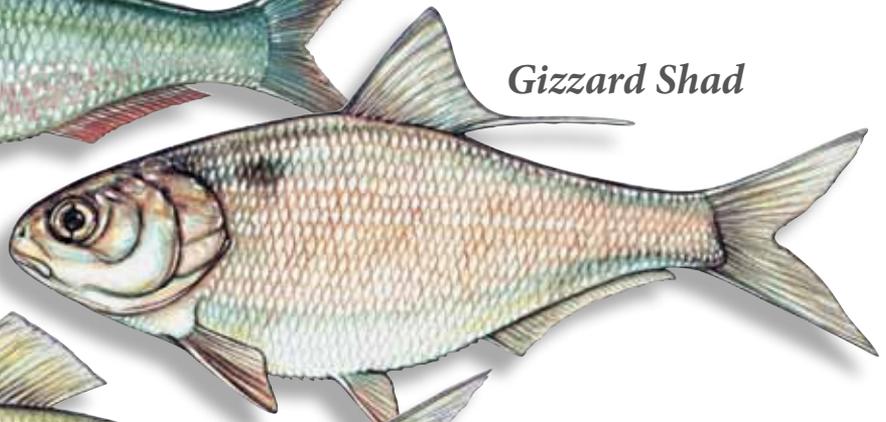
American Shad

American shad can be tricky to identify. It is easy to confuse them with other members of the herring family. They are silver in color with tints of green or blue along the back. Shad have a small dorsal fin in the center of their back and a deeply forked tail. American shad have a row of dark spots along their sides from the gill cover to the dorsal fin. They also have large, circular scales that flake off easily.

Below are some other members of the herring family.



Blueback Herring



Gizzard Shad



Hickory Shad

ENDANGERED

This species is in danger of becoming extinct.

Hazards on the Water

Life in the river can be dangerous. American shad face many challenges during migration each spring. They have to deal with predators, flooding, fish hooks and dams that block their way. Even cold and high water can delay their spawning. Imagine swimming against that strong current—*whew!*

Shad anglers face similar hazards since they are entering the same river environment.

Be aware of these dangers:



Rivers are cold in the spring when the American shad are running. Although the air temperature may be warm, the water temperature is cold. Be sure to wear your life jacket.

Rapids are dangerous places for boats and people. The power of water current is very deceptive and should be considered at all times.



Tree branches in the water become strainers that can capsize boats and trap people.



Wear a life jacket when on or near the water. It keeps you afloat, even if you are wearing heavy and wet clothes.



The Right Tools for the Job

Here is what you will need to hook and land one of these "silver bullets"!



Rods and reels

You'll need a long fishing rod to fight these strong fish. Many shad anglers prefer a medium- to fast-action graphite rod that is 6 to 8 feet long. The handle section should be very strong, too. Pair that rod with a good spinning reel that holds 200-300 yards of 4- to 6-pound test line. Clear line works best.



Shad darts

Flutterspoons

Gold spinners

Lure them in

Shad are fussy. It is hard to tell what they will strike at from day to day. That is why shad lures come in many shapes and colors. There are three common shad lures you should have in your tackle box:

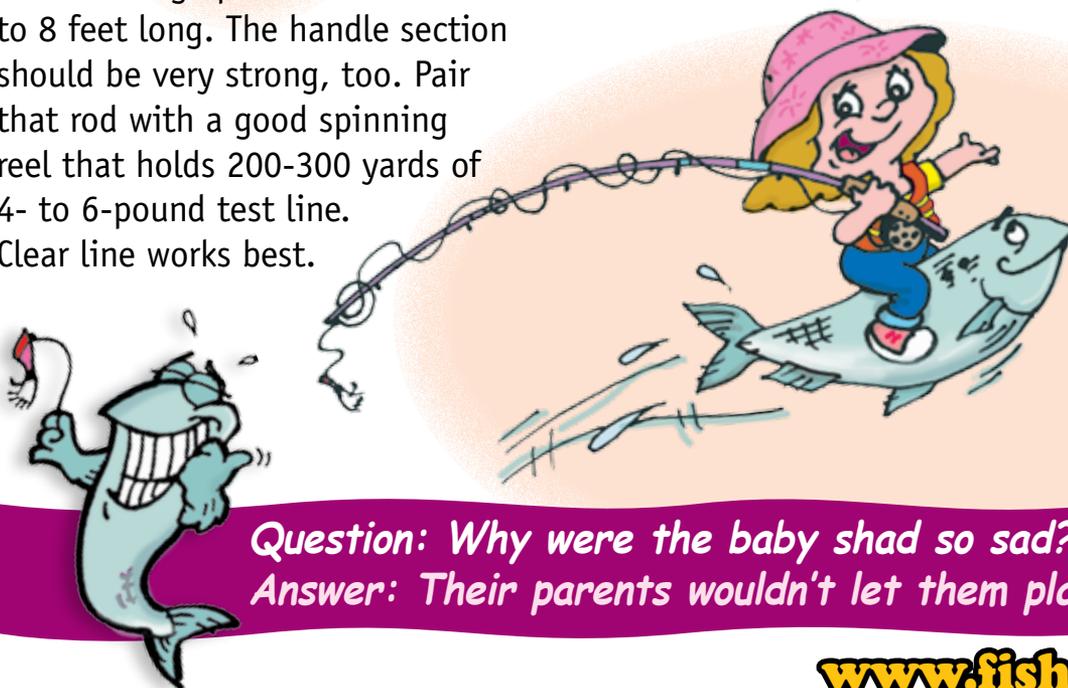
Shad darts—bright colors like chartreuse, hot pink and orange work great.

Flutterspoons—gold and silver are the standard. Shad can't resist the flash of the wobbling spoon.

Gold spinners—Keep a few on hand. It might take some extra bling.

Shad on the Fly

Catching shad on a fly rod is a blast. Use an 8- or 9-foot rod with fast sinking line. Then, tie on a tiny dart, spoon or fly.



Question: Why were the baby shad so sad?

Answer: Their parents wouldn't let them play with darts!

Cruising for Shad

Now that we know what gear to use. How do we catch them? Shad fishing is best done from a boat. Here are three techniques:

Trolling

Drag lures behind the boat as it travels slowly upriver. This is a great way to cover more water and locate shad.

Deadsticking

Rig a shad dart one or two feet below splitshot weights and cast downstream of an anchored boat. Place the rod in a holder and wait for a strike. Some anglers will twitch the rod occasionally to attract fish.

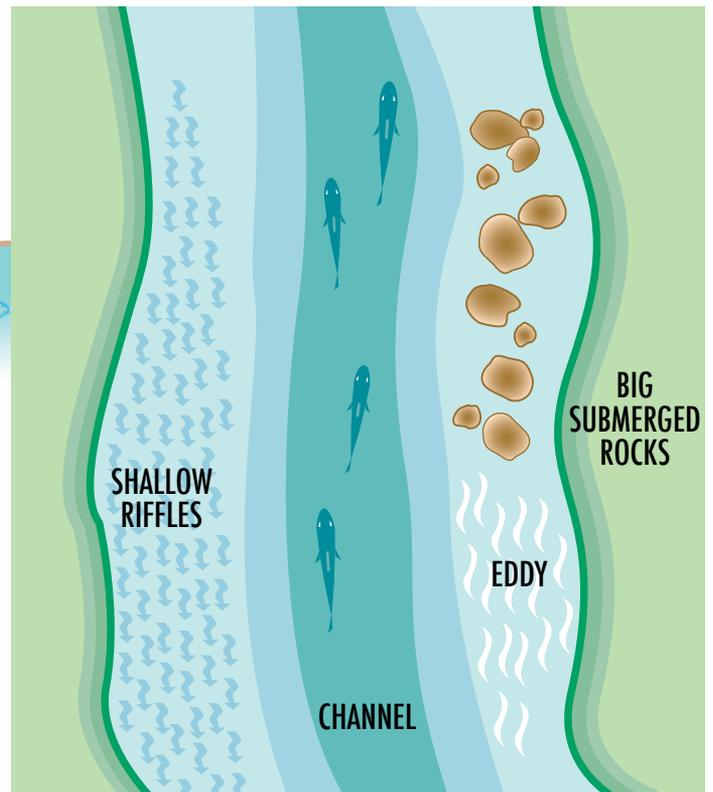
Downrigging

A downrigger controls the depth of lures using a cable and a heavy weight. Shad schools will often travel at a similar depth. When the fish bites the lure, your fishing line releases from the downrigger, and the fight is on.



**Water too high?
Don't have a boat?
Consider fishing from shore!**

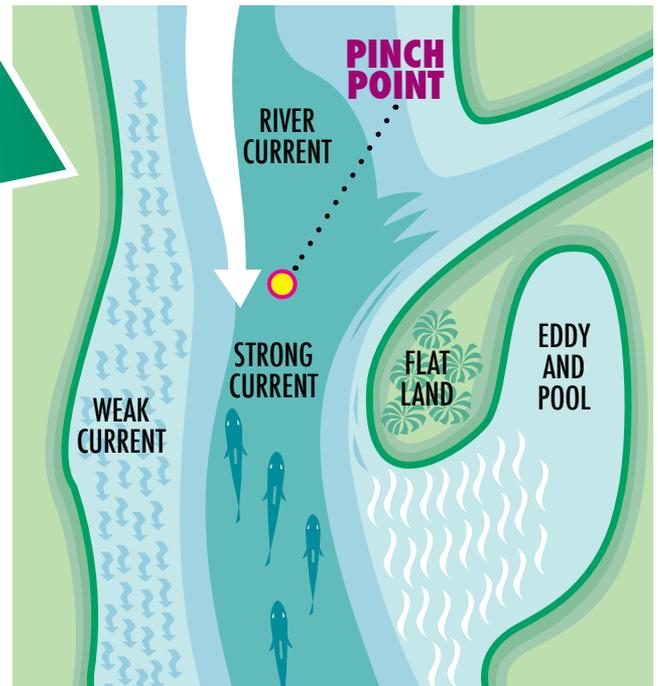
Use a wading staff and wear a life jacket. Cast out lures and reel them in over spots where the channel flows close to shore or in pools where they may be resting.



Get in a Pinch!

Here's how you work the river.

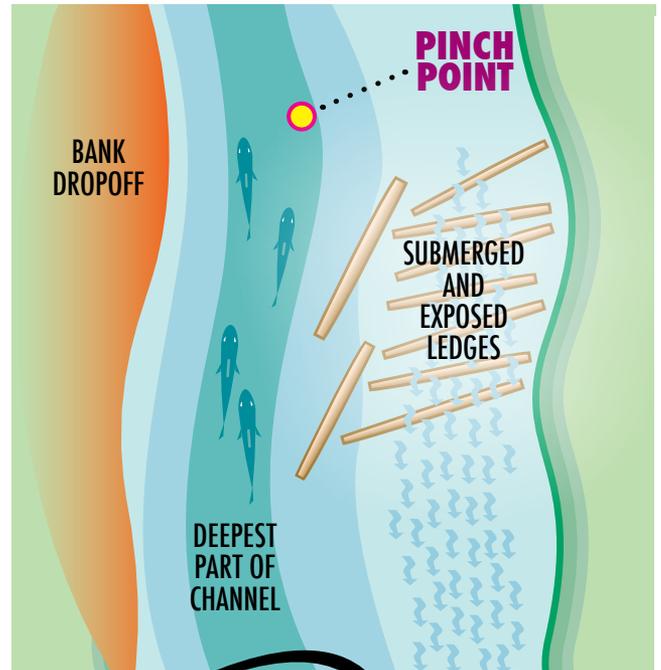
Look at the images at the right. Shad like to swim on the edge of the channel where the flowing water meets the still water. The current squeezes shad into a narrow area. This **pinch point** is where you want to fish.



Unscramble the words below

for more tips on fishing for shad. Use the **blue** letters below to discover a shad fishing destination.

- Set your **drag** so shad can pull and not break your line.
- Check the **line** after catching a fish for cuts or weak points.
- Remove **weeds** or twigs tangled in your lure.
- Fish bridge piers, pools and **islands** where fish rest.
- You will need to **anchor** if you plan on deadsticking from a boat.
- Change **lures** if fish are not biting.
- Use a deep **net** to land fish.
- Look for the **edge** of the current.



ENT SEURL NEIL
SEWED HACRON
DEEG ARDG ANSSLID



What is the river? D E L A W A R E

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Get Out There!

Now that you know about shad, shad fishing tools and techniques and how to work a river, where and when do you go fishing for them?

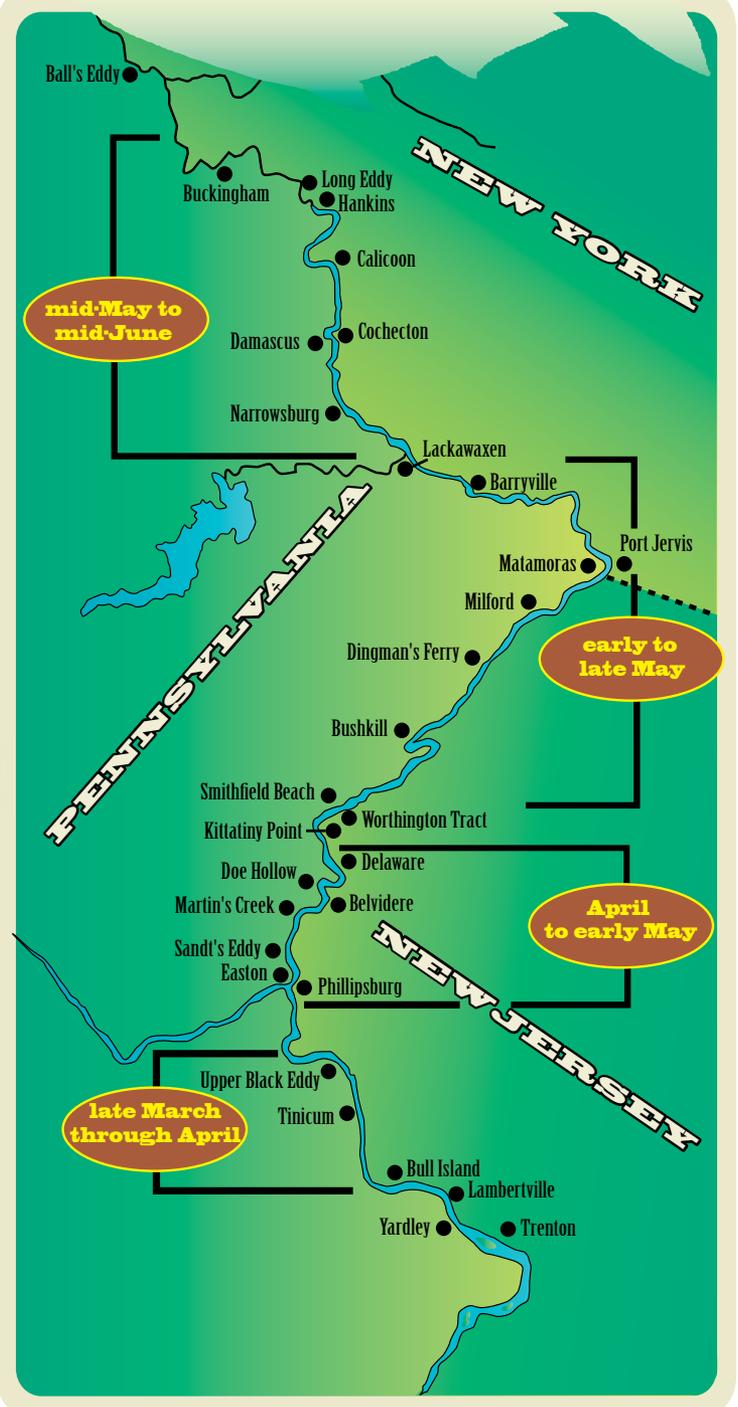
One of the best places to fish for shad is the Delaware River. The map on the right will help you focus your fishing efforts.

Shad can also be found in the Susquehanna River, but their population is still recovering with the help of the Pennsylvania Fish & Boat Commission. Anglers should note that it is unlawful to take, catch or kill American shad, hickory shad, alewife and blueback herring in the Susquehanna River and all its tributaries.

Get out there and try American shad fishing, especially if you are looking for a new adventure!



When to Fish



PLAY

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