

American Shad Fishing in the Merrimack River

The Run

Starts in mid-late April; really turns on when water temp hits 50°F (usually 1st week of May). Excellent catching through about the 3rd week of June.

MA Shad Regulations

Year-round season. Maximum of 3 fish/day in the Merrimack and Connecticut rivers and their tributaries. All other MA rivers are catch-and-release only. Unsure about saltwater catches. Need saltwater license to fish downstream of first I-495 bridge in Haverhill; need freshwater license to fish upstream of same bridge.

MA Sportfishing Awards Program

Can enter with a 22" shad (catch-and-release category) and/or a 5 lb shad (adults) or 3 lb shad (youths to 17 y/o) in catch-and-keep category. Bronze pin awarded with entry. Gold pin to angler with largest catch.

Where to Fish?

"Rocks Village" (Ferry Park) in West Newbury. "Spiro's" (Chippendale's Dance Studio) in North Andover. "The Dam" (Pemberton Park) in Lawrence.

When to Fish?

The Dam and Spiro's are not tide dependent, so they are available to fish anytime. Rock's Village is affected by the tide, and is best fished from high tide down.

Effects of Wind

Heavy wind can make an outing very difficult. Use this table when planning where to fish:

Location	Wind Direction	
	Good	Bad
Rocks Village	Any wind with east in it	Northwest around to due
Spiro's	South to southeast	Northeast around to due west
The Dam	Any wind with north in it	Southeast to southwest

Water Height

Use Ducks Bridge water gauge in Lawrence to determine amount of freshwater coming down the river. Merrimacport tide station best used to for Rocks Village (high tide approx. 1:20 later than river mouth).

Gear

Dress warm (neoprene waders or quality wading undergarments) in early season. Felt or studded boots a must. Consider a wading staff and inflatable PFD for safety.

Tackle

Rods designed for medium-light bass or salmon/steelhead are best; ensure the rod has a soft tip. Lines and leader range from 6 lb – 8 lb. Inline weights range from 1/8 oz – 5/8 oz, with 3/8 oz being the most common. Surfland carries a large selection of shad tackle.

Lure Choices

Flutterspoons ranging from size #00 to #3, with #1 and #2 being the most common. Shad darts range from tiny 1/32 oz to roughly 1/4 oz in the freshwater Merrimack. Remember that lead darts are not allowed above the first I-495 bridge. Other spin-casting lure options include the jig-and-grub, small tube plastics and even flies.

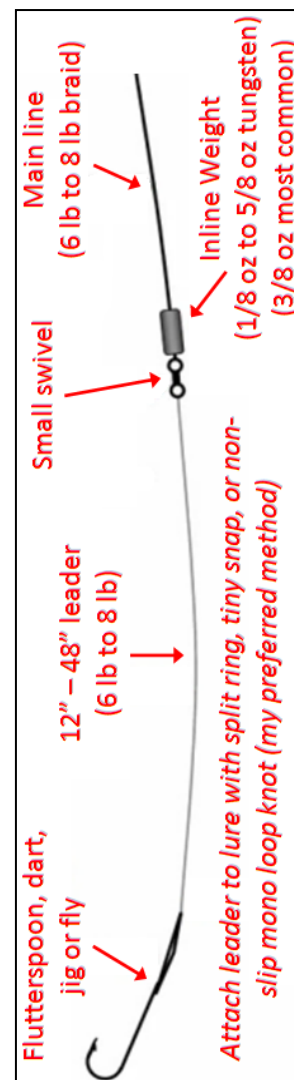
Lure Colors

Have a variety, but chartreuse / fl. green is a great color combo. Others include fl. (hot) pink and chartreuse, red & white and all fl. (hot) pink. Unpainted nickel blades with gold hooks can be good at times.

Distance Tips

Use a rod over 8'. Use braided line. Don't use a tiny spinning reel. Use tungsten weights. Downsize your lure (wind resistance). Use a longer leader "drop". Slow down and smooth out your cast.

Typical Shad Casting Rig



Fishing Techniques

Cast across current and allow to swing while retrieving only fast enough to keep lure near the bottom. Try some wrist twitches and even some exaggerated jigging until you find what works. Change lure weights, inline weights and where you splash down to deal with changing current speed and/or depth.

Please Come!

"Rocks Village" Cleanup

Saturday, 4/21/18

8:00 AM – 10:00 AM

- Coffee & donuts provided
- Cleanup supplies provided