

Results of Seine the Bay Day June 11, 2017

On Sunday, June 11 from 10am to 3:30pm, the annual “Seine the Bay Day” event took place. Juvenile fish and shellfish and other small fish were the stars of the show for the spring edition of Seine the Bay Day along the southern shore of New York Harbor, downstream from New York City.

For the past several years, the all-volunteer Bayshore Watershed Council has been conducting a seining survey of Raritan Bay and Sandy Hook Bay in Monmouth County, NJ at the start of the summer season to find out what species survive in these rich tidal waters. The catch included many juvenile and young-of-the-year fish (species that were born or emerged from eggs this past spring). Each young sea creature provides hope for the future.

As in years past, surveys were conducted at four locations: Cliffwood Beach in Aberdeen Township, the fishing beach along Front Street in Union Beach, the beach in Port Monmouth near the mouth of Pews Creek, and the beach near the mouth of Many Mind Creek in Atlantic Highlands.

A 50-foot-long net with buoys on top and weights on the bottom was hauled by watershed volunteers through murky waters and pulled towards the shore. Caught in the net was anything swimming or walking along the shallow edge of the bay.

The catch of the day were huge schools of juvenile river herring, which is a collective term that refers to alewife (*Alosa pseudoharengus*) and blueback herring (*Alosa aestivalis*). River herring are anadromous fish. They spend most of their lives in the ocean, but come spring they return to freshwater to spawn in tributaries of both the Hudson and Raritan rivers. Commercial and recreational anglers prize both the Alewife and Blueback Herring as baitfish for larger fish, including Striped Bass, and to make pickle herring for later consumption. Many larger birds and fish also rely on herring as a food source. If herring disappear entirely, their larger predators such as striped bass, blue herons, and osprey also become at risk. Seining along the shores of Raritan Bay show that the area of Cliffwood Beach to Union Beach is an important springtime nursery for juvenile river herring.

There is no doubt the more watershed members conduct these public seining events, the better picture people get of the bay. Seining is a method of taking the pulse of a local ecosystem. It's a way to gain an insight into the health of the near shore environment where many people swim and enjoy the bay.

All fishes, crabs, and other aquatic creatures were identified, cataloged, and returned to the water. In addition to seining, water temperature, salinity, and turbidity information were documented by volunteers at each site.

Below are the details of the event. Species found and data collected are listed beneath each seine location. The weather was mostly sunny with an air temperature reaching into in the low 90s. Winds were light out of the south 5 to 10 mph.

Thanks and special appreciation goes to Jen, Melanie, Neil, Cait, Elizabeth, the Martin family, and the Sheridan family; and other volunteers with the watershed council for all their wonderful help and time. No one person can ever seine alone. It's truly a team effort.

10am - Aberdeen Township/Cliffwood Beach
High tide. Water temperature 70 degrees F.
Visibility was good at nearly 3 feet.
Salinity = 27 ppt

1000+ juvenile Blueback or Alewife river herring
1000+ Salps
10+ Lion's mane jellyfish
20+ Bay anchovies
20+ juvenile Bluefish or snappers.

11:30am - Union Beach/Conaskonck Point
Outgoing tide. Water temperature 72 degrees F.
Visibility was good at 3 feet.
Salinity = 23 ppt

1000+ juvenile Blueback or Alewife river herring
1000+ Salps
20+ adult Spearing or Atlantic Silversides
20+ Bay anchovies

1:00pm: Middletown Township/Port Monmouth - Pews Creek
Outgoing Tide. Water temperature 72 degrees F.
Visibility was good at 3 feet.
Salinity = 23 ppt

500+ juvenile Blueback or Alewife river herring
100+ Shore Shrimp
10+ juvenile Windowpane flatfish
10+ juvenile winter flounder
10+ juvenile Bluefish or snapper
Masses of Mud Snail eggs attached to debris

2:30pm: Atlantic Highlands/Mouth of Many Mind Creek
Outgoing tide. Water temperature 75 degrees F.
Visibility was good at around 3 feet
Salinity = 22 ppt

100+ Salps
50+ Shore Shrimp
30+ juvenile Blueback or Alewife river herring
10+ juvenile winter flounder
10+ isopods or aquatic insects
5 juvenile Bluefish or snappers
1 juvenile Blue-claw crab
1 adult pipefish
Masses of Mud Snail eggs attached to debris

To view more pictures, video, or stories of wildlife around Sandy Hook Bay, Raritan Bay, and Lower New York Bay, please visit my nature blog, NY Harbor Nature at <http://www.nyharbornature.com>