


SPECIES OF CONCERN

<p>RAINBOW SMELT <i>Osmerus mordax</i></p>		<p><i>Left: Age 1 smelt.</i> <i>Right: Age 3 smelt</i> <i>Credit: Brad Chase, MA Division of Marine Fisheries</i></p>
<p>PHYSICAL DESCRIPTION</p>	<p>Size Rainbow smelt reach an average of 6 to 8 inches in length and 3 ounces in weight. Distinguishing Characteristics Small, slender elongated body. When viewed underwater, they appear primarily silver with light green backs. They have an abundance of pink, purple and blue along their incomplete lateral line. Their belly is white. They have a long, pointed snout, a mouth full of teeth, an adipose fin and a deeply forked caudal (tail) fin.</p>	
<p>HABITAT & BEHAVIOR</p>	<p>Habitat They are found in both salt and freshwater. Habitat varies depending on water temperature. They remain close to shore and in shallow waters. Some spend the entire year in estuaries. Behavior Rainbow smelt are anadromous (migrate to fresh water to spawn). Some populations reside entirely in freshwater. They forage on amphipods, mysids, euphausiids, shrimps and marine worms.</p>	
<p>STATUS</p>	<p>Areas of Concern Rivers and coastal areas of eastern North America from Labrador to New Jersey and on the west coast from Vancouver Island around Alaska to the Arctic Ocean. Factors for Decline Acid precipitation, fishing, dams and blocked culverts, and spawning habitat degradation. Conservation Designation IUCN: not evaluated</p>	

SPECIES OF CONCERN

<p>LIFE HISTORY</p>	<p>Spawning takes place in late winter to mid-spring depending on location and is triggered by photoperiod rather than water temperature. Depending on size, females can produce 7,000 to over 75,000 eggs.</p>
<p>STATUS OF HUMAN INTERACTIONS</p>	<p>In Maine, smelt are prized food fish harvested in three district fisheries. Two concerns identified for many rivers in Massachusetts Bay are structural impediments to spawning habitat such as dams and blocked culverts. In Massachusetts, the fishery is closed by regulation from March 15th to June 15th to protect spawning fish. There have been a number of projects in recent years involving restoration of habitat.</p>



For additional information, please contact NOAA Fisheries Service at (978) 281.9300 or visit us online at http://www.nero.noaa.gov/prot_res/CandidateSpeciesProgram/index.html.