

## Herring ID Cheat Sheet

All herrings will have the following common features:

Blue/green/copper colored dorsal surface

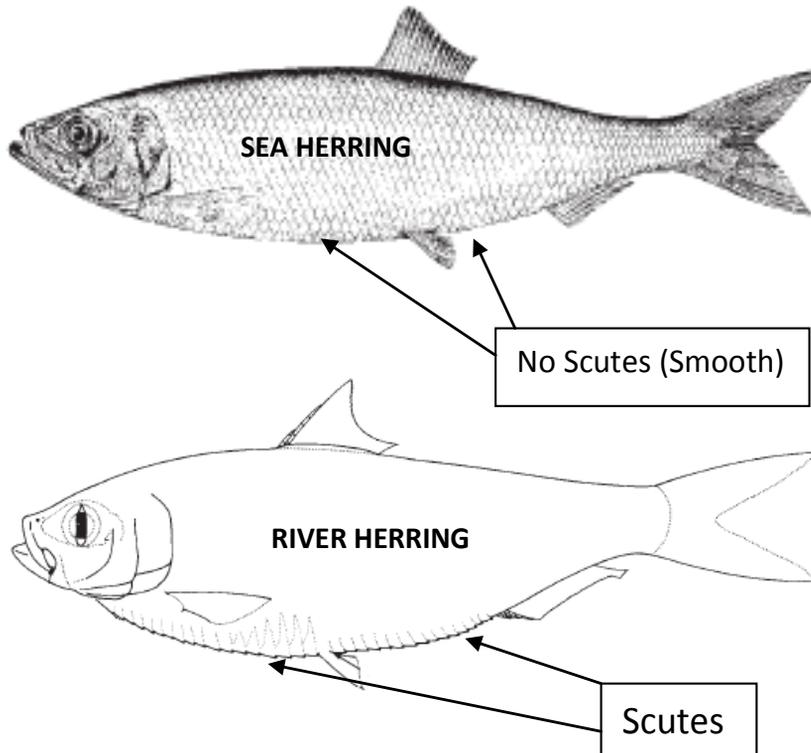
White/silver ventral surface

Single dorsal fin

Forked Tail

At least one spot or dark patch at the upper trailing edge of the operculum

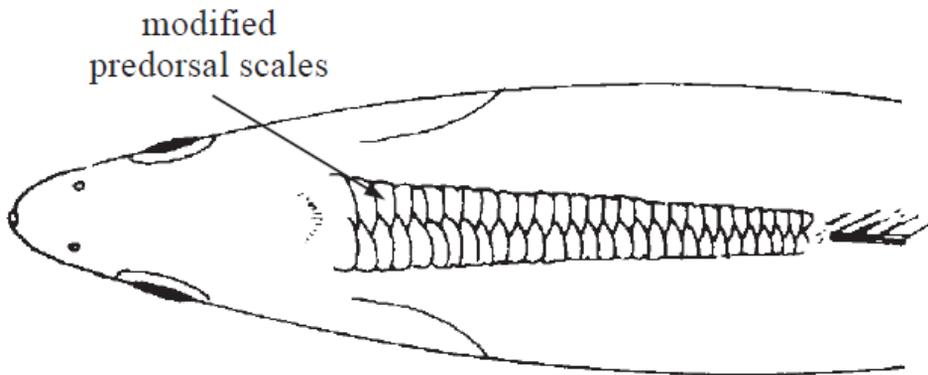
When you encounter a herring, the first ID characteristic you look for is the presence or absence of belly scutes. Run your finger from tail to nose on the belly. Scutes will grab a gloved finger.



We see 2 sea herrings in our area. They will have no belly scutes so their bellies will be smooth. The vast majority are **Atlantic Herring**, which are laterally (side to side) compressed and their dorsal fin is set in the 2<sup>nd</sup> half of the body (not including the tail). The other is the **Round Herring** which is cigar shaped and its dorsal fin is set in the 1<sup>st</sup> half of the body. They are easily distinguishable from one another.

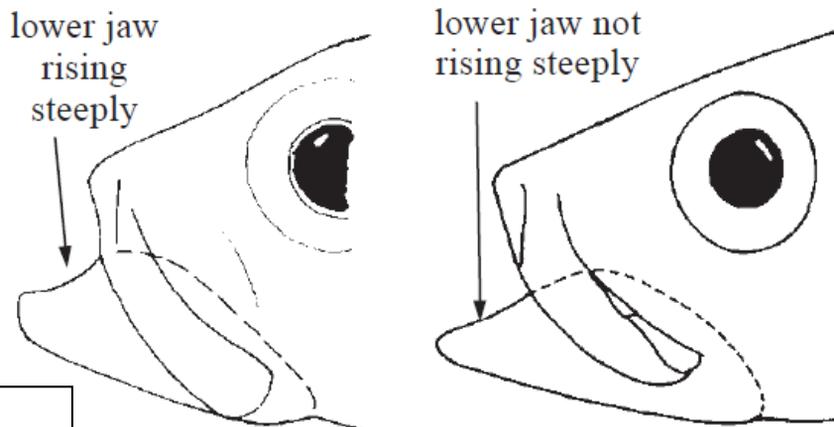
## RIVER HERRING ID

If you rule out Atlantic Herring by feeling sharp belly scutes, use the following succession of characteristics to ID the river herrings: Look at the scales between the top of the head and the dorsal fin. If they form an overlapping line of scales (like a zipper), it is an **Atlantic Menhaden**.



## Shads & River Herrings

If the above scales are absent, you must then look at the jaw. Pull the lower jaw open and look at the slope of it as it enters the mouth. If it is sharply rising, it's an Alewife or a Blueback Herring. If it's gradually rising, it's a shad. Spots are seen on both shad and true river herrings, so be careful.



Alewife or  
Blueback Herring

American or  
Hickory Shad

# Herring Identification

NEFOP

If you have a steeply rising jaw, you must crack the fish and check the gut cavity lining color.



**Pale to Sooty =  
Alewife**

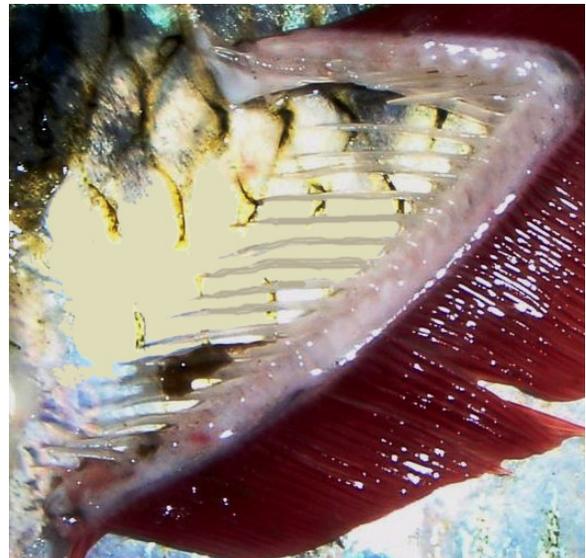


**Black/Very  
Dark=Blueback**

If you have a gradually rising jaw, you must check the gill rakers on the lower limb of the first arch.



**Feather or Brush =  
American Shad  
59-73**



**Comb = Hickory Shad  
~20**