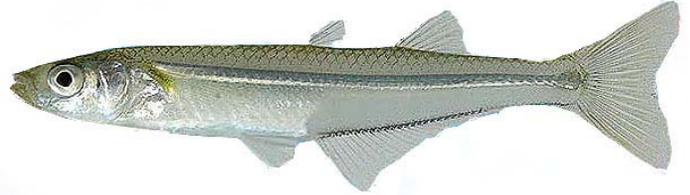


This Month

Atlantic silverside

Colloquial Nickname: Silverside, baitfish

Scientific name: *Menidia menidia*



Field Markings: Translucent gray-green above and pale below with thick, dark brown speckles on its upper sides. Distinctive silver band along the sides. The top of the head, nose and chin are dusky gray.

Size: Up to 5.5 inches long

Habitat: Sandy or gravel shores, brackish estuaries, salt water river mouths.

Seasonal Appearance: Year-round

are favored prey for larger predatory fish, such as mackerel, striped bass and bluefish, and are eaten by birds such as terns and cormorants.

The Atlantic silverside frequently interacts with another similar species, the inland, or waxen silverside (*Menidia berylina*). The inland silverside is smaller and stouter than the Atlantic silverside and duller in color. These two species occasionally school together and can coexist without significant competition for habitat, food or space.

DISTINGUISHING FEATURES AND BEHAVIORS

The Atlantic silverside is a long, slender and thin-bodied fish with two dorsal fins, a round white belly, and large scales. It has a short head with large eyes and a small mouth. Along each side, from the pectoral fin to its caudal fin, is a distinct silver band outlined by a narrow black stripe. Silversides resemble anchovies, differing mainly by its mouth size.



Atlantic silversides congregate in large schools that usually consist of similar-sized fish. They are found along the shore, often within a few feet of the water's edge. The silverside is commonly seen swimming among submerged grasses in brackish waters where streams and rivers meet the sea.

In summer, they are rarely found in water deeper than a few feet, but will descend to greater depths in the winter to avoid the cold temperatures of shallow water.

This omnivorous fish feeds on zooplankton, copepods, shrimp, amphipods, young squid, worms, insects and algae. They

RELATIONSHIP TO PEOPLE

The Atlantic silverside is the most abundant fish in Narragansett Bay. Silversides are an important food source for young bluefish, mackerel, striped bass and most shorebirds. Silversides are used to bait eel pots. Flocks of birds hovering and diving usually indicate the presence of silversides being fed upon

by a school of juvenile bluefish or stripers.

The silverside is a common subject for scientific research because of its sensitivity to extreme environmental conditions such as low oxygen levels, drastic temperature changes and contaminants in the water.

HOW TO GET YOUR OWN COPY

RISAA members can purchase their own copy of *The Uncommon Guide To Common Life on Narragansett Bay* for \$15 from the RISAA Merchandise Committee. Stop by the committee table at any monthly RISAA meeting.



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