

Eryn Murphy, Marine Fisheries Volunteer

Somehow, between being a full-time marine biology major at the University of New Hampshire, participating in Ocean Discovery Day at UNH, volunteering as the secretary for the UNH chapter of the National Society of Black Engineers, working at the Explore the Ocean World Oceanarium in Hampton, and holding down jobs as a secretary at UNH and Rochester Pet Smart, Eryn Murphy finds the time to volunteer with the Marine Fisheries Division at Fish and Game each spring and summer. Perhaps a chaotic schedule comes naturally for Eryn, who grew up in Rochester, N.H., in a household with eight children.

The Marine Division is also familiar with chaos each spring during the operation of the Department's six fish ladders on five coastal rivers in N.H. The fish ladders were designed to pass several species of anadromous fish, including river herring (alewives and blueback herring), American shad and sea lamprey, which live in the ocean, but must return to fresh water to spawn.

Over the past several years, an average of 100,000 river herring, several hundred sea lamprey, and a handful of American shad have returned to New Hampshire's coastal rivers. While these numbers seem impressive, just 20 years ago, more than twice as many river herring returned here to spawn. A hopeful sign is that recent restoration efforts in many coastal rivers have led to a slight increase in return numbers over the last three years.

Spring is a busy time for marine biologists working the fish ladders. In a single day, they may help more than 10,000 river herring pass into fresh water to spawn,

load several hundred river herring onto a stocking truck to restore runs in other rivers or locations further up the watershed, and collect biological samples. This work, done each spring with the help of volunteers, is critical to the management and continuation of these species.

Eryn has been volunteering with the

Marine Division for the past three seasons. With Department staff stretched thin, Eryn gives us the extra hands needed to net more fish, record data, and load and unload trucks. She has been a tremendous asset.

Eryn has primarily assisted marine biologists with operation of coastal fish ladders each spring, but she has also helped us with the juvenile finfish seine survey that occurs in Great Bay Estuary and Hampton Harbor from June

through November. This survey has been conducted at the same fixed sampling stations for the past 25+ years on N.H.'s coast. It provides important information on the general abundance of most of the juvenile marine fish species that occur there. Eryn helps us set the 100-foot-long beach seine and collect biological information from the fish captured.

Help from volunteers like Eryn is mutually beneficial. Eryn gains important knowledge and experience to put towards her marine biology degree. Fish and Game gets a helping hand with accomplishing work important to the Department's goals. Most importantly, the anadromous fish and juvenile finfish in New Hampshire benefit from the fisheries management we are better able to provide with help from volunteers like Eryn.

— Michael Dionne, Marine Biologist



NH FG STAFF PHOTO

Eryn Murphy gives the Marine Division a helping hand with operation of coastal fish ladders and the annual finfish survey.