

Bring Back the Missing Fish

Ocklawaha River – Silver Springs – St. Johns River

After the construction of the Rodman/Kirkpatrick Dam, fish species like these disappeared or were greatly reduced in Silver Springs and the Ocklawaha and St. Johns Rivers. The Dam prevents migration of these fish between their feeding and breeding grounds from Silver Springs to the Atlantic Ocean. Reduced natural downstream flow caused by the Dam also affects many other non-migratory fish, plants, and wildlife. These fish species are at high risk for disappearing from the Ocklawaha River forever.

Striped Bass (*Morone saxatilis*)

This anadromous species spawns in fresh water and lives in its adult form in brackish or salt water. Large numbers of “stripers” used to swim up the Ocklawaha River to spawn. The fertilized eggs must flow down river for several days to successfully hatch. Before the Dam, the Upper Ocklawaha River provided optimal conditions for their reproductive success. Hybrid hatchery-raised stripers or “sunshine bass” are still caught below the Rodman/Kirkpatrick Dam, indicating that this popular gamefish could return to a free-flowing Ocklawaha River.



White Catfish (*Ameiurus catus*) & Channel Catfish (*Ictalurus punctatus*)

While still found in the Ocklawaha their numbers are very low when compared to surveys done prior to the construction of the Rodman Dam. These fish were a major attraction at Silver Springs. Today they are rarely seen.

In 1966, three kinds of catfish could be seen through Silver Springs’ glass-bottomed boats – the channel, white and mud catfish. The white catfish, the second largest of the three, appeared dark blue in color. Hundreds of them congregated at the Silver Springs’ Catfish Hotel and along the Silver and Ocklawaha Rivers. (From Ross Allen’s field notes)



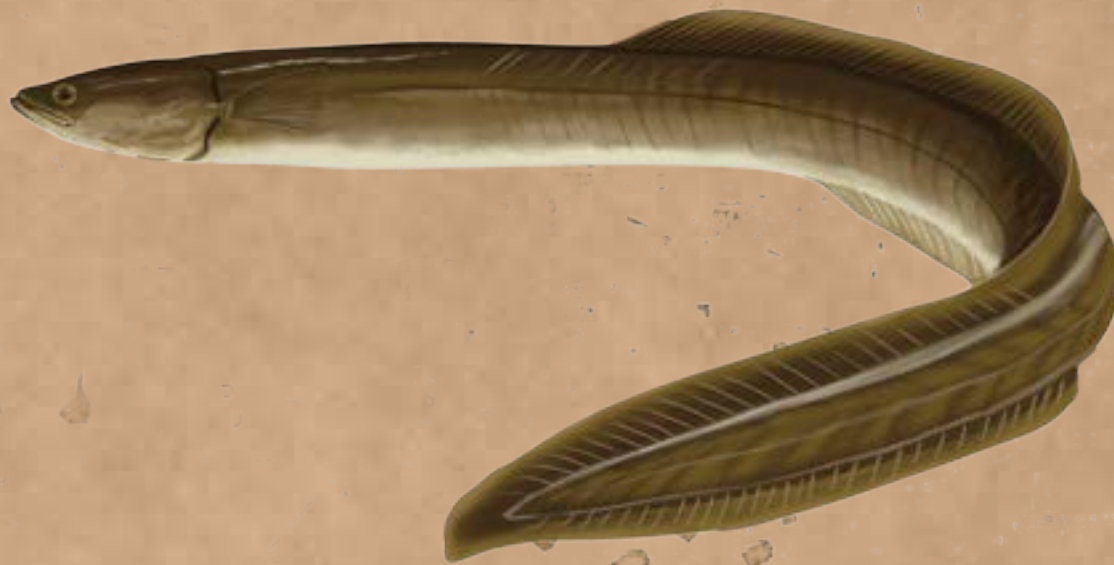
American Shad (*Alosa sapidissima*)

This species, an important commercial and sport fish, is no longer found in the Ocklawaha River above the Rodman Impoundment where it used to breed in large numbers. The breeding adults would swim upstream many miles from the Atlantic Ocean to spawn in early summer. The fry then grow to 1.5 inches before migrating to the ocean in the fall.



American Eel (*Alosa sapidissima*)

Eels are a significant source of food for fish, mammals, turtles and birds. As adults, this catadromous species spawns in the ocean in the Sargasso Sea, drifts at sea for 1-2 years, then stays in freshwater or estuarine habitats from 3-20 years before migrating back to the Sargasso Sea. Dams are a significant barrier on both the upstream and downstream eel migrations.



Atlantic Sturgeon (*Acipenser oxyrinchus oxyrinchus*)

This anadromous species is currently endangered throughout its range because of loss of habitat including its spawning grounds. The most suitable spawning habitat in Florida is in the Ocklawaha River system. Adults migrate upstream in the spring to spawn and remain in the river until returning to the ocean in the fall.



Fish migratory route to the Atlantic Ocean

ST. JOHN'S RIVER

OCKLAWAHA RIVER

RODMAN RESERVOIR



THE RODMAN / KIRKPATRICK DAM



Dams all over the world have negatively impacted fish populations by preventing the adults from reaching their optimal spawning grounds. This results in a lower productivity as well as reduced food for other species that prey on them or of species on which they forage. Studies conducted before and after the construction of the Rodman/Kirkpatrick Dam show a sharp decline in fish diversity in the Ocklawaha River (upstream of the Dam) and Silver Springs. Altered fish populations due to the Dam contribute to greater algal populations and invasion by exotic fish species that are not dependent on long-range migration.

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Let the Ocklawaha River Flow!