

# GIZZARD SHAD

*(Dorosoma cepedianum)*

**Oneida Lake Status:**  
**Common**

- Discovered in Oneida Lake in the 1950s
- Belong to the herring family
- Important food for walleye

Gizzard shad are native to Atlantic slope drainages and were first noted in Oneida Lake in the 1950s. It is unknown how they arrived in Oneida Lake, but they likely migrated through the Oswego and Erie Barge Canal from Lake Ontario.



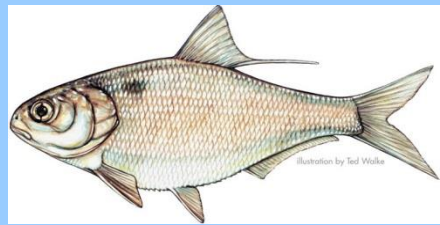
A young gizzard shad clearly showing the long dorsal ray and dark “shoulder” spot  
[www.outdooralabama.com](http://www.outdooralabama.com)

Gizzard shad have a flat silver body with a purple or brownish spot (photo above) behind the gill flap that disappears (see photo at left) midlife. They average 7 to 14 inches in length but may grow to 20 inches and weigh over 3 pounds. They have a blunt snout, small inferior (downturned) mouth, deeply forked tail fin, and a long dorsal fin ray.

Gizzard shad are filter feeders, consuming zooplankton and algae. They have a unique, muscular stomach called the gizzard that grinds up food. Because they are sensitive to cold temperatures, overwinter mortality is high in Oneida Lake. Gizzard shad are an important food source for walleye but are only vulnerable to predation during their early life stages because adults are too large for consumption.



A young gizzard shad  
University of Michigan



Gizzard shad illustration  
Ted Walke



Adult gizzard shad can grow quite large  
TWRA Reservoir Fish Gallery



A net full of Oneida Lake young gizzard shad

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