

Fishing



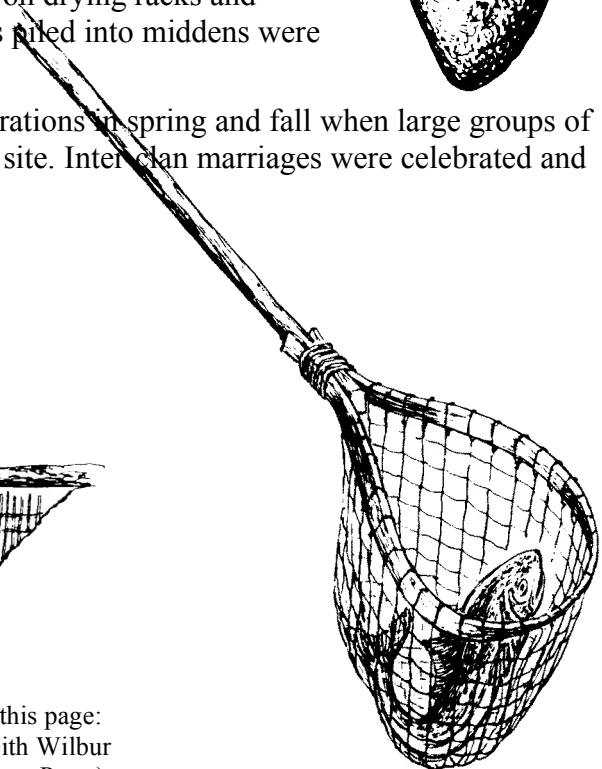
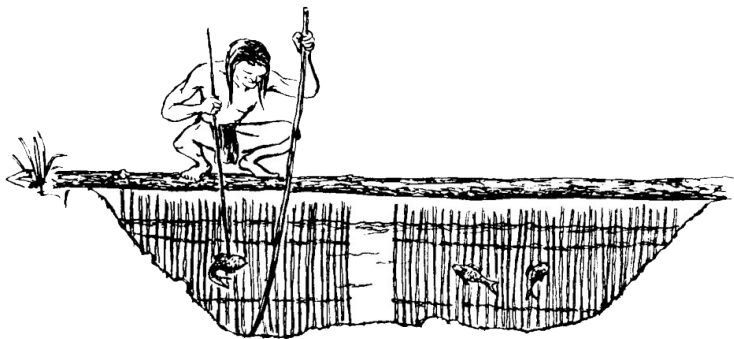
Fish and shellfish were important sources of food for native peoples. The men caught fish in local waterways on a small scale throughout the year. Major fishing times were spring and fall when quantities of shad, alewife, herring, and salmon swam upstream to spawn. They were captured easily where there were falls or where a stream was narrow enough to construct a weir or trap of stone and brush.

During the summer, fishing encampments along the coasts were common. The size of the cod, sturgeon, and bluefish amazed early European settlers. Native men sought shellfish and sea mammals at the coast; they caught freshwater mussels and clams along inland streams.

Various devices were used to catch the fish and shellfish. Men used nets made of fibers from the hemp plant and inner bark of trees. They were weighted with stone plummets and hafted with a wooden handle. Spears and harpoons made of stone or bone aided in the catch. Men might use a line with a bone hook fishing from canoes in summer or ice fishing in the winter.

Shellfish were gathered by hand and opened with bone or stone awls. While some were eaten immediately, most were smoked on drying racks and carried back to the campsite and stored. The shells piled into middens were sometimes used as fertilizer for coastal fields.

Special ceremonies took place during the fish migrations in spring and fall when large groups of Native Americans gathered at a large falls or weir site. Inter-clan marriages were celebrated and friendships cemented.



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