



NOAA FISHERIES



7. SPAWNING ADULTS

When they reach the spawning grounds, they find a mate. Females dig nests in the gravel and lay thousands of eggs that are fertilized by milt. Most salmon die after spawning and their bodies provide food for other wildlife including bald eagles, bears, minks, river otters, and invertebrates.

1. EGGS

Under the gravel, thousands of eggs develop in nests called redds.

2. ALEVIN

Alevin hatch and remain under the gravel for protection against predators until their yolk sac is fully absorbed.

3. FRY

Once alevin have absorbed their yolk, they become fry. They head for protected spots, like under logs and behind boulders. They dart out to catch tiny insects that come their way.

4. SMOLTS

When they feel the urge, young salmon begin migrating toward estuaries where they begin adapting to saltwater in a process called smoltification.

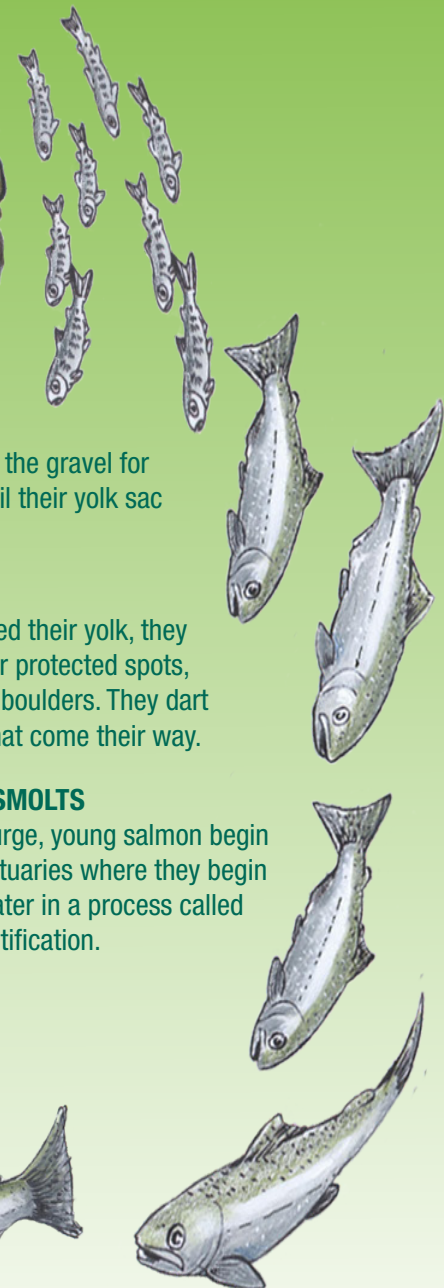
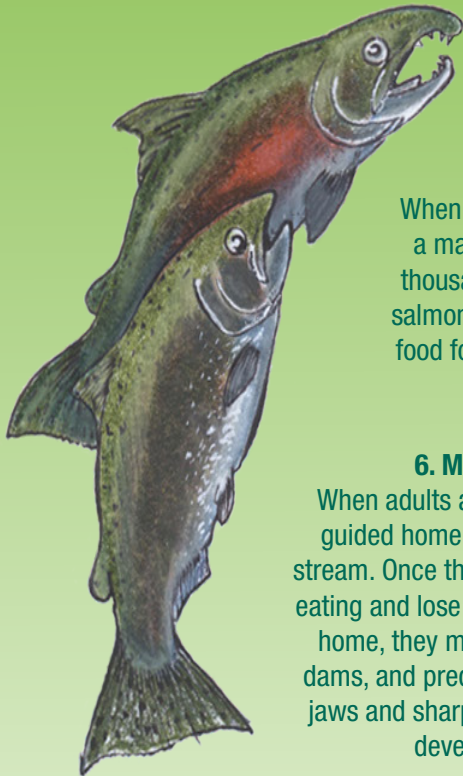
5. OCEAN ADULTS

Salmon enter the ocean as juveniles and leave it as mature adults. In the ocean, salmon travel thousands of miles and feed on other fish, squid, eels, and shrimp.

6. MIGRATING ADULTS

When adults are ready to spawn, they are guided home by the smells of their home stream. Once they reach freshwater, they stop eating and lose their silver color. On their way home, they must battle rapids, waterfalls, dams, and predators. Males develop hooked jaws and sharp canine teeth; some species develop humped backs.

Salmon Lifecycle



At every life stage, salmon need abundant cold, clean water.

LEARN MORE: www.nmfs.noaa.gov