

# A SALMON LIFE CYCLE



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## A Salmon's home

A unique combination of geology and weather makes Fish Creek a perfect home for spawning salmon. Clear, spring-fed water and clean gravel are the keys to spawning success. In the Salmon River Valley, milky glacial sediment gives the water its special color.

## A Salmon's Year

Salmon are anadromous—they depend on both fresh and salt water during their life history. Each year, salmon return to the freshwater streams of their birth to spawn and die. Chum, coho and pink salmon often spawn in small streams from the intertidal zone to creeks many miles inland. After spawning, the adult salmon die, but a new generation of salmon are born to continue the cycle.

After emerging from the gravel as tiny fry, chum and pink salmon migrate to the ocean rather than to freshwater lakes or streams. Emerging from the gravel, coho salmon will spend up to two years as juveniles in the stream before migrating to the ocean. (You can see them—they prey on salmon eggs.) Chum salmon spend three to five years in the ocean before returning to spawn, while pink salmon return in just two years. After spawning, the adult salmon die, returning their nutrients to the Fish Creek ecosystem.



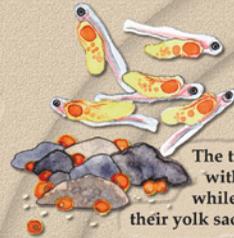
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Spawning out chum salmon in Fish Creek.

Chum salmon spawn in Fish Creek.

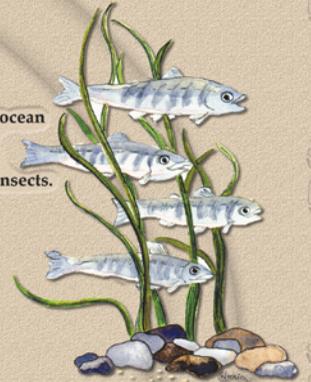


The tiny alevins live within the gravel while they absorb their yolk sac.



After they absorb their yolk sacs, the young salmon emerge from the gravel and feed on tiny aquatic insects.

The fry migrate to the ocean where they gather in large schools and feed on plankton and tiny insects.



Chum and coho salmon spend three to five years in the ocean, while pink salmon spend just two years.



ILLUSTRATION BY CATHERINE NORRIN, COURTESY OF THE KODIAK MARITIME MUSEUM. © KODIAK MARITIME MUSEUM 2003.

The female digs a redd, or nest, in the freshwater gravel. After the eggs are laid, the male fertilizes them. Eggs hatch during early spring.



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A bald eagle plays its part in the life cycle of Fish Creek chums.

Chum, coho and pink salmon are silver-colored before they enter freshwater as adults.



ALASKA REGION



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