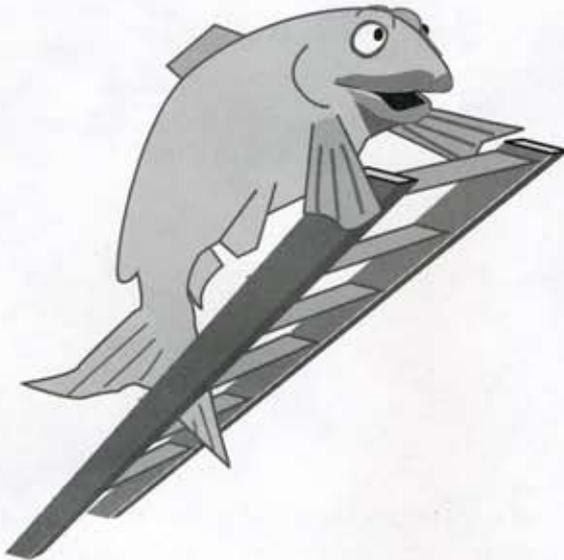
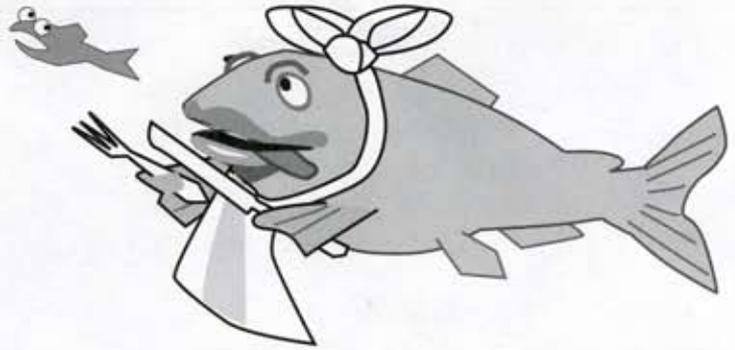


5. Feeding in the Ocean

By now, the fingerlings have reached the estuary, an area near the mouth of a river where salt water and fresh water mix. Here the fingerlings complete the changes that enable them to live in salt water. This process is called smoltification.

Adult salmon live in the ocean for one to six years. There is plenty of food, and the salmon grow quickly. Some grow to more than 50 pounds! When they mature, the adults head back toward the streams where they were spawned.



6. Swimming Upriver to Spawn

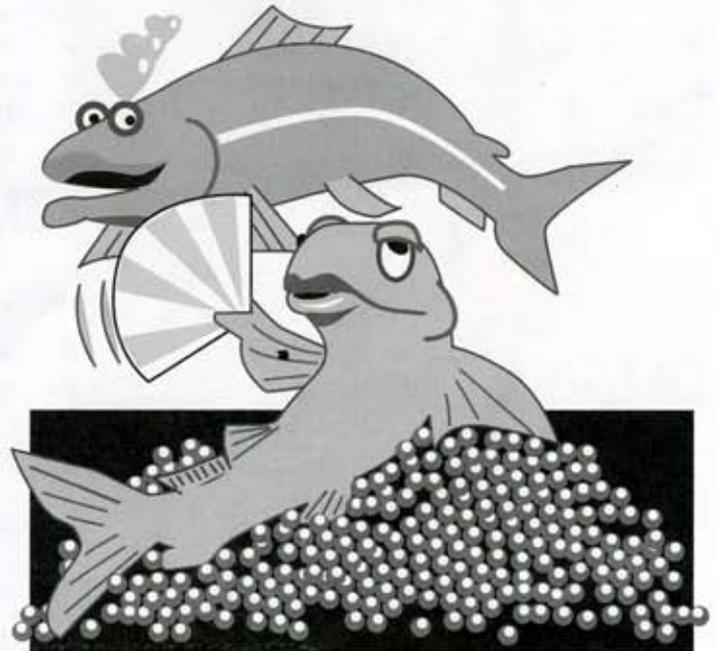
Salmon find their way back to the river by "smelling" the water. Each river has its own chemical scent that the fish recognize. As they enter the river, the salmon stop eating and rely on body fat for energy.

On their journey upstream, the salmon must again pass by the dams. The Corps provides ladders to help get the fish past dams. Ladders are essentially stairways for fish and are designed to simulate a set of rapids.

7. Back Home Again

Once salmon reach their birthplace, the female selects a shallow, clean stream with a gravel bottom. She dislodges the stones by violently pumping her tail. This creates a depression called a nest or redd.

Eggs are fertilized when both the female and male hover above the nest, simultaneously discharging eggs and milt. Each pair buries up to 5,000 eggs in the loose gravel. After spawning, the adult salmon die. Their bodies provide food for other animals. The eggs, lying protected in the streambed, begin the entire cycle once more.



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This is a brief description of the life cycle of a chinook salmon. You can learn more about the incredible journey of these fish at your local library.