

Chinook Salmon - Words To Know

This may sound a bit "fishy" but, before you can really learn about the Chinook salmon, you'll need to know the meaning of a few new words. Are you ready to talk Salmon?

Alevins - Salmon that have just hatched from an egg.

Anadromous - Adult salmon that migrate upstream to spawn in freshwater streams, then migrate as juveniles downstream to grow and mature in the ocean.

Estuary - Where the river meets the sea; freshwater then mixes with salt water.

Fingerling - Young fish about the size of a finger.

Freshwater - Water that lies inland; not ocean water.

Fry - Young salmon that have absorbed the yolk sac.

Hatchery - A place where eggs are hatched, cared for, and released into the wild.

Juvenile - Young salmon in fresh water who are a few months to two years old.

Migration - Salmon travel thousands of miles out into the Pacific Ocean before returning to their rivers or streams of origin. This migration make take several years.

Part Marks - Dark vertical stripes on the young salmon's sides that camouflage them from larger fish and fish eating birds.

Race - Fish returning to their river or stream of origin.

Redd - Nest made by a female salmon in a gravel stream bed.

Roe - Eggs that have not yet been spawned.

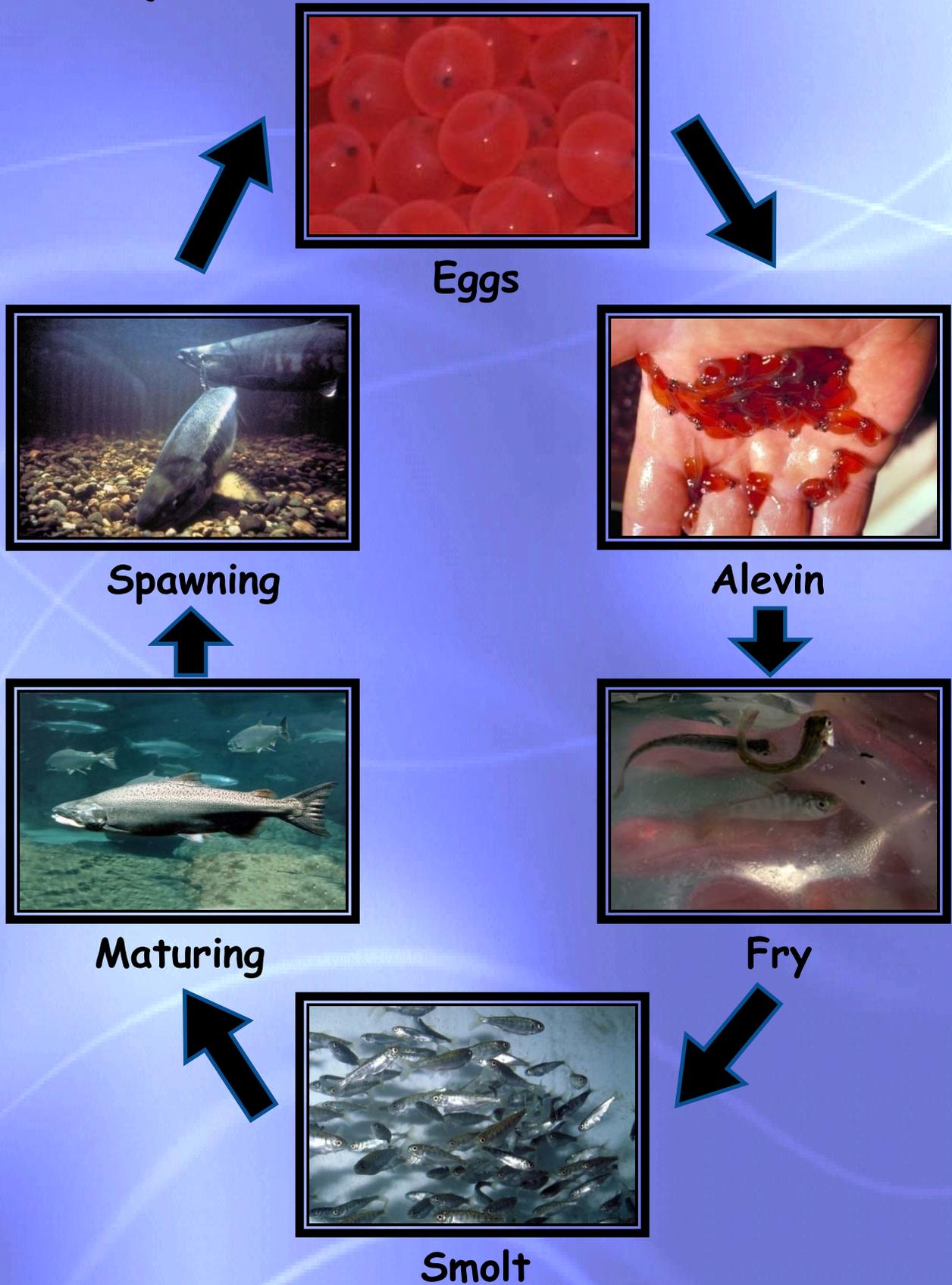
Run - Name for the season when the majority of the salmon enter freshwater as adults (spring run, fall run, etc.).

Smolting - When salmon fry turn silver in color and begin swimming to the sea. Now they are called "smolts."

Spawning - Female salmon deposit thousands of bright red, pea-sized eggs into a redd. The male salmon then fertilizes the eggs.

Yolk sac - A small sac on alevin that provides them with nutrients while they are still buried in gravel.

Life Cycle of the Chinook Salmon



The Journey of a Chinook Salmon



Late in winter, a salmon begins as a small red, fertilized egg in a cool mountain streambed. The egg is lying in a redd, which is loosely covered with gravel, along with thousands of other eggs.

When the young salmon hatches from its egg, it is then called an alevin. The alevin will absorb all of the nutrients it needs from the yolk sac that is attached to her belly.



Alevin

Fry



Once the yolk sac is gone, the baby salmon is called a fry. Most fry have big oblong spots called parr marks on their sides. The parr marks help to camouflage the fry from fish eating predators. The fry continues to grow as she swims through the freshwater of streams and rivers and is now considered a juvenile.

She'll spend the next one to two years eating insects and hiding under fallen logs. Then the fry will begin smolting and turn silver in color. Now the salmon is called a smolt and begins migrating to the Pacific Ocean. Finally, she reaches an estuary where she will feed on tiny crustaceans and fish while her body becomes tolerant to sea water.



Smolt



After a few months, the salmon enters the ocean and will spend two to five years traveling thousands of miles before migrating in the fall run. She will return to her original stream to spawn.