

Salmon

The several varieties of Pacific salmon spawn but once and then die. They grow to maturity in the sea, and when approximately four years old ascend the western rivers to the spawning beds. The spring Chinook Salmon enters the mouth of the Columbia River in the month of March or April. It is a strong swimmer, weighing anywhere from twenty to eighty pounds. The egg sacs of the female contain from 1500 to 6000 eggs. Early in the spring ^{these} they are small and undeveloped. The flesh of the fish is bright pink, almost red, and is full of oil. When she leaves the sea and starts upstream, her last meal has been eaten. The stomach gradually shrivels up. The fatty tissue in the body is the fuel for the long trip and the food that nourishes and develops the eggs ready for the spawning period. The flesh gets lighter in color and becomes less and less valuable as a food for people.

The journey upstream may be a thousand miles or more, often through swift or falling water with many obstacles to pass. It may take from four to six months. When she reaches the spawning bed, she wallows out a sort of nest in the sand and gravel and in the final struggle of life lays her eggs. The mate is close behind. He guards and keeps other fish away. When the eggs are fertilized by the male, they are covered with loose sand and gravel. Then both male and female salmon die. The bodies float off downstream or along the shore-line, where they are destroyed by maggots.

The story of the salmon begins with the pink egg
the size of a garden pea. In a little over two months, the ^{or longer according to cold temperature of the water}
egg reaches the eyed stage, that is, two little eyes begin
to show through the transparent ^{ly} shell. In about three months'
time the baby fish struggles until he cracks open the shell
and emerges somewhat as a chick hatching from a hen's egg.

When the new-born salmon comes out of the shell,
he looks as if he were all eyes. He has a very slender tail.
On the under side of the main part of his body is a yolk sac,
which furnishes him food for a full month or more.