Chinook Salmon

Spring salmon | *Oncorhynchus tshawytscha (Walbaum, 1792)*



THE LONG JOURNEY

The river's *mighty return*

BC's largest Pacific salmon begins life in river gravel, grows in coastal or offshore waters, and returns to spawn. Its journey connects streams, estuaries, ocean food webs and forest wildlife.

SEASONAL RETURNS

Run timing varies by watershed. Some Chinook enter rivers in spring or summer; many coastal fall runs arrive with autumn rains and spawn in October or November.

RIVER & ESTUARY HABITAT

Chinook spawn in large rivers and tributaries with clean, oxygen-rich gravel and cobbles. Young fish may rear in streams or move seaward in their first year.

STEWARDSHIP

Conservation varies among BC populations. Some runs are assessed as Endangered or Threatened. Protecting river flows and migration routes matters.

FIELD NOTES

RECOGNIZE IT

A deep, powerful body, fine black spots on both tail lobes, and black gums at the bases of the teeth help identify Chinook.

OCEAN TO FOREST

After spawning, Chinook feed bears, river otters and bald eagles, helping carry marine nutrients into streamside ecosystems.

WATCH WITH CARE

Watch spawning fish from shore. Keep out of gravel spawning areas, where salmon eggs may be developing beneath the stones.

Sources: DFO | COSEWIC | Pacific Salmon Foundation

Illustration: AI-assisted digital watercolour, *BC Watercolour Art* | Learn more: BCWatercolourArt.com