Sockeye Salmon

Red Salmon | *Oncorhynchus nerka* (Walbaum, 1792)



THE GREAT RETURN

From silver *to scarlet*

In British Columbia's rivers, Sockeye Salmon make a final journey upstream. Once silver at sea, spawning adults glow crimson with olive-green heads as they swim toward gravel beds where the next generation will begin.

THE SPAWNING RUN

In BC, many Sockeye return in summer and spawn in late summer or autumn. Timing varies by river.

FRESHWATER NURSERIES

They spawn in clean gravel of streams and lake shores. Many young Sockeye rear in freshwater lakes before going to sea.

PROTECTING THE RUN

The Adams River run flows through Secwépemc territory. At Tsútswecw Provincial Park, visitors can watch from shore while leaving spawning waters and gravel undisturbed.

FIELD NOTES

RECOGNIZE IT

Spawning adults show crimson bodies, green heads and unspotted tails. Males can develop a humped back and hooked snout.

BUILT TO FILTER

Closely spaced gill rakers help Sockeye catch tiny planktonic animals. Pigments in their diet contribute to their red colour.

OCEAN TO FOREST

After spawning, adults die. Their remains release ocean-derived nutrients that nourish aquatic food webs and nearby forests.

Sources: COSEWIC (2017); BC Parks; BC Conservation Data Centre.

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