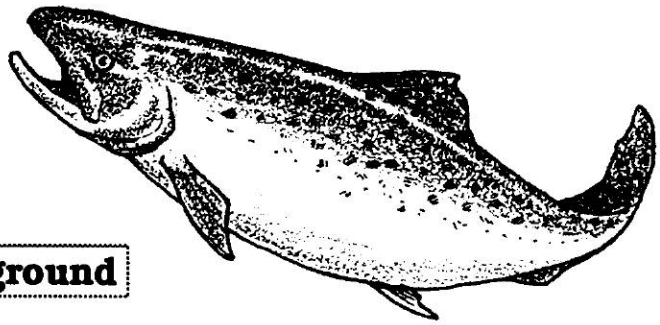


Teacher Background

Coming Home

COMING HOME is the first installment of a story which will be continued in the student text throughout many of the lessons which follow. The story line follows the progress of a female chinook salmon returning to Puget Sound to find the river in which it hatched years ago, where it will try to spawn.

As the students follow the text, they are asked to mark on their Puget Sound maps the route the salmon takes as it enters the Strait of Juan de Fuca, Puget Sound, Hood Canal, and eventually the Skokomish River. It is suggested that they work first in pencil, then make the route bolder with felt pens. You may need to provide the pens.

Lesson Plan

Answer key

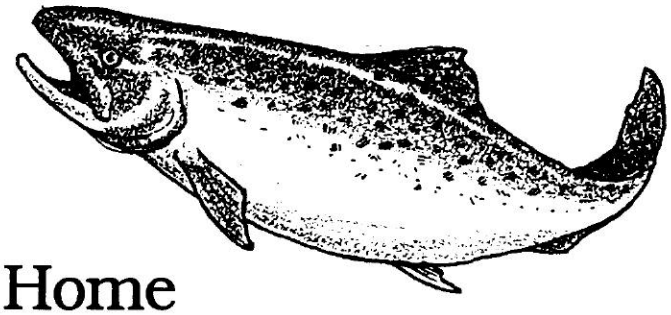
1. July through September

2. 3 to 4 years

3. Chum

4. Chinook

5. Vancouver Island



Coming Home

We would now like to introduce you to a fish, a salmon we will call Hyak. Hyak is means "swift" in Chinook Jargon, a common language of Puget Sound Indians. Hyak is returning to Puget Sound, hopefully to spawn in one of the Sound's rivers.

It is early summer. Hyak is approaching the Washington coastline, heading for Puget Sound. She is a chinook, or king salmon. Inside her sleek and powerful body, her 5,000 eggs are ripening. During the coming months she and thousands of other fish like her will move through Puget Sound on their way to rivers and streams to spawn.

1. During what months do chinook salmon spawn?

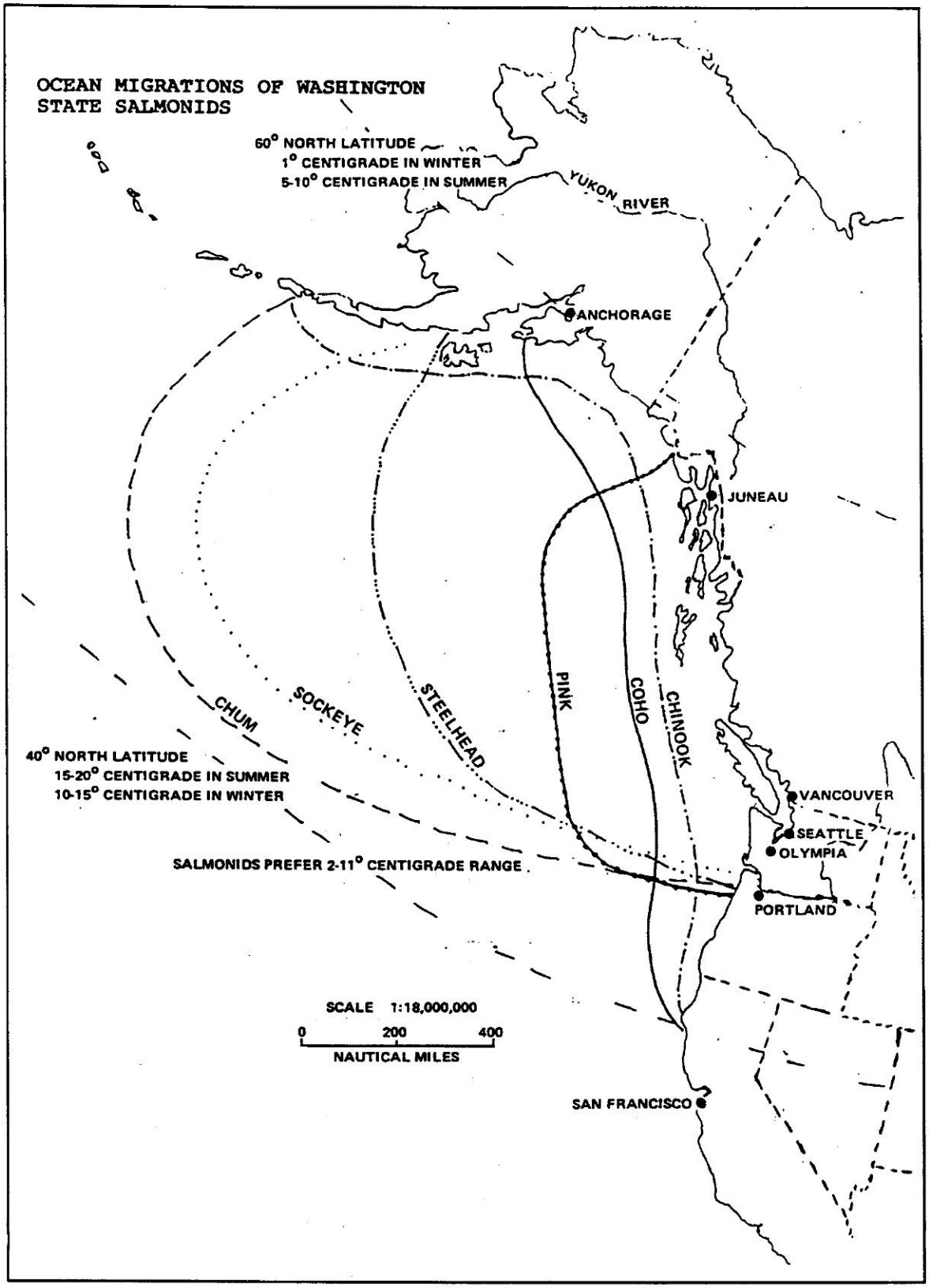
2. How long has Hyak been at sea?

(Hint: If you need help in answering these quetstions, refer back to your Salmon Identification Chart.)

Hyak passed through Puget Sound once before on her way out to sea from the stream where she began her life. At that time she was only a five inch fingerling; now she weighs over 30 lbs. and is nearly three feet long. During this time she has traveled hundreds of miles in the Pacific Ocean, feeding on plankton, shrimp and herring. Her body has stored the energy she will need to use in getting home to spawn.

We are going to follow Hyak's progress as she makes her way back to find her spawning stream. You will use your large Puget Sound map to chart her movements. Take out your map and a sharpened pencil. (Use a pencil first in case you need to make corrections. Afterwards, you should go over the lines you make with a felt-tipped pen.)

First, let's find out where Hyak has been. The map below shows the ranges of the five salmon species in the Pacific Ocean.



Map from: *Clean Water, Streams and Fish*, by Claire Dyckman and A. William Way.

3. Which species migrates out into the Pacific Ocean the farthest?

4. As it migrates, which species hugs the coastline the closest?

Using the ocean range of chinook salmon from this map as your model, draw a line to mark Hyak's return route on your map as she travels southeast along the British Columbia Coast and approaches the Strait of Juan de Fuca.

5. As she moves toward the Strait, what large island lies to her left?

Now bring her into the Strait of Juan de Fuca, moving her along until she is midway between Port Angeles and Victoria. We will leave her there for now, but you should continue marking her progress on your map whenever you see this symbol in your student guide: