

Chum Salmon a.k.a. Dog Salmon

Oncorhynchus keta (on-cor-AIN-cus KEY-ta)



Female (front) and male (back) Chum salmon.
Photo by Roger Tabor, USFWS

Chum Salmon are the most widely distributed of all Pacific salmon species. They can be found in most coastal streams from Arctic Alaska to San Diego California.

Chum fry do not spend more than a few days in freshwater. Once they are strong enough to swim they migrate to estuaries where they spend several months before heading out to the open ocean for the next 3-4 years.

Even though Chum Salmon are not as desired as Chinook or Sockeye, they are highly prized as traditional sources of dried winter food for many Alaskan Indigenous communities.



Male Chum Salmon spawning in a stream.
Photo by Roger Tabor, USFWS

PHYSICAL CHARACTERISTICS

Average weight: 6-15 pounds

Average length: 24-28 inches

Chum Salmon fry have 8-12 vertical, uniformly shaped, evenly spaced parr marks (dark bars) that typically do not extend below their lateral line.

During spawning, Chum Salmon develop a bold pattern of red and black tiger stripes. Spawning males develop large "teeth" that resemble canine teeth, giving rise to their nickname "dog salmon".



Chum salmon fry. Photo by Roger Tabor, USFWS

DIET: Juvenile Chum feed on crustaceans, insects and young herring in estuaries and near shore waters. Once in the open ocean, adults eat copepods, fish, mollusks, squid and tunicates

CONSERVATION: State and federal agencies along the west coast work together to coordinate the management, research and enhancement of Chum salmon in Pacific waters.

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