

# Keying Out Five of the Local Pacific Salmon Species

## Subject

Science

## Objectives

The students will (1) become familiar with the five pacific salmon species and (2) identify these five species using a dichotomous key.

## Materials

Students for Salmon Journal  
Pencil  
Five pacific salmon identification pages

## Size/Setting/Duration

Whole class/classroom/~1 hour

## Background

After distinguishing between five of the local salmon species, students are ready to use their sight to identify these species by appearance. In addition to the differences in habitat requirements, spawning characteristics etc., these species each have distinguishing physical characteristics. This activity is designed to engage students in an active sensory exploration of these species.

## Activity

1. Ensure that students each have a copy of the Salmon Identification Key.
2. Position the five color identification sheets around the room as stations for students to visit.
3. Explain to the class that the salmon key they hold in their hands is like a map. They will use this "map" key to discover the identity of the fish at each station. At each station, students will use the color pictures

and clues given to answer the questions on the key. Once they have followed the questions and answered them correctly they will know the names of each fish.

4. Tell each student to start at question 1 for each station. Each question has two parts and only one will be true. Tell the students to determine which question is true and follow that question to the step indicated. They will repeat the process until they come to the name of the salmon they are identifying.

5. Students should move to each station and identify all five of the species provided. When students find the name of the fish at each station they should write down the station number next to the name on the key so you can check their work.

**Salmon Identification Key**

<b>EALR Information</b> Component	Benchmark	Assessment
<b>1.1 Reading</b> Use word recognition and work meaning skills to read and comprehend text	Understand scientific vocabulary and the meaning of words to answer questions	Students will complete the <i>Salmon Identification Key</i> on page 16
<b>1.2 Science</b> Identify, describe, and categorize living things based on their physical characteristics	Identify physical characteristics that are used to classify living organisms	Same as above
<b>2.2 Science</b> Think logically, analytically, and creatively	Use clues and pictures to derive information needed to identify living organisms	Same as above
<b>4.1 Science</b> Use listening, observing, and reading skills to obtain scientific information	Obtain scientific information by reading questions and clues, observing pictures, and determining the identity of living organisms	Students will use observation and reading skills to answer questions that will help them to identify living organisms

# Identify Five Local Pacific Salmon Species

Use this key and the pictures at each station to identify the different local salmon species that you have learned about.

## Instructions:

1. Start at question 1.
  2. Read the question, then look at the picture and read the clues on the Station Card.
  3. Answer the question and follow the directions for the next step.
  4. Go to the next step.
  5. Repeat the process until you identify the fish.
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## Questions:

Does salmon have spots on dorsal and caudal fins?

1a. Yes, salmon has spots on dorsal and caudal fins.      Go to 2

OR

1b. No, salmon does not have spots on dorsal or caudal fin.      Go to 4

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Does salmon have spots on entire caudal fin?

2a. Yes, salmon has spots on entire caudal fin.      Go to 3

OR

2b. No, salmon has spots only on top half of caudal fin. Has white gums.      Station # \_\_\_\_\_  
Coho Salmon  
*Oncorhynchus kisutch*

Is salmon large or small in size?

Station # \_\_\_\_\_

3a. Salmon is the largest of all Pacific species (10-24 lbs, 36-58 inches).  
Has grey gums.

Chinook Salmon  
*Oncorhynchus tshawytscha*

OR

Station # \_\_\_\_\_

3b. Salmon is smallest of all Pacific species (2-5 lbs, 20-30 inches).  
Develops large hump when spawning.

Pink Salmon  
*Oncorhynchus gorbuscha*

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Does salmon have large or small pupils?

Station # \_\_\_\_\_

4a. Salmon has small pupil and develops bright red bodies when spawning.

Sockeye Salmon  
*Oncorhynchus nerka*

OR

Station # \_\_\_\_\_

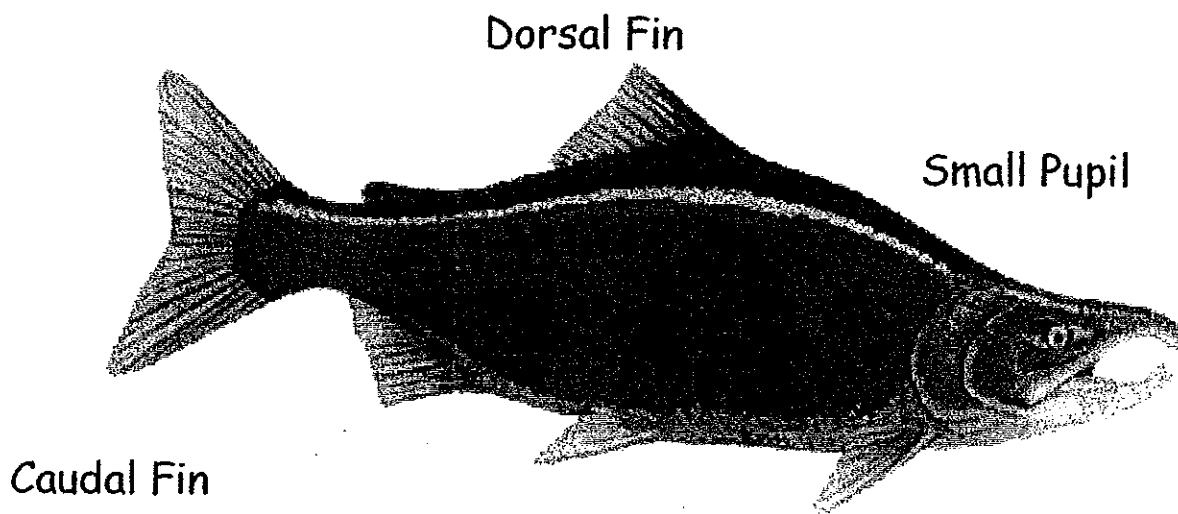
4b. Salmon has large pupil and develops red vertical bars on body when spawning.

Chum Salmon  
*Oncorhynchus keta*

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## Station # 1

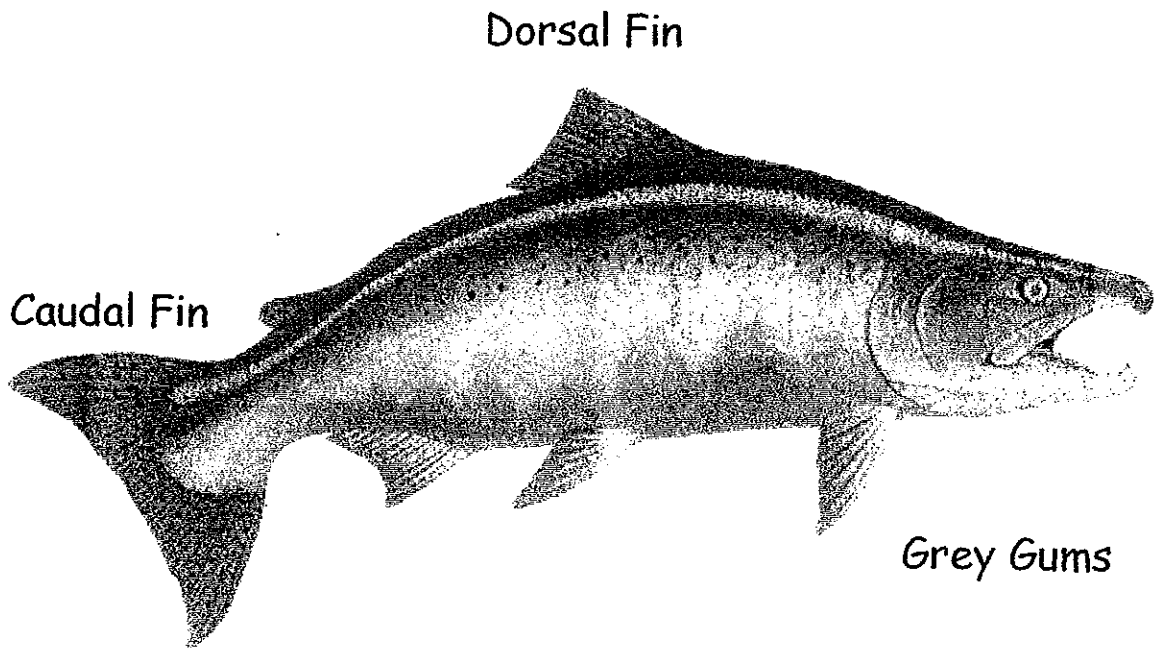


Red Body when Spawning

Average weight: 4-8 lbs

Average Length: 25-33 inches

Station # 2

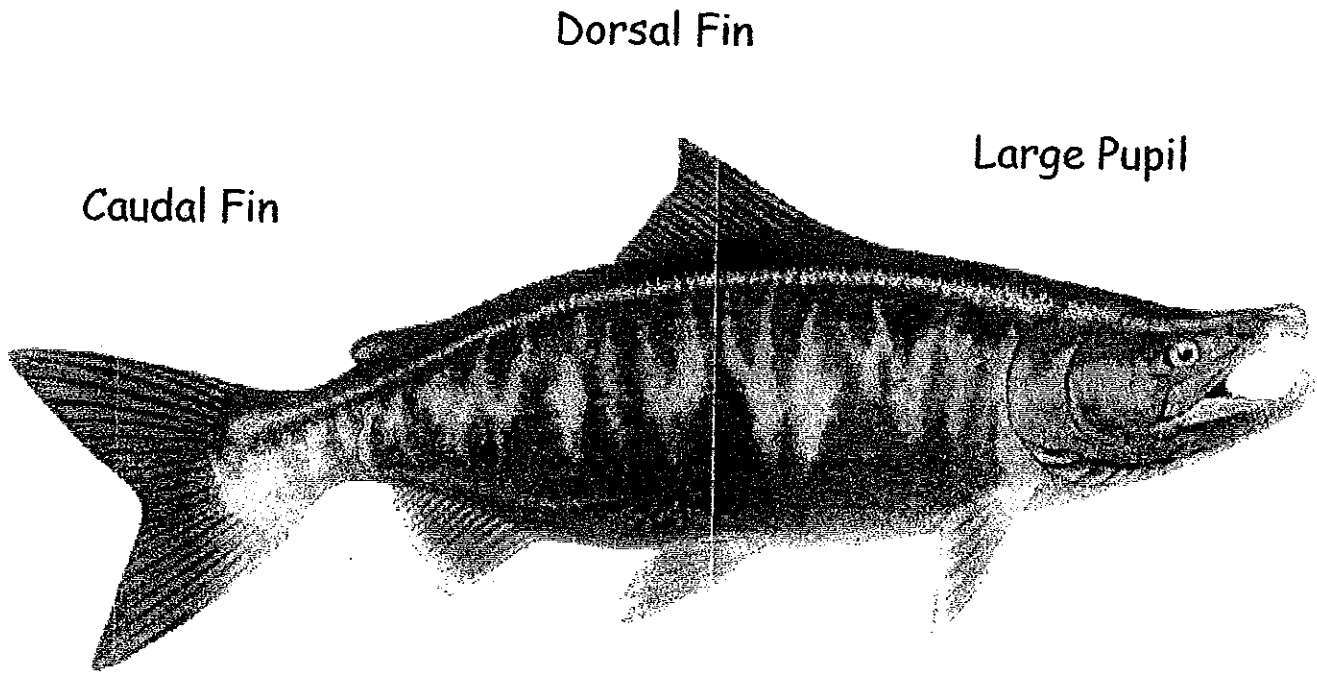


Largest of all Local Pacific Salmon

Average Weight: 10-24 lbs

Average Length: 36-58 inches

## Station # 3

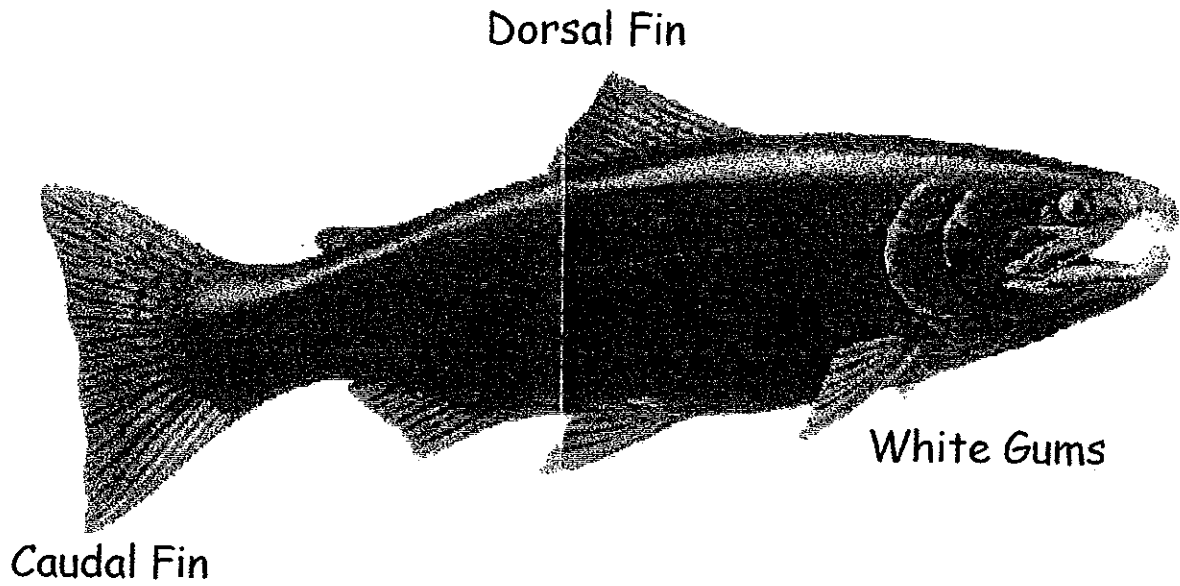


Red Vertical Bars on Body when Spawning

Average Weight: 9-15 lbs

Average Length: 25-40 inches

Station # 4



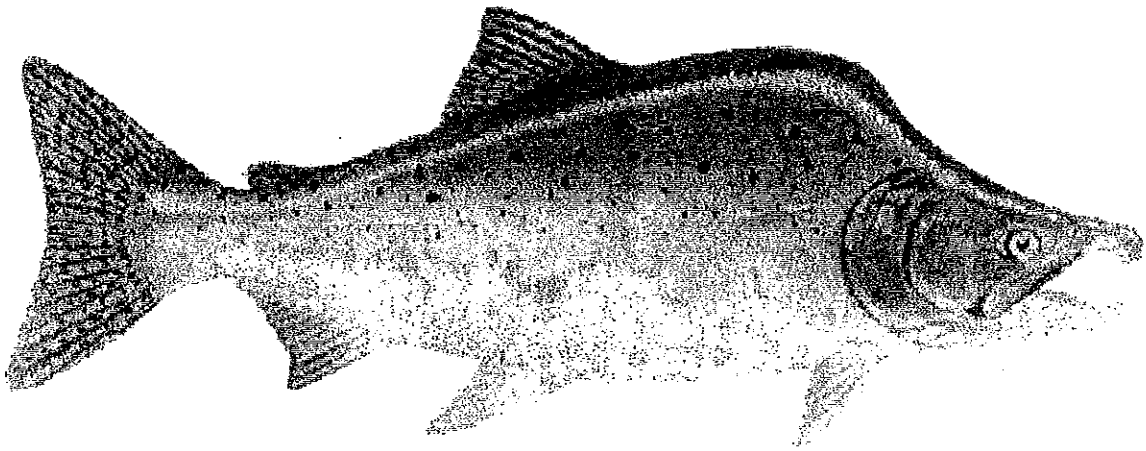
Average Weight: 6-12 lbs

Average Length: 24-38 inches



## Station # 5

Dorsal Fin



Dorsal Fin

Develops Large Hump when Spawning

Average Weight: 2-5 lbs

Average Length: 20-30 inches