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Fisheries and Marine Service | Service des pêches et des sciences de la mer

fisheries fact sheet

Number 11

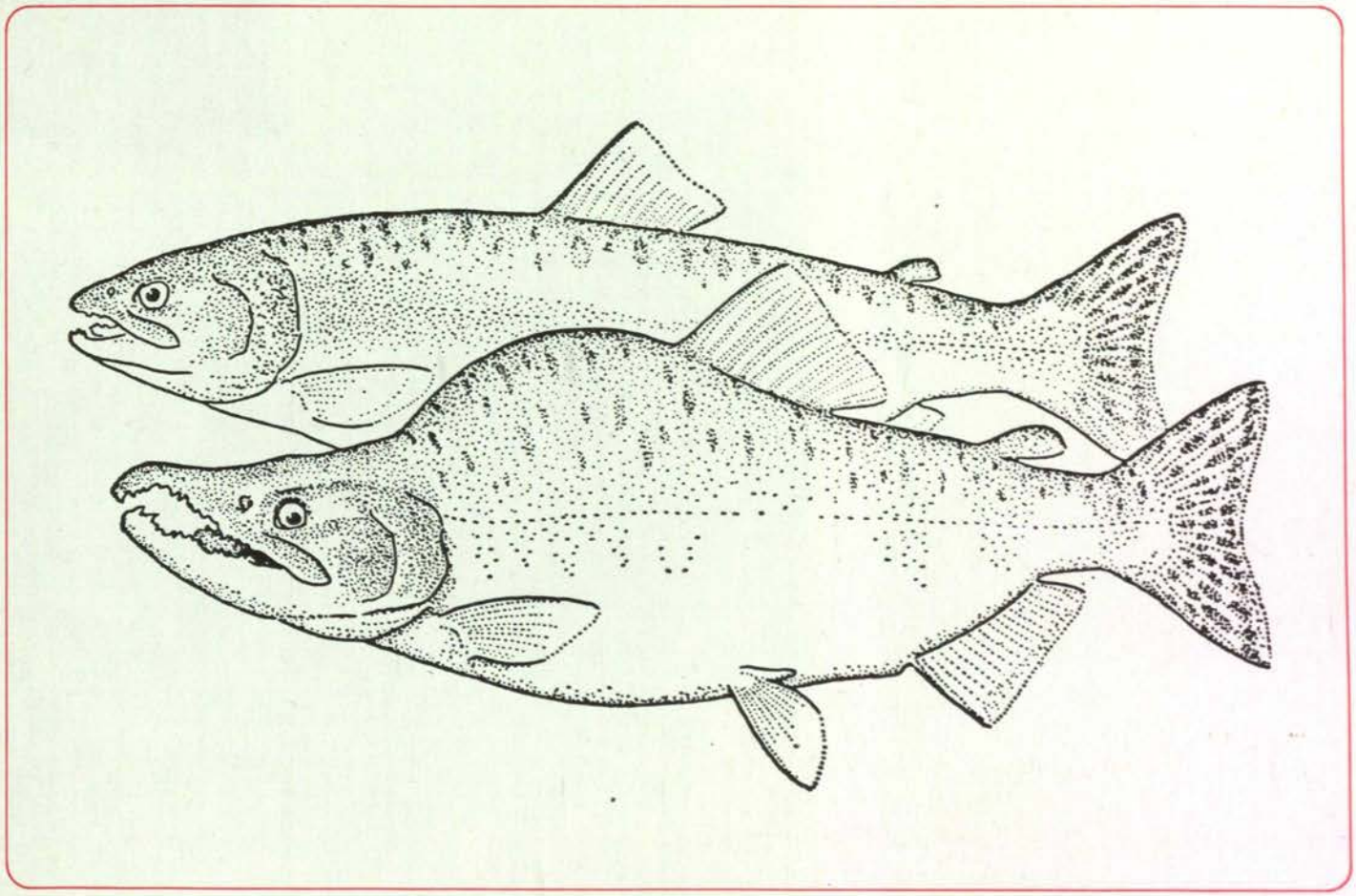
PINK SALMON

The pink salmon, which is known scientifically as *Oncorhynchus gorbuscha,* is the most numerous of the five species of Pacific salmon in British Columbia. In the years 1962 to 1971 the catch of pink salmon averaged 12.2 million fish per year and made up 48% of the catch of Pacific salmon and steelhead in British Columbia. However, because they are smaller and less valuable than the other species, their landed value during those years averaged only 18% of the total value of salmon and steelhead. The geographic range of pink salmon extends around the North Pacific rim from northern California to North Korea. In British Columbia they are common along the entire coast.

Description

The smallest of the Pacific salmon, the pink is similar to the other four species (sockeye, chum, coho, and chinook) in shape, with an elongate body, and a conical head. The teeth and scales are small relative to other salmon. Pink salmon have a metallic blue back and silvery sides, and are covered with black blotches.

At spawning the colours of both sexes become a dark olive brown shading into white on the under surfaces. In the males, a change in shape occurs with a pronounced hump or ridge forming on the back,



the jaws becoming elongated and the upper jaw hooked downward at its tip. Similar changes in shape occur in males of other Pacific salmon, but because in pink salmon the hump on the back is more pronounced than in the other species and also because it begins to form so quickly after the fish enters brackish water, the pink salmon is often called a "hump" or a "humpback" by fishermen. The length of the pink is usually about two feet, and the weight is from three to five pounds, occasionally as high as 10. The flesh is pink, hence the common name, and is highly nutritious, being first in protein content and fourth in fat content of the five B.C. salmon species.

Migration and reproduction

Its life cycle is similar to that of all Pacific salmon. Pink salmon spawn mainly in streams close to tide water but occasionally travel long distances. For example, in the Skeena River system pinks migrate about 300 miles from the sea to the Bear River. Spawning occurs from August to early November when the eggs are deposited in the gravel. The resulting fry, which are distinguishable from those of other salmon because they lack parr marks, emerge from the gravel in the spring and migrate directly to the sea. As is the case with the other species of salmon, the ocean migrations of pink salmon are extensive and encompass thousands of square miles of area.

While at sea they grow rapidly feeding on small fish, crustaceans, and squid. After a marine life of about 15 to 18 months, the pink salmon return to their native area to spawn. As pink salmon always mature in their second year the populations in the even- and odd-numbered years are completely separate. In some streams pink salmon occur in both even- and odd-numbered years, whereas in other streams they occur only in one of the years. In the Queen Charlotte Islands pink salmon occur in large numbers in even-numbered years and are found only in a few streams in small numbers in odd-numbered years.

In southern British Columbia pink salmon run only in odd-numbered years into mainland streams which flow into the Strait of Georgia. Along the remaining part of the British Columbia coast pink salmon runs occur in both years, although in most streams and areas the run in one cycle usually is larger than in the other.

Methods of catching

The pink salmon is largely taken in purse seines and gillnets. However, substantial catches are made by fishermen using trolling gear. The latter catches are usually sold on the fresh-fish market.

Almost the entire net catch is canned and is eagerly sought in many countries, but mainly in the United States.