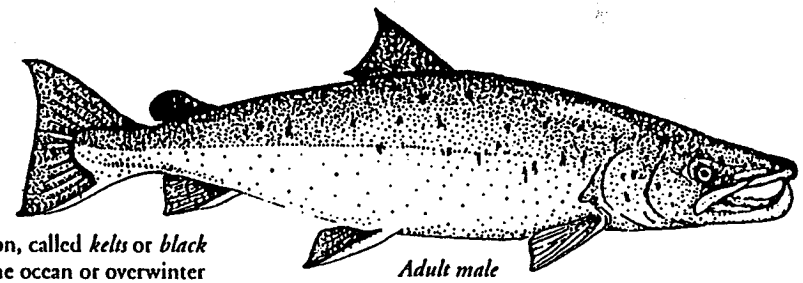
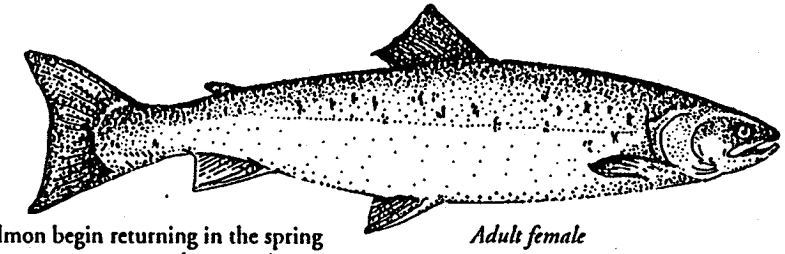
Life Cycle of the Atlantic Salmon

(Salmo salar)



Adult male

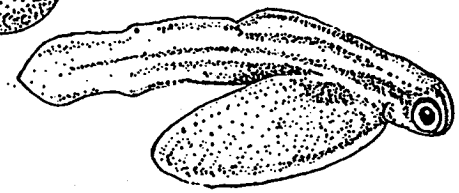
Spawned-out salmon, called *kelts* or *black salmon,* return to the ocean or overwinter in the river.



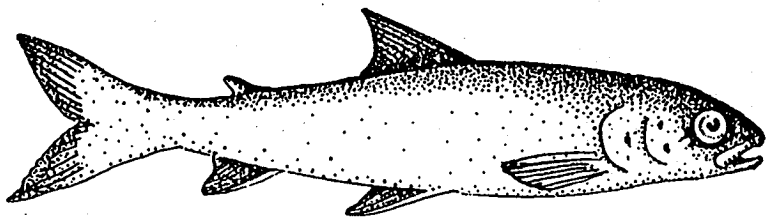
Adult female

The adult salmon begin returning in the spring to their native stream to repeat the spawning cycle.

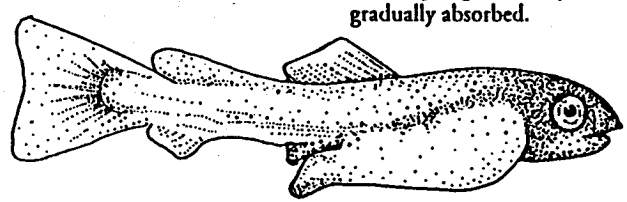
In late autumn, the female salmon buries fertilized eggs in stream bottom gravel nests called *redds.*



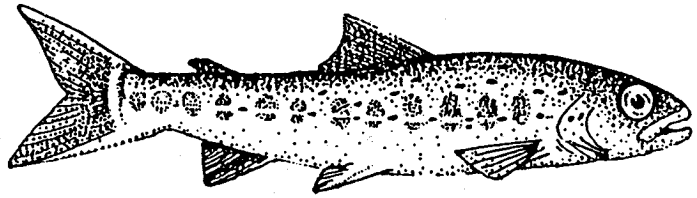
The eggs hatch into *alevin* or *sac fry* in late spring, and the yolk sac is gradually absorbed.



Smolts are silver colored and approximately 6 inches long. In the spring, smolt body chemistry changes; they now weigh about 2 ounces and are ready to enter salt water. They migrate to the ocean where they will develop in about two to three years into mature salmon weighing about 8 to 15 pounds.



Three to six weeks after hatching, alevins emerge from the gravel to seek food and are called *fry.*



Fry quickly develop into *parr* with camouflaging vertical stripes. The parr are two inches long. They feed and grow for one to three years in their native stream before becoming *smolts.*