

## **1,000 Pound Salmon Eats Fisherman**

There you are, standing in a river trying to catch dinner in your bear hide coveralls, up to your primal buns in snow melt and all of a sudden...fwoop... you're the main meal. It could've happened, right? Well, maybe not...but these pre-historic creatures used to weigh as much as 1000 pounds a piece. Imagine hooking one. Better yet, imagine landing one! A thousand pounds of one of the most amazing fish on the planet.

So they're not furry; they don't purr or fetch or look at you all doe-eyed and act like you are the best thing to ever walk in the door. They won't hike with you or sit on your lap or bring you your slippers, but many believe they are intrinsic to life and at the very heart of the ecosystem. Salmon. We're talking about salmon. Remarkable, steadfast, precious, elemental salmon.

Consider this: There is no more dedicated a mother than the female salmon who fights her way through the torrent of a raging river, leaping through walls of forceful water while eluding the jaws of grizzlies, deadly diseases, not to mention hooks and nets, so she can return to the home of her birth to lay her eggs and do her best to ensure that the next generation will survive. And once that monumental task is complete, she dies. That's dedicated parenting wouldn't you say?

And what about the journey of the young fingerlings after they hatch? Each species has a different youthful lifestyle but all involve extensive travel. For example, Chinook can live up to 7 years while Coho spend 1-2 years in freshwater before beginning their trek out to sea. Chum and Pinks, on the other hand, head out shortly after hatching. Imagine as a mere infant of 2 months, emerging from a safe, freshwater nursery and beginning treacherous journey downstream that ultimately ends up in the mighty salt waters of the ocean...and being potential lunch for everyone along the way?

Oh and here's a kicker: the intricacies of a salmon's genetic code insist that it always face upstream into the current, so when they embark on the amazing journey out to sea, they actually swim tail first, sometimes for hundreds of miles.

Are you getting why these little geniuses are so admirable?

After spending up to 4 years in the ocean and loading up on nutrients to pass on to their young, salmon use their keen sense of smell to navigate their way back to the place in which they were born. They actually return to the very same home river where they hatched out and saw the world for the first time. In that journey, they have to overcome unbelievable obstacles and avoid predators in a way that would make any NFL running back envious.

One reason these amazing critters survive is that they've been around a very, very long time and they've got the adaptation thing down. Case in point -- two fishermen found a pile of fossilized salmon on the Skokomish River that are thought to be nearly 1.6 million years old, hailing from the Pleistocene Age. This was at a time when mountains rose up,

the climate changed dramatically, our coastline migrated, and numerous volcanoes flooded huge areas of the region with layers of molten lava, destroying many species of fish. But guess who survived? Yep, if you guessed salmon, you are absolutely correct.

The word salmon comes from the Latin salmo which means "to leap." Watching salmon leap acrobatically out of the rapids pretty much defines what that word is all about. It's incredible to watch. Hey, who doesn't love a good leap?

Many cultures down through millennia have honored salmon. In Celtic mythology the salmon is associated with wisdom and venerability. Welsh mythology looks to the salmon as the wisest of all creatures. Glasgow Scotland even features a salmon on the city's coat of arms.

Salmon are central to the Native American people and in the Pacific Northwest, they represent the heart and soul of the ecosystem. According to one Northwest Native Indian legend, salmon were actually people with superhuman abilities and eternal lives. Who can deny that after reading about their life journey? Superhuman indeed.

137 different species rely on salmon as part of their diet. That's a lot of mouths to feed. Not only in life do they nourish, but they also make tremendous contributions to the forests, rivers and oceans after they die. How? Their nutrient rich carcasses become food for a variety of microscopic creatures that ultimately end up being consumed by other salmon. Those same nutrients also nourish the growth of numerous plants and trees along the rivers. Salmon are essential. They are part of the essence of life as we know it, and we need them. Not just want them...need them... for the community of life to function sustainably.

Why do so many species rely on salmon for nourishment? Well, to begin with, they are extraordinarily healthy and life-supporting superfood, loaded with nutrients like magnesium, selenium and vitamins B-12 and B-6. They're rich in Omega 3 essential fatty acids that feed brains and our hearts. Have you ever had salmon straight off the grill or cooked on a cedar wood plank? Melts in your mouth. How about some smoked salmon on a bagel with cream cheese? Salmon chowder on a cold winter day? Yuhm-m-m...

So that's why we love salmon. Whether it's their incredible life journey, their wonderful contribution to our environment, the way they nourish or the delicious way they taste, they are simply extraordinary. Seriously, what's not to love?

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