



Life Cycle of the Atlantic Salmon

The diagram on the next page shows the life cycle of the Atlantic Salmon. It starts in the Autumn as an egg buried in the gravel at the bottom of rivers like the Tweed. In early Spring it hatches into tiny alevins, they still have the yolk sac from the egg attached to them and this gives them food. They stay underneath the gravel for 4 to 6 weeks because they cannot swim very well and it also protects them from predators. In late Spring and early Summer the alevins have developed into fry, emerge from the stones and start feeding on water organisms.

At one year old fry become parr, they feed on insects and remain in fresh water for between 1 and 4 years, after this time they become smolts. When they become smolts during their 2nd, 3rd or 4th year they migrate to the sea. As they mature in the sea they travel great distances and feed on sandeels, krill and herring.

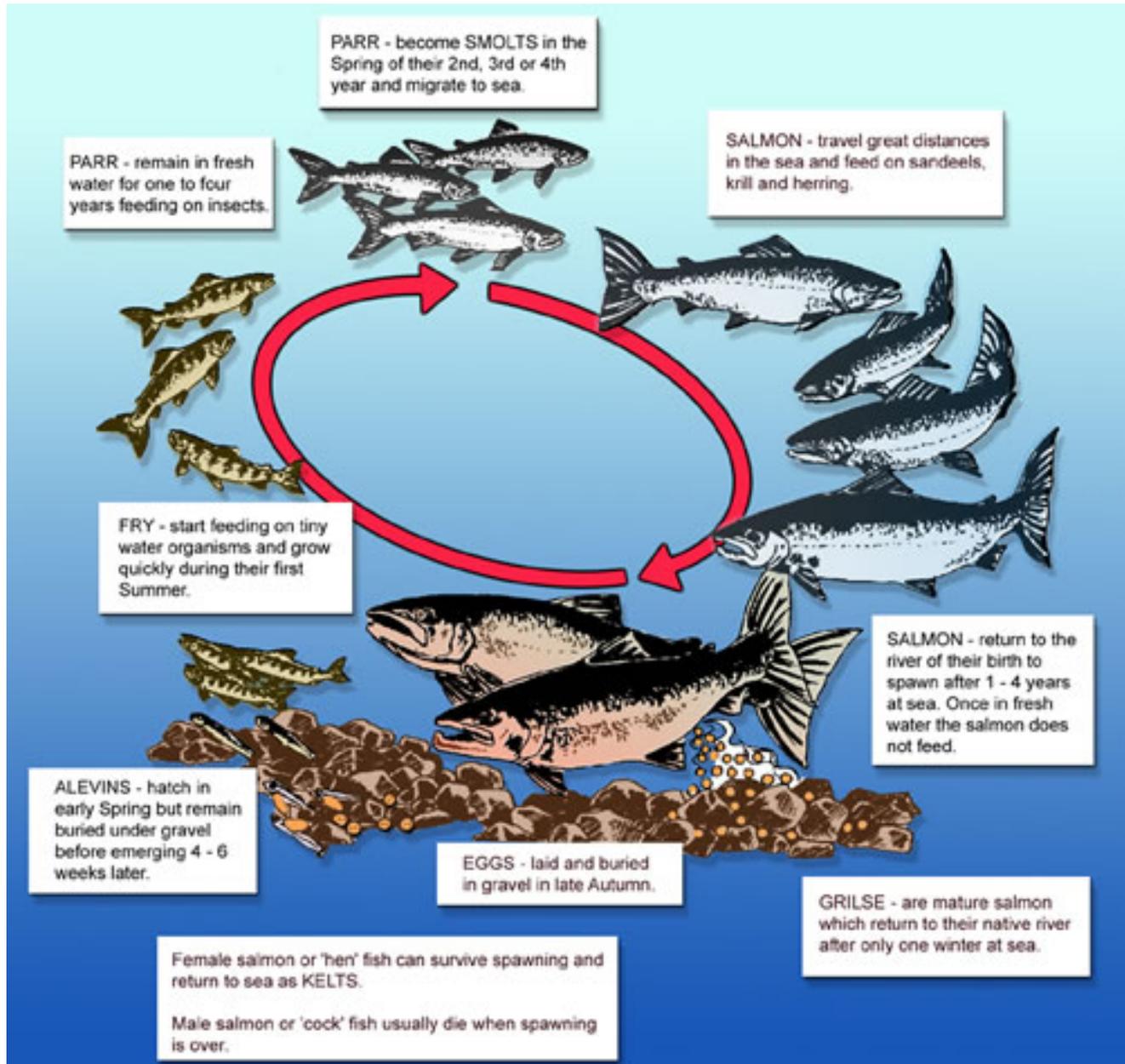
After 1 to 4 years at sea the salmon return to the river where they were born to breed, they do not eat at all once they have returned to the river. Grilse is the name that is given to salmon who return to the river after only 1 year at sea.

When the mature salmon returns to the river to breed, this is called spawning. The female digs a redd or small nest in the gravel using her tail, she then lays her eggs and the male salmon releases milt which fertilises the eggs.

After spawning most salmon die but some females, known as kelts, return to the sea and spawn again the following year.



Life Cycle Diagram





Using the information above answer the following questions:

1. What is a female adult salmon called?
2. Where are salmon eggs laid?
3. What do you call a salmon when they first hatch?
4. What do 'Fry' feed on?
5. How long do 'Alevins' stay buried in the gravel before they emerge?
6. Where do 'Parr' stay for 1 - 4 years?
7. What do 'Parr' turn into in their 2nd, 3rd or 4th year before migrating to the sea?
8. What do salmon feed on when they are at sea?
9. At what age do salmon return to the river?
10. Why do salmon return to the river?



11. What are 'Grilse'?

12. What do salmon not do in fresh water?

13. What do you call a salmon that returns to the sea after spawning?

KS1 Science – notice that animals have offspring which grow into adults

KS2 – Observe the lifecycle changes in living things

SCN 2-14a