

PACIFIC SALMON MARINE PHASE IDENTIFICATION

Please note, when salmon enter fresh water they undergo significant physical changes including changes in coloration. This chart is intended to help anglers identify salmon by species. However, it is the angler's responsibility to be able to positively identify the species at any point in its life cycle.

Chinook (king) Salmon



- Spots on back and both lobes of the tail
- Black mouth with a black gumline

Coho (silver) Salmon



- Spots on back and upper lobe of the tail
- Black mouth with a white gumline

Sockeye (red) Salmon



- No distinct spots on back or tail
- White mouth with a white gumline
- Large, bright gold eye

Pink (humpy) Salmon



- Large, oval spots on back and both lobes of tail
- White mouth with a black gumline

Chum (dog) Salmon



- No spots; calico bands on body (often faint in saltwater)
- White mouth with a white gumline

Chinook (king) Salmon



- Spawning adults turn maroon or olive brown
- Spots on body and both lobes of the tail remain

Coho (silver) Salmon



- Males develop pronounced “kype” (hooked-nose)
- Spots on back and upper lobe of the tail remain
- Male and female turn dark maroon and have dark backs

Sockeye (red) Salmon



- Spawning adults develop dull-green heads
- Males develop hump on back
- Both female and male turn red

Pink (humpy) Salmon



- Spawners turn dull gray on their backs and upper sides
- Lower sides appear cream color or white
- Large, oval spots on back and both lobes of tail remain

Chum (dog) Salmon



- Spawners develop pronounced, vertical calico bands on sides
- Males exhibit large, canine-like teeth

Photographs by the Alaska Department of Fish and Game.