

## We Walk - Literally - on the Backs of Wild Salmon



Pacific salmon do a strange thing after they spawn, they die.

In evolutionary terms, it seems counterproductive. Wouldn't it be better if each fish lived to rear its young, and perhaps even get a second shot at spawning? It turns out that Pacific Salmon, in their own way, are providing for their offspring. When salmon swim upstream, they are returning to the waters where they themselves hatched years before — their bodies plump with eggs as well as the bounty of the seas.

After spawning, they leave their nutrient- rich carcasses behind. Many of the tiny creatures that nibble on the carcasses eventually become prey for the next generation of fish - so the parents nourish the young. But salmon provide more than an indirect food source for baby salmon.

At least 138 different species - from grizzly bears to gray wolves — depend on salmon for part of their diet. Even forests and rangeland benefit from the nutrients brought back by salmon from the seas

It is awe-inspiring when you think about it. This mighty fish struggles up stream, jumping waterfalls, and its last act is sacrificing its body to ensure that the community that will raise its children will be thriving, teeming with life.

Which begs the question, what are we doing for our community, for the next generation? Imagine what could be accomplished if we devoted our energies to the future the way that salmon do. Imagine if you will, a Nation of such salmon-people, leaping great obstacles to make a better place for their offspring and their ecosystem. Isn't it time you put your carcass to work?

*Words by Howard Silverman & Artwork by Shannon Wheeler*

### **The Scientific Research Findings Supporting this premise**

#### **Review Of Wildlife Relationships By Salmon Life Stages: Scientific Abstract<sup>1</sup>**

For the 138 species with a relationship to salmon, Cederholm et al. identified the salmon life stage(s) involved for each species. In this study, the five general life history stages of salmon were identified as: (a) Incubation (egg and alevin), (b) Freshwater Rearing (fry, fingerling, and parr), (c) Saltwater (smolt, subadult, adult), (d) Spawner, and (e) Carcass. The number of wildlife species associated with each (in parenthesis) were: Incubation (23), Freshwater Rearing (49), Saltwater (63), Spawning (16), and Carcass (83); this tally of wildlife species totals more than 138 because 73 species are associated with salmon at more than one life stage (Appendixes I, II, III). See Appendix VII for a complete list of published and unpublished observations of wildlife predators and scavengers on salmon at various stages of their life.

#### **A Partial Species List**

Bald Eagle, Golden Eagle, Osprey, California Condor, Turkey vulture, Harlequin Duck, Red-throated Loon, Pacific Loon, Common Loon, Pied-billed Grebe, Western Grebe, Clark's Grebe, American White Pelican, Brandt's Cormorant, Double-crested Cormorant, Pelagic Cormorant, Great Blue Heron, Black-crowned Night-heron, Green Heron, Common Goldeneye, Barrow's Goldeneye, Common Merganser, Red-breasted Merganser, Bonaparte's Gull, Hermann's Gull, Ring-billed Gull, California Gull, Herring Gull, Thayer's Gull, Western Gull, Glaucous-winged Gull, Glaucous Gull, Common Tern, Arctic Tern, Forster's Tern, Elegant Tern, Caspian Tern, Common Murre, Marbled Murrelet, Rhinoceros Auklet, Tufted Puffin, Belted Kingfisher, American Dipper, Steller's Jay, Black-billed Magpie, American Crow, Northwestern Crow, Common Raven, Virginia Opossum, Water Shrew, Coyote, Gray Wolf, Raccoon, Mink, Bobcat, Northern River Otter, Northern Fur Seal, Northern (Steller) Sea Lion, California Sea Lion, Harbor Seal, Pacific White-sided Dolphin, Killer Whale, Black Bear, Grizzly Bear, Cope's Giant Salamander, Pacific Giant Salamander, Pacific Coast Aquatic Garter Snake

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#### **<sup>1</sup> Recommended Citation:**

Cederholm, C. J., D. H. Johnson, R. E. Bilby, L.G. Dominguez, A. M. Garrett, W. H. Graeber, E. L. Greda, M. D. Kunze, B.G. Marcot, J. F. Palmisano, R. W. Plotnikoff, W. G. Percy, C. A. Simenstad, and P. C. Trotter. 2000. Pacific Salmon and Wildlife - Ecological Contexts, Relationships, and Implications for Management. Special Edition. Technical Report, Prepared for D. H. Johnson and T. A. O'Neil, Wildlife-Habitat Relationships in Oregon and Washington. WA Dept. of Fish and Wildlife, Olympia, WA.