

# GRAB BAG

BOOK SHELF // GLIMPSE // WILDLIFE // POP CULTURE // WORDS // Q&A // FOOD // FUN

## word nerd

By RYAN HUME

### Chum [tʃʌm]

*noun*

1. a friend or buddy
2. fish bait made of odds and ends, including various fish parts, bones, and blood, that is used to lure carnivorous fish, especially sharks
3. *chum salmon* / *Oncorhynchus keta*: also called the dog salmon, the calico or simply just keta, this species has a metallic blue-green hue and is spackled with small black spots along its dorsal. Chum salmon is known for having a mild taste and soft pink flesh and the fish weigh 10 to 15 pounds on average, but they can occasionally reach up to 30 pounds

#### Origin:

Each definition of the word *chum* arrives from a

separate source.

The meaning "friend" arrives first in the 1680s and is British university slang for a "chambermate" or "roommate."

The second definition, meaning "fish bait" is first noted in 1857 and is thought to have originated within the Scottish dialect,

where *chum* simply means "food."

*Chum salmon*, on the other hand, developed out of Chinook Jargon in the early 20th century from the term *tzum samun*, which literally means "spotted salmon" in the pidgin. The *keta* in the salmonid's scientific description comes

via Russian from the Evenki language of Eastern Siberia.

"Once one of the most abundant of salmon species in the Columbia River, chum salmon made up as much as 7 percent to 10 percent of historical salmon runs, with as many as 1 million fall-run chum salmon returning to the river in 1928. That was the same year that the commercial

harvest of chum was 700,000 fish."

—Columbia Basin Bulletin, "Welcome back, good (salmon) chums," *The Daily Astorian*, Monday, Oct. 5, 2015, P. 5A

"Because of their high protein content and their body-building value, pink and chum salmon are

both highly recommended by food experts . . . Others give preference to the chum because its meat bears a close resemblance in color to that of the trout and is less oily than other varieties."

—"What Experts Say," *Oregon City Enterprise*, Friday, March 25, 1921, P. 8



PHOTO BY DAMIAN MULINIX

An adult chum salmon is pulled from a holding tank in preparation of being released into an Oregon river in 2014.

#### Crossword Answer

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