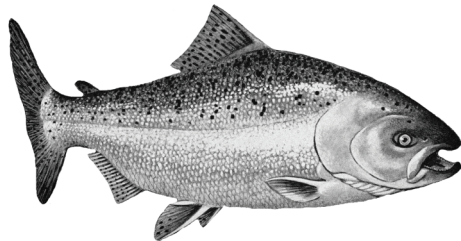


## Spring salmon return to the Columbia

By **LISSA BREWER**  
COAST WEEKEND EDITOR



**Chinook salmon can be found migrating downstream along the Columbia River in the spring.**

Migrating from freshwater streams and rivers, the North Coast's prized Chinook salmon have begun their annual spring journey along the Columbia River. These regional icons are one of five salmon species to call the river home, sharing the waters with sockeye, coho, chum and pink salmon.

These young fish will seek respite in estuaries along their downstream journey, making their way toward the Pacific Ocean. After living in streams for months or even several years, salmon undergo physiological changes that allow them to survive in

saltwater seas. The growing fish will make their home in the ocean for between two and five years before returning to spawn in their native freshwater streams.

Along their route, the traveling salmon face many challenges, navigating human made habitats, marine debris, and, of course,

fishing. While they do make a delicious meal, many salmon species in the Pacific Northwest are at risk of extinction. Columbia River Chinook salmon are now classified as endangered, with a fishing limit of one per day. Across the region, in as much as 40% of their historical range, all species of wild salmon are already considered to have gone extinct.

As a keystone species, the decline of salmon threatens to disrupt the region's waterway ecosystems, limiting food sources

for marine mammals and other sea dwellers. As abundant as salmon seems on coastal seafood plates, it may seem a surprise that the iconic Northwest fish is quite threatened. To help preserve its habitat, consider purchasing wild caught salmon from abundant areas like Alaska, as well as advocating for the establishment of parks and wildlife preserves.

In the meantime, the return of spring salmon is a cause of celebration for many. Local tribes have long celebrated welcoming ceremonies for the fish. A fresh catch is an opportunity to share a dish and memory with loved ones, enjoying the savory taste of these beloved Northwest fish.

# our coast weekend

**ON THE COVER**

Eric Wiegardt is an artist working on the Long Beach Peninsula.



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