SALMON FACTS

- Pacific salmon undertake anadromous migrations meaning they reproduce in clean, cool, freshwater streams, but rear for a portion of their life in oceans, where they accumulate more than 99 per cent of their adult weight.

- Pacific salmon are also semelparous, meaning that the most adults die after reproduction and become nutrients and food in the freshwater systems. They are the nutrient backbone to B.C.'s coastal ecosystems.

- Pacific salmon 'home' to their natal streams to reproduce! Adults return to the same streams that their parents used. This behaviour has allowed the development of extensive genetic diversity within each species, allowing salmon to be highly adaptable.

- Scientists believe that homing is accomplished by tracing 'pheromones' or chemical signatures of the home stream! Salmon have an extremely keen sense of smell - they can smell chemicals down to one part per million.

- Once adult salmon return to freshwater, they do not eat. This means that adults can go six months without food while transferring body fats into their gametes for reproduction.

- Salmon hear using low frequency sound waves which vibrate through the water to a row of sensory pores called lateral lines on the sides of the salmon.

- Salmon in their saltwater phase travel an estimated 18 miles a day, but they are capable of maintaining an average of 34 miles per day over long distances.

- Salmon can migrate more than 3,000 kilometres upstream through freshwater to spawn (Yukon River). That is like driving halfway across Canada.

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SALMON FACTS

- Salmon often travel 50 kilometres per day on their spawning journeys. This would be like running more than a marathon every day!
- Salmon can jump up to two metres to cross obstacles in rivers. That is about as high as a female Olympic athlete can jump.
- A typical orca eats 25 kilograms of salmon a day. The 300 resident orcas in B.C. probably consume 1,000 tonnes of salmon per year! That is the weight of 100 large trucks!
- Chinook salmon make up to 80% of the Southern Resident Orca population
- The city of Vancouver has lost most of its salmon streams due to urban sprawl. Out of about 50 streams, only two remain.
- Females lay thousands of eggs (usually between 2,000 and 10,000), unfortunately, at present less than 1 per cent of these eggs survive to the next generation.
- Approximately 80 per cent of 'farmed' salmon in B.C. are Atlantic salmon, not the local Pacific salmon variety. Salmon farming usually refers to the rearing of salmon in net-pens in coastal waters until they are harvested for market. But 2014 saw the first land-based commercial Atlantic farmed salmon brought to market by Kuterra Farms, owned by the Namgis First Nations. The Foundation was proud to partner as an independent biological monitor for the project.
- Salmon are considered a keystone species -- a species on which other species in nature depend on.
- Think of a keystone as the top stone in an arch that holds the arch together. Not only do salmon provide nutrients for streams and rivers because they die after spawning, they are also a key part of the diet of other animals. There are over 130 animals that feed on salmon throughout the salmon life cycle.

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SALMON FACTS

- The earliest record of salmon in North America is of the 'Saber-Tooth Salmon' in fossils dating up to 7 million years ago ... at up to three meters long these weren't your common 'salmon'!

- There are ten species of Pacific salmon. The seven that occur in B.C. include Sockeye, Chinook, Coho, Pink, Chum, Steelhead Trout, and Cutthroat Trout. Two more occur within North America, Mexican Golden Trout, and Gila Trout, and Masou (or Cherry) salmon occurs only in Asia. Plus, there are also freshwater forms of Sockeye (Kokanee salmon), Steelhead Trout (Rainbow Trout), and Masou Salmon.

- Pacific salmon are named Oncorhynchus. The name is derived from the Greek onkos ("hook") and rynchos ("nose"), in reference to the "kype" - the hooked jaw that forms in males during competition for females during mating season.

- There are more than 9,000 salmon populations (species and stream combinations) in B.C., organized into about 450 conservation units applied in resource management.

- Pacific salmon are distantly related to Atlantic salmon but they can not inter-breed as these species have different numbers of chromosomes.

- Pink salmon are the smallest and most abundant species and Chinook salmon are the largest (exceeding 50 kilos) but least abundant species. Interestingly, they have exactly the same number of scales.

- Spawning preferences: Chinook due to their large size they are able to spawn in larger gravel, Pink prefer the lower reaches of rivers and quickly go to the Ocean as they spawn every 2 years, Sockeye need a mixture of gravels and go for the smaller tributaries, Coho are similar to Sockeye they remain in the river for one year before going to the ocean.

- A Chinook salmon lays an average of 5,000 eggs and only an average of 2 survive to become spawning salmon.