

# Disappearing Salmon



Chinook salmon  
(*Onchorhynchus tshawytscha*)

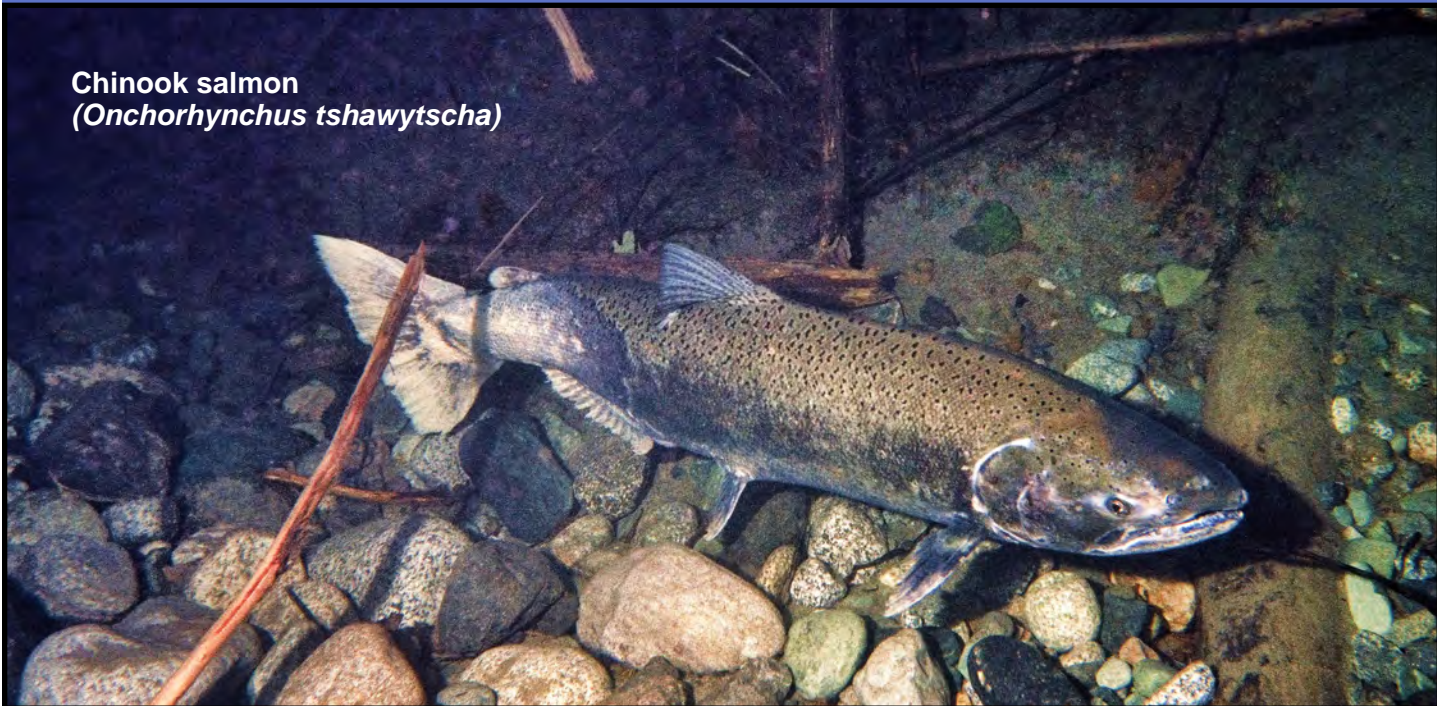


Photo: Roger Tabor, USFWS

## Where have all the salmon gone?

The lower reaches of the Snake and its adjoining tributaries, including the lower Boise River, were highly productive fisheries in the early 1800s for the Shoshone Bannock Tribes. In fact, the lower Boise River was described as the “most renowned fishing place in the country,” because of the large numbers of salmon caught here at that time.

As part of the hydroelectric project relicensing work for the three dams in the Hells Canyon Complex on the Snake River, Idaho Power Company biologists have documented historical distributions of Chinook salmon (*Onchorhynchus tshawytscha*) and steelhead (*Oncorhynchus mykiss*) in the lower Snake and Boise Rivers. They found evidence of Chinook salmon spawning in the lower Boise River until the early 1860s—exactly when Boise Basin mining

and valley irrigation projects began. Biologists also reported steelhead runs in the lower Boise River, and the presence of Pacific lamprey (*Lampetra tridentatus*) in the river near Caldwell.

Today, natural salmon and steelhead runs are not possible above Hells Canyon Dam so Idaho Department of Fish and Game releases hatchery jack salmon, fish not required for brood stock, from Glenwood Bridge to Barber Park, providing a unique fishing experience for urban anglers.

Barber Dam was constructed with a fish ladder because the Boise River teemed with salmon and steelhead in the 1800s. Still, employees of Barber Lumber Company stated that 1916 was the last year in which spring Chinook were observed at the fish ladder in the Barber Mill Pond.

