

Atlantic Salmon Habitats

Atlantic Salmon alternate between freshwater and ocean habitats. This has to do with the salmon's unique life cycle. Depending on the location of the river that the salmon is born in, it may spend between one and four years there before it migrates to the ocean. It will stay in the ocean and feed until it is time to reproduce.

Freshwater Habitats

When in freshwater, salmon fry and parr like to live in gravel, cobbles and boulders and where the water is clean, unpolluted and is well oxygenated. The clean gravel provides the right habitat for the redd or nest to be built for the eggs. It enables the alevins to hide in relative safety. Smolts migrate from our rivers to the sea. After a year or more at sea, adult salmon return from their feeding grounds back to their river. Adult fish may enter the rivers and 'hold up' in areas of cool deep water such as pools. Once it is time for them to spawn they will return to the area where they were born, with amazing accuracy, to spawn themselves. These spawning areas may be in small tributaries of river systems where there is clean gravel and a good flow of fresh clean water.

Young salmon also like to live in rivers which have natural grassy banks with some deciduous trees near the river. This is because lots of insects (that salmon feed on) live in the overhanging grasses and trees. Sometimes these insects will fall into the river then the salmon can eat them. Deciduous trees are also useful to shade the edges of riverbanks. This shade provides cover for the fish so that predators find it harder to find them.

Ocean Habitats

The Atlantic Ocean is where Atlantic salmon spend majority of their time feeding and growing. The ocean has a much better supply of nutritious food than many of the rivers. When the salmon migrate back to the rivers to reproduce, they do not eat at all. Grilse feed near the Faroe Islands, and multi sea winter salmon swim to sub arctic seas near Greenland.