Waiting to hatch. It’s early spring, and 5,000 tiny, salmon eggs lie hidden in a stone nest in a creek high in Northwest mountains.

LEARNING TO SURVIVE. Leaving the gravel of their nest, young salmon eat small organisms for food and learn to hide from predators.

LEAVING HOME. The next spring, the now finger-long salmon move into swift current. Rushing snowmelt carries them downstream.

Riding to the sea. The young salmon keep eating and growing as they glide down the Columbia River.

Entering the estuary. As the days get longer, the salmon slide past cities into wide, shallow water. It tastes salty! The Columbia River meets the Pacific Ocean.

Swimming upstream. At life’s end, sleek, mature salmon return to the river and head upstream. Salmon have been important to tribal cultures and religions for thousands of years.

Climbing fish ladders. At each dam, the fast-flowing water of fish ladders attracts adult fish to climb them.

Returning to spawning grounds. At last, the salmon reach the stream where they were born. They dig nests and lay and fertilize their eggs.

Renewing the cycle. After they spawn, the salmon become food for birds and bears. They help nourish the stream and the land.

Living in the ocean. The salmon live in the ocean for one to five years and may swim as far as Alaska or even Japan.

Swimming upstream. At life’s end, sleek, mature salmon return to the river and head upstream. Salmon have been important to tribal cultures and religions for thousands of years.