

Rich...

but fragile

Soyre Hodgson photo

FISHERIES RESEARCHERS HAVE IDENTIFIED a rich-but-fragile tapestry of more than 250 distinct spawning populations of Fraser sockeye. Returning adult sockeye distribute themselves throughout the Fraser watershed in a pattern somewhat akin to the overlapping shingles of a roof. And whether with roofs or Fraser sockeye, we risk a catastrophic 'loss of function' if we remove too many shingles—or stocks of sockeye.

The abundance and diversity of Fraser River sockeye are imperiled by many man-made threats (see inside), but perhaps none greater than recent record warm water and low river flows related to global warming.

To learn more about climate trends and the effects of 'thermal stress' on sockeye, see salmon at www.watershed-watch.org/publications, or contact

Watershed Watch
Salmon Society at
604 936-9474.



CAN POLITICIANS AND BUREAUCRATS BE PERSUADED TO HELP?

Politicians and bureaucrats tend to champion issues that already have significant public support. Help prod them to support sockeye conservation by expressing your ideas and concerns in a letter. It's easy to reach provincial and/or federal representatives, and/or specific ministers, because all provincial politicians share one address (Mr./Ms. X., M.L.A, Parliament Buildings, Victoria, BC V8V 1X4) and all federal politicians share another (Ms./Mr. Y., M.P, House of Commons, Ottawa, Ontario K1A 0A6). Be sure to maximize the effect of your valuable letters by copying them to allies, local elected officials, and community newspapers.

WHAT ELSE CAN CONCERNED PEOPLE DO?

- Learn more about the state of the Fraser River, Fraser River sockeye, and global warming threats (see www.watershed-watch.org/publications).
- Donate to Watershed Watch or any other group you trust to represent you.



Craig Orr photo

FRASER RIVER SOCKEYE

Elan Park photo



*So what's
at stake?*

Each year, millions of sockeye salmon ascend the Fraser River to spawn in the Scotch, Seymour, Adams, Chilko, Shuswap, Bowron, Raft, Fennell, Horsefly, Stuart, and dozens of other storied streams....



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BRITISH COLUMBIANS

and many others throughout the world have come to celebrate the sheer vastness and diversity of the magnificent bounty. Sockeye are, without a doubt, central to the very identity of the Fraser, and of British Columbia, itself. But for how long?

Today's Fraser River sockeye face many hurdles to their continued existence. Sadly, 'missing sockeye' events have become far too common. As 'biological indicators,' sockeye are alerting us to an uncomfortable message: important changes are upon us.

If humankind doesn't soon deal seriously with its global responsibility to protect the Fraser's signature salmon, we could all lose an irreplaceable treasure—and a fleeting opportunity to do the right thing.

WHAT THREATENS SOCKEYE AND OTHER WILD SALMON?

Three major threats to wild salmon also threaten civilization: habitat destruction, poor fisheries management, and a poorly-informed public.

Global warming, ever-higher water temperatures, overfishing, bad logging, farming and ranching practices, urbanization, hydro dams, water extraction, pollution, and salmon farming are foremost candidates in the long-term harm done to wild salmon.

THE FRASER SOCKEYE, PRIZED FOR ITS RICH FLESH AND ROBUST RETURNS, GIVES THE FRASER RIVER A LEGITIMATE CLAIM TO BE THE "WORLD'S GREATEST SALMON RIVER."



Gordon Ennis photo

IT'S A TRAVESTY THAT SALMON NOW PROVIDE ONLY SEVEN PERCENT OF THE MARINE NUTRIENTS THEY PROVIDED PRIOR TO EUROPEAN SETTLEMENT.

It is human nature to over-fish salmon (or cod and other fish stocks), abuse salmon habitat, and knowingly or unknowingly pillage the future—so long as we allow it.

By permitting immediate self-interest to trump long-term collective interest, we implicate ourselves in the turning of rich, but fragile places into wastelands.

Sockeye thrive only in hospitable habitats. The same applies to humans. By not protecting sockeye habitat – the streams in which the adults spawn and from which newly-emerged fry depart, the lakes where the fry live for one to three years before heading to sea, and the vast ocean where the sockeye feed and grow to prime size—we edge closer to a world without wild salmon. Chances are, such a world would be inhospitable to humans, too.

Poor salmon management, including legally-sanctioned over-fishing, largely stems from a failure to acknowledge the full value of wild salmon and wild salmon diversity—which goes far beyond the food, pleasure and money salmon provide (*see Rich...but fragile*). For example, the enormous benefits provided by salmon carcasses and salmon-transported marine nutrients remain sadly undervalued, despite the fact that these proteins and nutrients sustain vast and complex webs of life—bears, eagles, wolves, fish, and plants. No wonder salmon are considered 'keystone' species.

HOW CAN FRASER SOCKEYE BE HELPED?

The best way to help Fraser River sockeye and to honor the world's interest in them is to ensure that British Columbia and Canada take their stewardship responsibilities seriously. That means:

- Putting the conservation of wild salmon and salmon habitat—and thus the public interest—ahead of all other demands.
- Putting wild salmon first by funding the Wild Salmon Policy, stock-assessment, catch-reporting, enforcement, and environmental programs.
- Persuading governments to protect sockeye through precautionary (risk-averse) fisheries management—including a serious investment in live-capture, in-river fisheries—and by honoring (not abandoning) our habitat stewardship responsibilities.