

Juvenile salmon migration report; northern Strait of Georgia

— Hakai Institute Juvenile Salmon Program 2020 —

Aim

To provide in-season summaries of juvenile salmon migration characteristics and oceanographic conditions in the northern Strait of Georgia region in British Columbia, Canada.

Background

The Hakai Institute Juvenile Salmon Program was launched in the spring of 2015 in a collaborative partnership with UBC, SFU, University of Toronto, Salmon Coast Field Station, Pacific Salmon Foundation, and Fisheries and Oceans Canada. As of 2020, the program operates in the Discovery Islands (Figure 1) and thus provides information on the health of juvenile salmon after passage through:

- 1) Strait of Georgia – stratified high plankton biomass zone; and
- 2) Discovery Islands – highly-mixed low-plankton-biomass zone, and area of high wild-farmed fish interactions.

Program Objectives

- 1) Determine migration timing and pathways;
- 2) Migration habitat mapping - oceanographic conditions along the migration route;
- 3) Understand the dynamics of the plankton food-webs that underpin juvenile salmon growth and health;
- 4) Understand parasite and pathogen infection dynamics and their impact on juvenile salmon growth and health.

Key Parameters Reported

- Catch Statistics
- Lengths
- Parasite Presence
- Oceanographic Conditions

The following plots are subject to change as the underlying data are preliminary and subject to further quality assurance.

We are endeavouring to provide useful information for the entire salmon research community. As such we welcome any feedback. Please direct questions or comments to Brian Hunt (B.Hunt@oceans.ubc.ca), Julian Gan (Julian.Gan@hakai.org), and/or Brett Johnson (Brett.Johnson@hakai.org).

The Hakai Institute embraces an “Open Science Policy”; to that end you can review, make suggestions or report issues with the R code written to produce this report by visiting <https://github.com/HakaiInstitute/jsp-in-season-reports>

See our interactive data explorer for more information <https://hecate.hakai.org/shiny/JSP/>



Figure 1: Salmon sampling locations in the Discovery Islands and Johnstone Strait in 2019. The Discovery Islands sites (Inset B) remain unchanged, but Johnstone Strait (Inset A) is not being sampled in 2020.

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Migration Timing

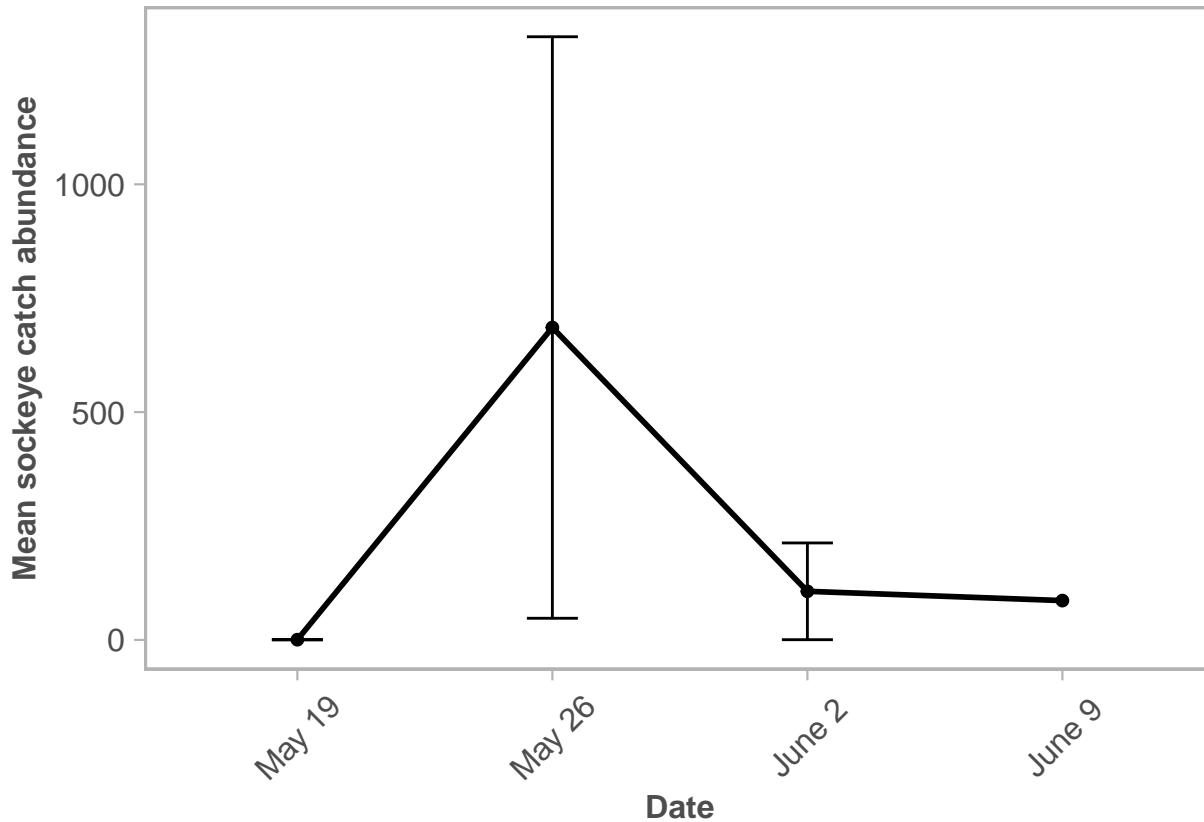


Figure 2: Average number (± 1 SE) of juvenile sockeye salmon caught in each seine in 2020, averaged over one-week periods for each region, and represented by the middle day of each week.

Fish lengths

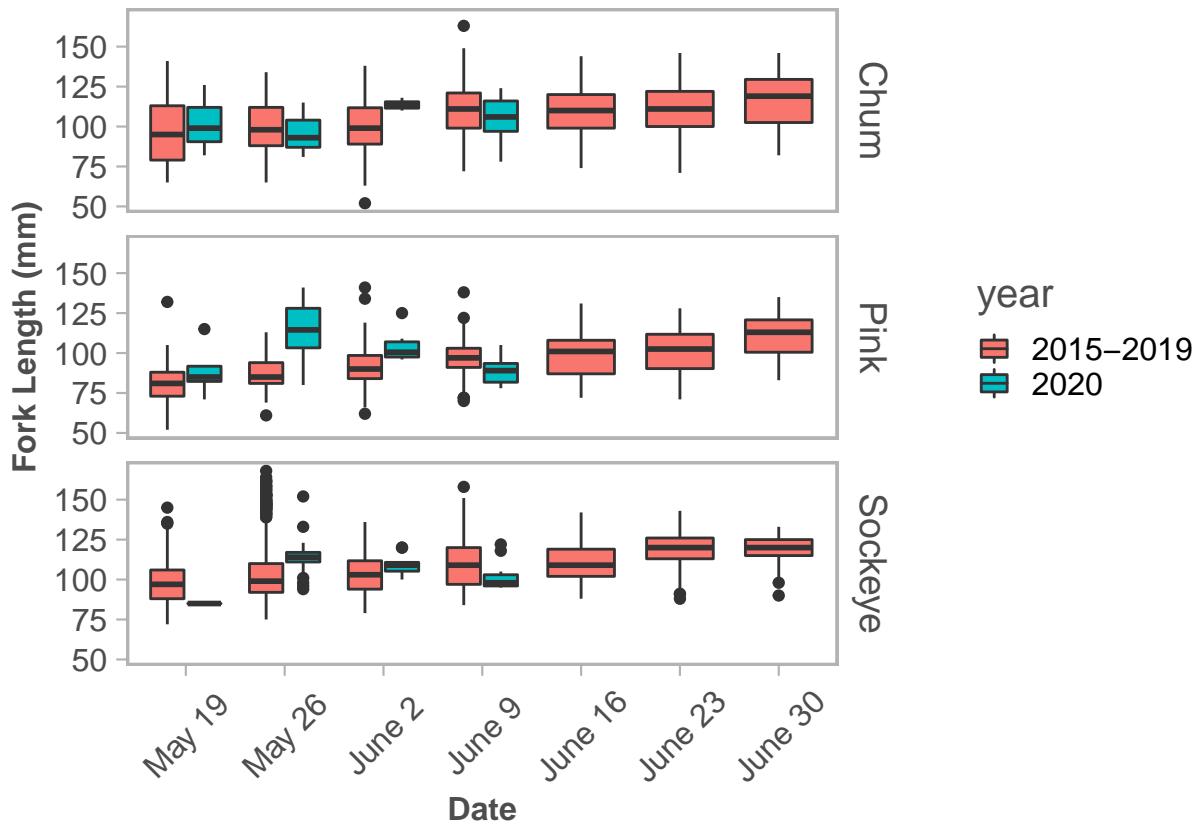


Figure 3: Fork-length boxplots of juvenile salmon in the Discovery Islands in 2020 grouped by week, and represented by the middle day of each week, compared to the average length from 2015–2019.

Parasite Presence

Juvenile chum, pink, and sockeye were visually inspected for sea lice. Inspection was conducted for all life stages (both attached and motile) that could be identified with the unaided eye.

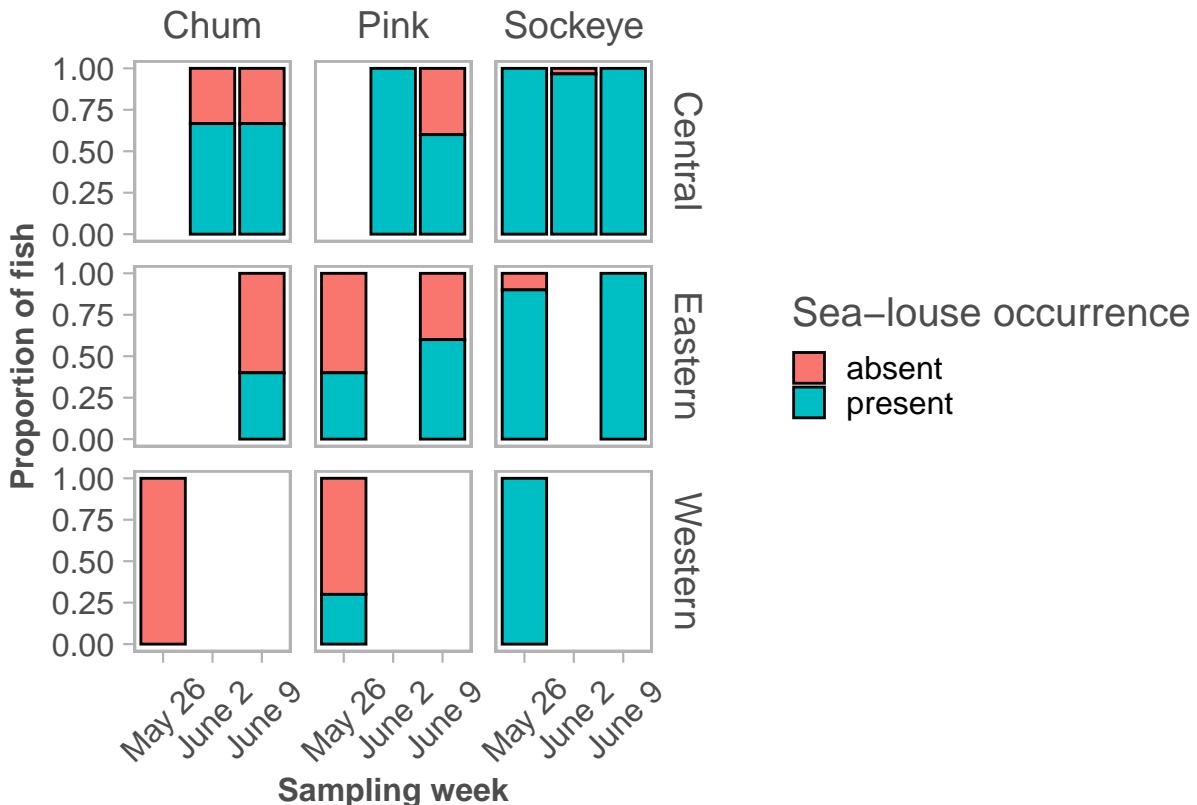


Figure 4: The proportion of juvenile chum, pink, and sockeye infected with at least one sea-louse of either *Lepeophtheirus salmonis* and *Caligus clemensi*, in the three sampling zones within the Discovery Islands, in 2020.

Oceanography

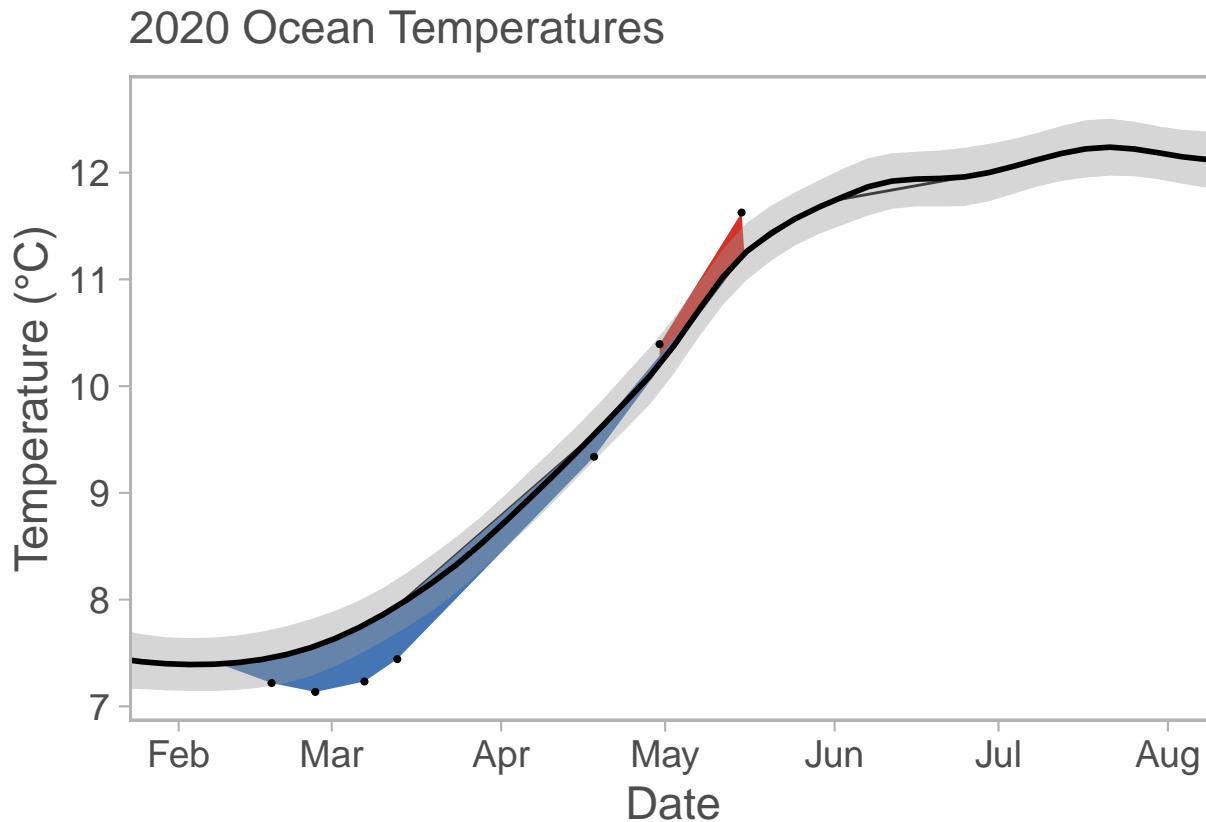


Figure 5: Ocean temperatures (top 30 m) at station QU39 in the northern Strait of Georgia between Quadra and Cortes Island. The solid black line is a LOESS regression based on temperatures from 2015-2019, representing the study period average. The shaded grey area is 1 SE of the LOESS regression. Blue areas represent temperatures from 2020 that are below average and red areas represent above-average temperatures.

Highlights

- The first sockeye recorded in the Discovery Islands was May 19th – several days earlier than in 2018 and 2019, but later than in 2015 and 2016.
- The majority of sockeye caught were infected with at least one sea-louse.
- Spring ocean temperatures are colder than the average over the past five years.