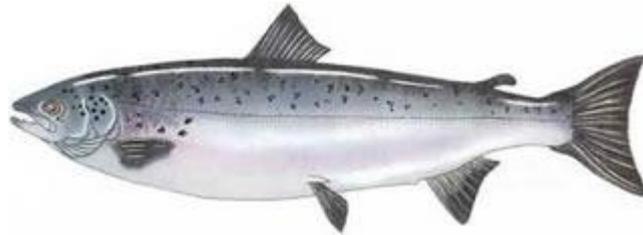


## AN BRADÁN FEASA

### THE SALMON OF KNOWLEDGE



The salmon is woven into our lives and into our history. This great fish has fed countless generations of our ancestors, was seen as a sacred animal and is an important symbol of a clean and healthy environment.

The story of 'An Bradán Feasa' is a part of native mythology. It is a tale of how Fionn Mac Cumhail, a great warrior, received the gift of '*fios*' or knowledge. According to our mythology the salmon ate nine hazelnuts that fell into the Well of Wisdom (known as *Tobar Segais*) from nine hazel trees that surrounded the well. By this act, the salmon gained all the world's knowledge. Moreover, the first person to eat of its flesh would, in turn, gain this knowledge. Through an accident or perhaps fate the young Fionn was the one who by eating the wise salmon gained its gifts.

Our ancestors saw the salmon as a very important wild animal. It has fed, nurtured and inspired them. Salmon was also seen as a magical fish that can live in two worlds, the freshwater of rivers and the saltwater of the sea. Perhaps because of its ability to live in two worlds it became associated with 'The Other World' or the Fairy Folk

### THE LIFE CYCLE OF THE SALMON

The lifecycle of the salmon is truly remarkable. Eggs are laid in clean gravel on the beds of fast flowing rivers and the young salmon or '**fry**' spend their first few years of life feeding on invertebrates in fast shallow riffles of these rocky streams. After two to three years in the river everything changes and the young salmon '**parr**' magically changes its body chemistry and becomes a silvery fish called a '**smolt**'. It is this fish that leaves rivers and enters the sea in the spring and early summer. They then begin an epic journey, in rare cases, going as far as Greenland to feed and grow before remarkably navigating back, not only to its native river but often within a few metres of where it was hatched! It truly is a salmon of knowledge!

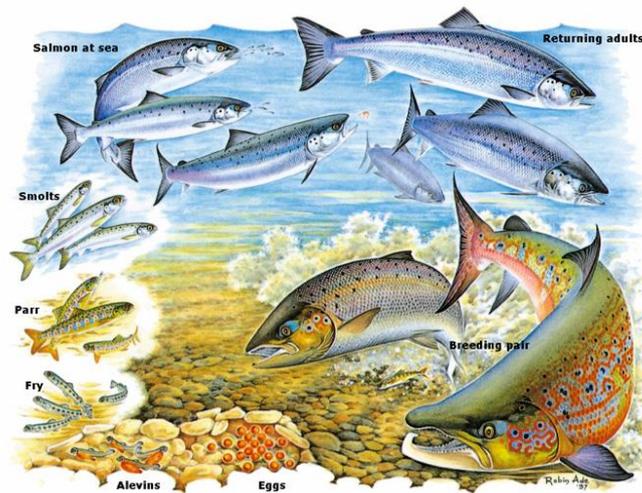


Image courtesy of Atlantic Salmon Trust

## OVERCOMING INSURMOUNTABLE ODDS

In the native Gaelic there is a saying: *'ag snámh in aghaidh an easa'* which means **'swimming against the waterfall'**. Often people think that it means an impossible task, but Salmon often successfully scale all but the greatest of waterfalls in order to return to their home stream to spawn. Perhaps *'ag snámh in aghaidh an easa'* is a metaphor with the wise fish saying "don't give up and persevere in the things you should do."

## SALMON NEED CLEAN WATER AND HEALTHY GLENS

Salmon and their close cousin, trout, inhabit all The Glen's rivers and have done so for thousands of years. Salmon and trout need clean fast flowing rivers in which to live.

Pollution from farm runoff, septic tanks, sewage works and chemicals from things like sheep dip are the main threats to the health of the rivers in which the salmon live.

Erosion along grazed river is also sometimes an issue, but this can be repaired by planting of native riverside trees which strengthen the banks, while roots trailing in the water creating hiding places for fish and a range of other animals.

YOU CAN FIND OUT MANY MORE COOL FACTS ABOUT THE BIOLOGY OF SALMON ON:

[www.atlanticsalmontrust.org/learning-zone/index.html](http://www.atlanticsalmontrust.org/learning-zone/index.html)

YOU CAN FIND OUT MORE ABOUT AN BRADÁN FEASA AND FIONN MAC CUMHAILL ON:

English: <http://www.askaboutireland.ie/learning-zone/primary-students/3rd-+4th-class/english-3rd-+4th-class/the-salmon-of-knowledge/index.xml>

Gaeilge: [www.askaboutireland.ie/learning-zone/primary-students/3rd-+4th-class/irish-3rd-+4th-class/scealta/an-bradan-feasa/](http://www.askaboutireland.ie/learning-zone/primary-students/3rd-+4th-class/irish-3rd-+4th-class/scealta/an-bradan-feasa/)