

Where to Spawn

Salmon are anadromous fish, which means they begin life in freshwater, then migrate to the ocean where they grow up. Then they return to their natal (or birth) fresh waters to spawn and die. Salmon *know* the concept of home more organically than any other species.

In August 1959, when I was 10, my family moved to California. The population was 16 million. Months later we went to the 1960 Winter Olympics near Lake Tahoe, which became the metaphorical ocean where I grew up, the one spot I homed in on.

By 1975, at population 21 M, Judy, a fellow lifeguard on a Tahoe beach, often lamented the population growth by claiming, "Idaho is what Tahoe once was."

Two years later I moved to Idaho for law school. Her population was 883,000. *I'll be damned*, I thought from my perch on a Sun Valley ski lift. Judy was right. Although there was no lake in sight from the top of Baldy, an organic sensation of "home" enveloped me as I scanned the sparsely populated, snow-painted horizon. I decided to spawn in the non-natal stream I was navigating.

People now arrive in Idaho in droves, and the population is pushing 2 million. Nevertheless, I retain that innate sense of home here, as if I'd been born a sock-eye in a freshwater Idaho stream in a previous life.

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Prompt: Concept of Home