

Plamu

Atlantic SALMON in Middle River

UINR has been researching salmon in Middle River since 2011. Salmon are complicated fish. They live in both freshwater and ocean water.

Our primary goal is to learn about the small salmon migrating out of Middle River. These small salmon are called smolt and they leave Middle River to feed and grow in the ocean before coming back to Middle River to reproduce. UINR also works with the Dalhousie University and Cape Breton University to see where these smolt are going. So far, we have learned:

- Smolt leave Middle River when they are two to three years old. Most leave at three years and two years, but a few stay until they are four years old.
- Smolt leave when the water temperature is between 5 and 10°C. This is different from other rivers where smolt are known to leave when the water is at 10°C.
- The size of smolt when they leave Middle River is 10 to 16 cm (4 to 6 inches) and are 11 to 40 grams (up to 1 ounce).
- Other fish common to Middle River include smelt and brown, brook and rainbow trout.
- We are unsure if all smolt that leave Middle River leave the Bras d'Or Lakes.



UINR is currently working on tagging salmon that have already reproduced. These salmon are known as kelts, slinks or black salmon. Transmitters were placed inside 20 kelts. So far, these kelts left Middle River. We will not know where they end up until later this year.

In the next year or so we will learn how many Middle River smolt die at sea, and how many return to reproduce. We do this by estimating how many smolt left the river and counting how many adult salmon return the next one to two years.

UINR is also working on communication material on salmon life cycle and the story of salmon in Middle River. In 2016 we will have a placemat available in several restaurants in Cape Breton and in 2017, a children's book that shares both Mi'kmaq traditional knowledge and research results will be made available to the Mi'kmaq school libraries.



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