

# Physical features of King salmon

**SLO:** Students will be able to identify the different parts of the King salmon and explain how they help the King salmon to survive.

## INTRODUCTION:

King salmon are anadromous – they are born in fresh water, spend most of their life in sea water then migrate to fresh water again to spawn. In order to survive in both fresh and salt water, King salmon have a number of physical adaptations that enable them to survive.

## WHAT YOU WILL NEED:

- Physical features of King salmon information sheet – 1 per student
- Physical features of King salmon activity sheet – 1 per student
- Paper for making posters

## ONLINE VERSION:

[kingsalmon.co.nz/ed/activity25](https://kingsalmon.co.nz/ed/activity25)

## ACTIVITY:

This activity involves students exploring the external anatomy of the King salmon and researching what role each part plays in how the fish moves.



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### Colour

The colour of wild King salmon changes depending on whether they are in salt water or fresh water. At smolt stage they have a silvery coating which protects them from predators and also helps in the transition between fresh water and sea water.

Two special external features of King salmon are its scales and the lateral line.

### Scales

Unlike many other fish, King salmon scales are very soft and almost part of the skin. Believe it or not scales can show growth rings just like trees, so we can tell how old a fish is by the number of rings.

### Lateral line

The lateral line on a King salmon is a line of cells which can detect pressure and also sense movement and objects in water.

King salmon have a streamlined body so they can move through water with ease and also up rivers.

### Nostrils

Nostrils are used by King salmon just like ours to smell scent, to smell danger and recognise the scents from their birth place. This can help them work out their way home. We smell scent in the air but fish smell scents in the water.

### Gills

King salmon need gills to absorb dissolved oxygen from the water. This enables them to breathe (instead of using lungs). They do this by opening their mouth and taking in water. This water then flows over the gills.

### Fins

The caudal fin (tail) pushes from side to side is used for balance and helps to push through water. Female King salmon use the tail to dig a redd (nest) to lay their eggs.

Just along from the tail on top is the adipose fin, with no known purpose.

The dorsal fin is on the very top and acts like a keel on a ship to keep the King salmon upright. It also controls the direction the fish moves in.

Two pectoral fins are situated at the front on the bottom. The pelvic fins are underneath the dorsal fin. Both pectoral and pelvic fins are used for steering and balance, as well as helping the King salmon move up and down in the water.

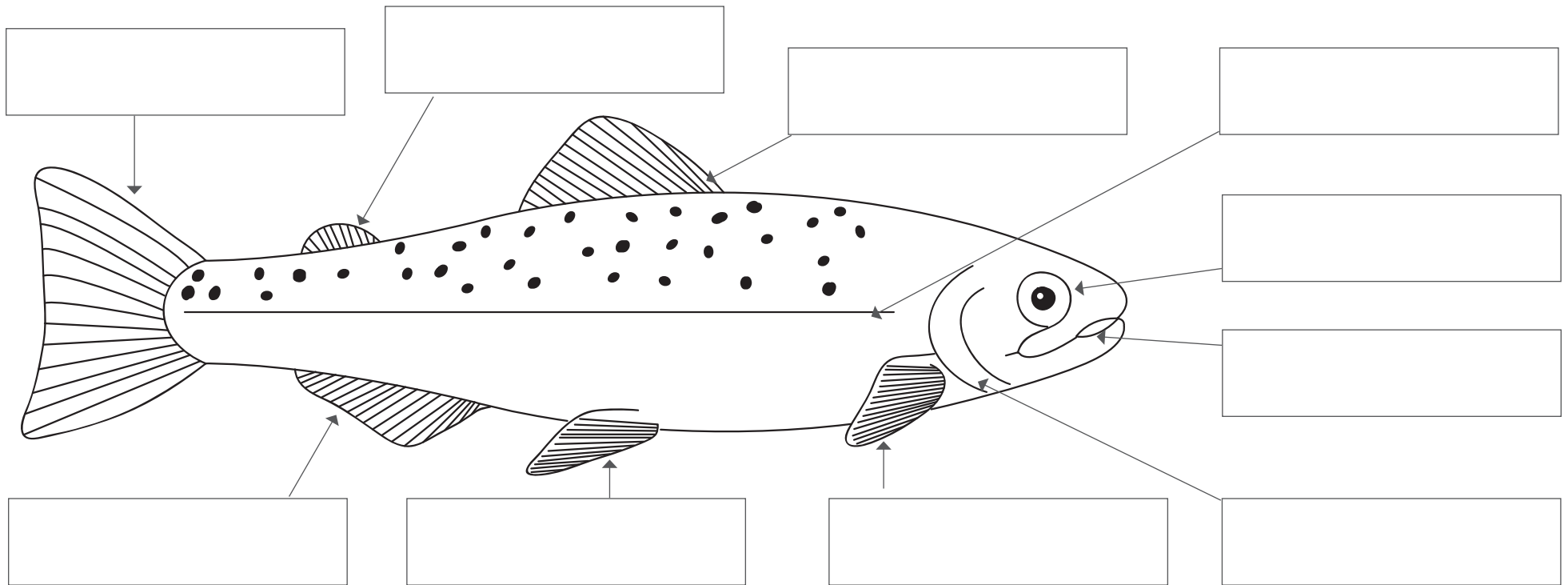
The anal fin sits on the bottom near the tail and helps keep the fish stable and upright.

# ACTIVITY SHEET

## Physical features of King salmon

1. Read the Physical features of King salmon information sheet and label the external (outside) parts of the King salmon below with these features:

- Dorsal fin
- Eye
- Mouth
- Pectoral fins
- Anal fin
- Caudal fin
- Adipose fin
- Pelvic fins
- Gills
- Lateral line



2. Make a poster to explain the parts of the King salmon (physical adaptations) and how these help them to survive.

# ANSWERS SHEET

## Physical features of King salmon

1. Read the information sheet about the physical adaptations of the King salmon and how these help the King salmon to survive, and label the external (outside) parts of the King salmon with these features:

- Dorsal fin
- Caudal fin
- Eye
- Adipose fin
- Mouth
- Pelvic fins
- Pectoral fins
- Gills
- Anal fin
- Lateral line

