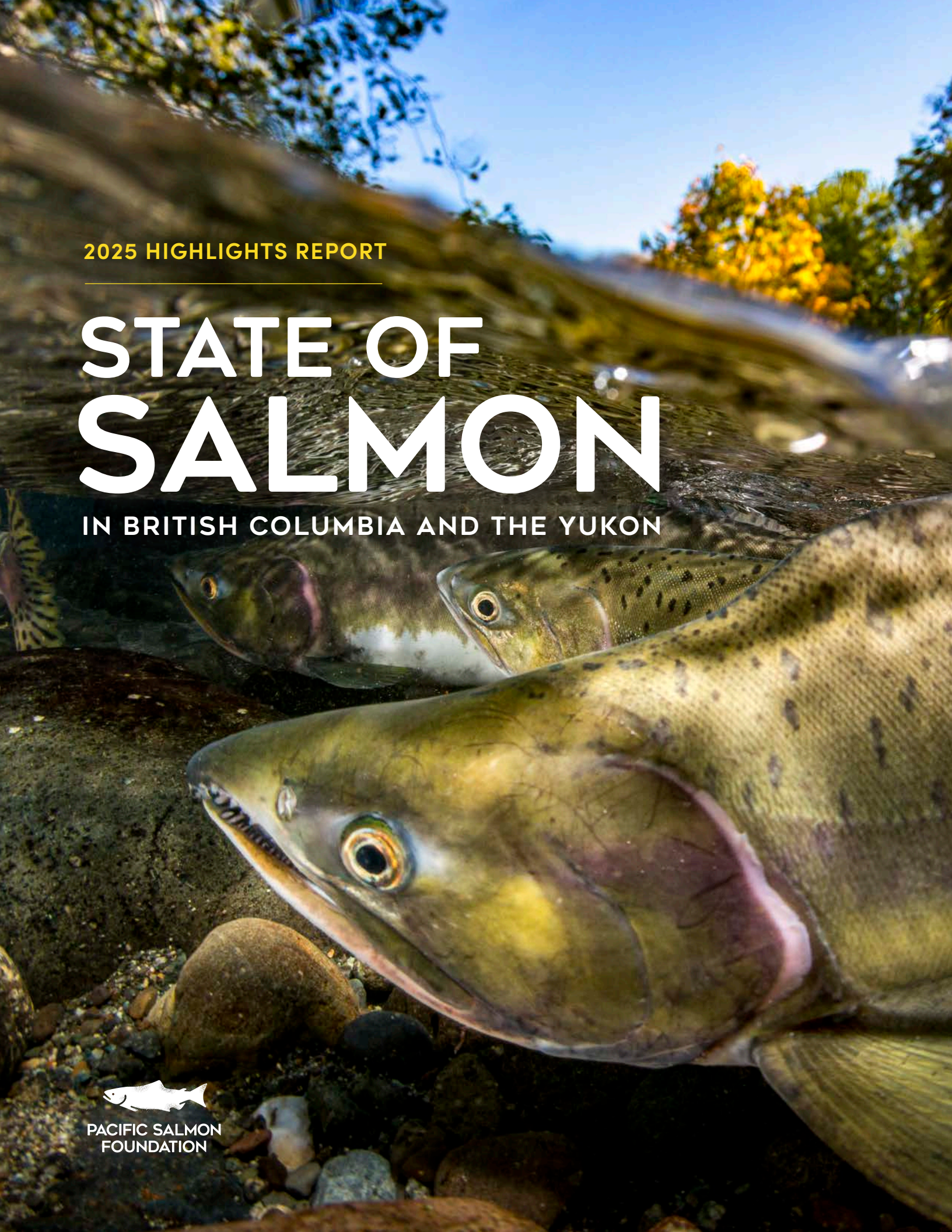


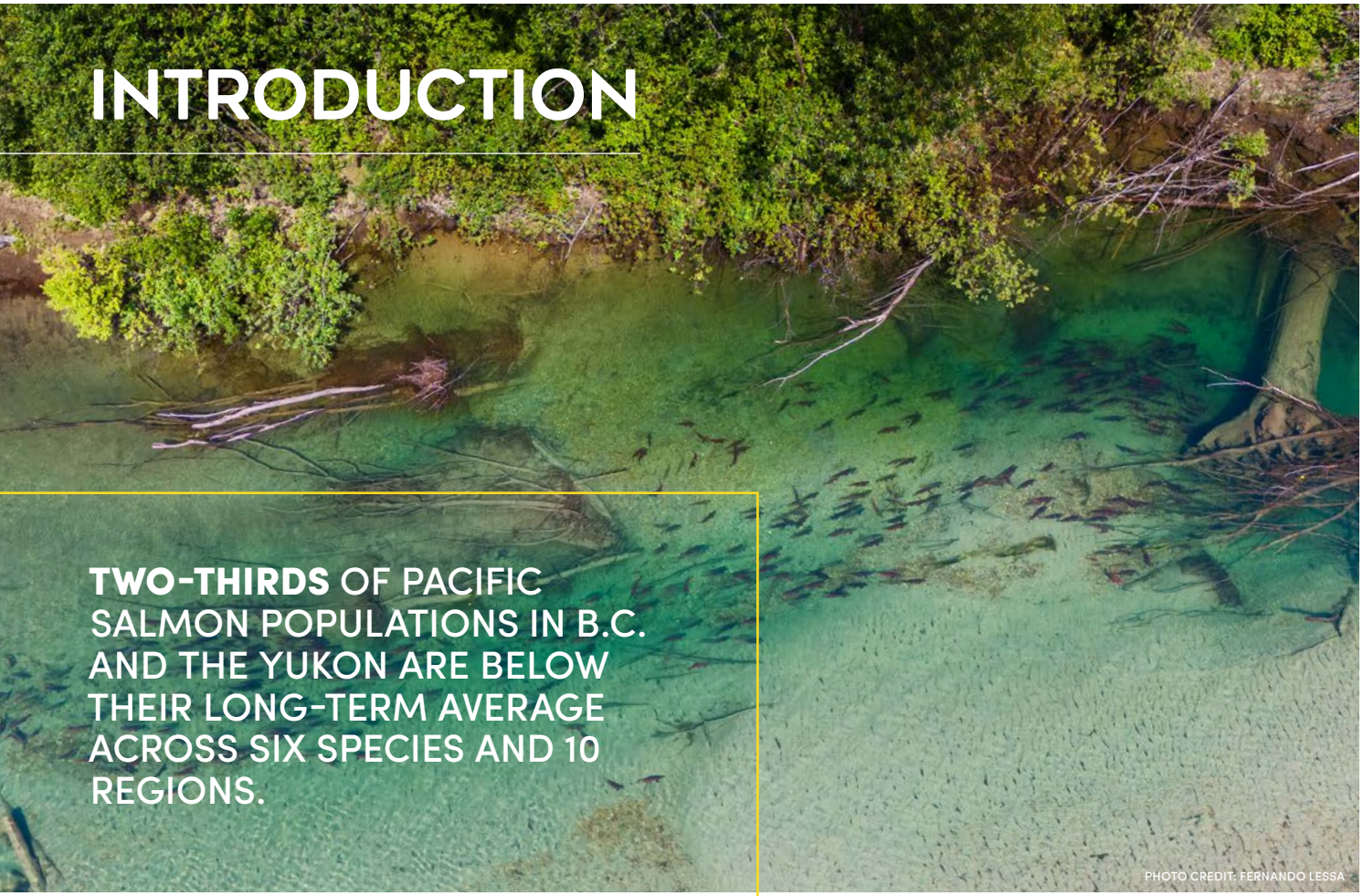
2025 HIGHLIGHTS REPORT

STATE OF SALMON

IN BRITISH COLUMBIA AND THE YUKON

PACIFIC SALMON FOUNDATION

INTRODUCTION



TWO-THIRDS OF PACIFIC SALMON POPULATIONS IN B.C. AND THE YUKON ARE BELOW THEIR LONG-TERM AVERAGE ACROSS SIX SPECIES AND 10 REGIONS.

PHOTO CREDIT: FERNANDO LESSA

SUMMARY

The Pacific Salmon Foundation's (PSF) State of Salmon 2025 Report provides a data-driven overview of the state and trends for six species of Pacific salmon, including steelhead, throughout British Columbia and the Yukon. The State of Salmon Report guides PSF's work, both on the ground and behind the scenes, to strengthen resilience and advance recovery of salmon populations for generations to come.

This report critically examines the best available data across salmon species throughout B.C. and the Yukon and provides a summary designed to prompt important dialogues and inspire action.

This Highlights Report summarizes key findings from the State of Salmon 2025 Report and presents a snapshot of how each species is doing across distinct regions in B.C. and the Yukon.

Overall, the state of salmon remains critical as two-thirds of Pacific salmon populations in B.C. and the Yukon are below their long-term average abundance. Yet, the Report highlights some recent improvements and reasons for hope.

WHAT'S NEW IN 2025

Building on the inaugural 2024 Report, this year's edition highlights signs of recovery – and areas of conservation concern.

The State of Salmon 2025 Report also improved data sources where possible to ensure findings were robust. The inaugural report covered nine regions. This year, PSF expanded to 10 regions by separating the original 'Vancouver Island & Mainland Inlets' region into distinct East and West regions to better reflect the unique ecology and salmon biodiversity in these areas.

This Highlights Report is intended to provide a high-level summary of the full State of Salmon Report. To explore the State of Salmon in more detail, visit stateofsalmon.ca

Special thanks to the Province of B.C. and Sitka Foundation for supporting the State of Salmon 2025 Report.

KEY FINDINGS

Although some regional salmon populations show signs of recovery, two-thirds remain below their long-term average.

Some species have seen promising rebounds in some southern regions. For example, Chinook spawner abundance is 32 to 236 per cent above average among the three south coast regions – West Vancouver Island, East Vancouver Island & Mainland Inlets, and the Fraser. Meanwhile, most salmon populations on the north and central coast remain severely depressed. While hopeful, recent gains for some species and regions need to be viewed in light of widespread, historical declines and the growing challenges salmon face due to climate change.

Increasing numbers of sockeye and Chinook are bringing renewed hope for some salmon-dependent communities and ecosystems.

After years of closures, sockeye fisheries are reopening in places like the Skeena. In the Columbia, sockeye recovery is surpassing expectations. Some Chinook returns to Vancouver Island and the Fraser are also showing promise, though not all populations in these regions are rebounding.

Pink salmon are proving their resilience, returning in large numbers across many regions.

These short-lived fish are thriving – thanks in part to favourable ocean conditions. While these increases are encouraging, the growing numbers of pink salmon and the fisheries that target them can pose risks to other co-migrating species like sockeye.

While most salmon species seem to be struggling in northern and central regions, data gaps make it hard to know just how serious and widespread the declines are.

Reduced monitoring has created uncertainty in regions like the Central Coast, Haida Gwaii, and Northern Transboundary. Still, the available data point to conservation concerns and highlight an urgent need to protect these fish.

ILLUSTRATIONS:
AIMÉE VAN DRIMMELEN

BY THE NUMBERS

PHOTO CREDIT: FERNANDO LESSA

The following chart depicts the current state of salmon for each species across all regions of British Columbia and the Yukon. Each fish icon shows the per cent difference in current spawner abundance over the most recent generation compared to their long-term averages. The fish icons assigned a '!' are critically low and at risk of local extinction.

WHAT IS SPAWNER ABUNDANCE?

Spawner abundance is the number of salmon that make it back to their spawning grounds to reproduce and contribute to the next generation. Spawners also transport nutrients inland and meet ecological needs within watersheds. Understanding spawner abundance is therefore important to inform conservation planning.

	Chinook	Chum	Coho	Pink	Sockeye	Steelhead
Yukon	-50%	-74%	?	Species Not Present		
Northern Transboundary	-46%	-76%	-14%	-84%	+34%	?
Haida Gwaii	?	-67%	-76%	-30%	-3%	?
Nass	-16%	+118%	+74%	+564%	+49%	-13%
Skeena	-50%	-84%	-6%	+237%	+29%	-41%
Central Coast	+10%	-57%	-18%	-24%	-44%	?
East Vancouver Island & Mainland Inlets	+236%	-58%	+20%	+164%	-13%	-44%
West Vancouver Island	+32%	-42%	-2%	-89%	+11%	-34%
Fraser	+45%	-29%	+104%	+110%	+8%	-81%
Columbia	!	Species Not Present			+187%	!

PHOTO CREDIT: JASON V

SPECIES AT A GLANCE

Pacific salmon have unique life histories across species and regions. The State of Salmon Report helps identify where salmon are showing resilience, recovery, and where they are in decline. The following snapshot summarizes the current state of each of the six Pacific salmon species found in B.C. and the Yukon.

Chinook

Chinook are below average in northern regions, while southern regions have increased above average in recent years. Yukon Chinook numbers have been decreasing since the mid-1990s, but significant declines since 2015 have prompted a recent moratorium on all fishing of Chinook in the mainstem Yukon River and Canadian tributaries. Similar declines are evident in the Northern Transboundary, Nass, and Skeena regions. In contrast, southern populations—West Vancouver Island, East Vancouver Island & Mainland Inlets, Central Coast, and Fraser—are well above long-term averages. Many of these populations are boosted by strong ocean survival, and, in some cases, hatchery production, though reliance on hatcheries may hinder long-term recovery of wild stocks. Columbia River Chinook remain critically low, and are at imminent risk of local extinction.

Chum

Chum salmon have experienced the most precipitous declines of any species with spawner abundance below the long-term average in all regions except the Nass. The largest declines are found in the northernmost regions, including the Yukon, Northern Transboundary, Haida Gwaii, and Skeena. Historically, chum salmon were a mainstay of commercial fisheries in Canada, providing the greatest annual catch by weight of any species. It's not clear why chum salmon have experienced such dramatic declines. However, the crash is not isolated to Canadian rivers, suggesting that changes in the broader North Pacific may be contributing to their decline.

Sockeye

Sockeye spawner abundance is above average in two-thirds of regions, but the species faces a challenging road to recovery. Sockeye salmon show mixed abundances across regions. In the Columbia, sockeye exemplify the resilience of salmon, having recovered to well-above the long-term average from near-extinction in the 1990s. Conversely, sockeye are well below the long-term average on the Central Coast, which historically claimed one of the largest salmon runs in the province. These populations have plummeted, and all major commercial sockeye fisheries in the region have been curtailed. Sockeye spawner abundances in the Nass and Skeena regions are above the long-term average, but total abundance remains below average, with catches having steadily declined since the 1990s.

Steelhead

Steelhead have the lowest absolute abundance of all six species and are below the long-term average in all regions assessed. Many populations face an imminent risk of extinction, including in the Fraser where two populations are listed as Endangered by the Committee on the Status of Endangered Wildlife in Canada. In general, data on steelhead abundance are limited, and there were no data for steelhead in the Northern Transboundary, Haida Gwaii, or Central Coast.

Pink

Pink salmon are well-above average in the Nass, Skeena, East Vancouver Island & Mainland Inlets, and the Fraser, with strong returns expected in 2025. Pink salmon have a short two-year lifecycle, and their abundance tends to fluctuate more than other species in response to ocean conditions. The impressive returns of pink salmon in some regions are a likely result of favourable ocean conditions, as well as a strong parent generation. Pink salmon also spend the least time in freshwater of any species, minimizing their exposure to some of the climate changes that are adversely affecting other salmon species during their freshwater life stages. However, this boom is not universal. In the Northern Transboundary, Haida Gwaii, and Central Coast regions, for example, pink salmon are below their long-term average.

Coho

Coho are below the long-term average in many regions, but in the Nass and Fraser both spawner and total abundances are above average. A widespread coho crash occurred in the late 1990s, reportedly due to poor ocean conditions and low marine survival. By the early 2000s, many populations had recovered, though total abundance and commercial catches have remained low relative to historical rates. Recently, coho abundance has diverged among regions, with current abundance below the long-term average in the Northern Transboundary, Haida Gwaii, Skeena, Central Coast, and West Vancouver Island. Meanwhile, coho are above average in the Nass, East Vancouver Island & Mainland Inlets, and Fraser regions. In the Fraser, increases over the last generation have pushed abundances to levels not seen since the late 1990s. Harvest reductions under Interior Fraser Coho recovery plans may be showing results, but simultaneous booms in Chinook and other species in the Strait of Georgia point to improved early marine conditions as another likely factor.

PHOTO CREDIT: JASON CHING

MORE DATA
AND STORIES AT
STATEOFSALMON.CA

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FRONT + BACK COVER
PHOTO CREDIT: EIKO JONES