

Kokanee Salmon Facts

Kokanee are land-locked sockeye salmon. This means that they do not travel to the ocean and return inland to spawn, instead they complete their entire life cycle in Lake Coeur d'Alene.

Their life cycle is 4 years long. At the fourth year, they spawn on the gravel shores of Lake Coeur d'Alene (especially Wolf Lodge Bay) and then die.

The eagle arrival in November and December is tied to the spawning of the kokanee.

Kokanee were introduced to Lake Coeur d'Alene in the 1930s.

Chinook salmon are the main predators of kokanee.

Kokanee feed almost exclusively on zooplankton, tiny aquatic animals from the size of a pinprick to the size of a small fish hook. They will also eat tiny plants, insects, and freshwater shrimp when available.

They strain zooplankton from the water by means of many fine combs on the gills called gill rakers.

In late fall kokanee begin to spawn. Females lay their eggs in clean gravel on the lake shore in a "nest" called a redd.

Erosion of sediment into the lake can destroy spawning habitat.

Fry (baby kokanee) live in the gravel for almost one month, they then move to open water and form schools.

Kokanee mature between 3-5 years old when they will spawn and the life cycle starts over.

Prefer cooler waters between 15 and 90 feet below the water surface.

Move up to the surface at dawn and dusk to feed on zooplankton and insects.

