



Hi! I'm Lily, the mascot of the City of Eugene's Stormwater Education Program.

Do you love a mystery? Find out how paleontologists made a startling discovery about a species that lived in Oregon millions of years ago.



ANCIENT MYSTERY MAY HOLD CLUES TO THE FUTURE

It was ten feet long and weighed 500 pounds. It had huge fangs and prowled the rivers and oceans of the Pacific Northwest until it became extinct over 5 million years ago. Who was this monster? This giant creature was the **saber toothed salmon!** Discovered in fossils sites in Oregon and California, the saber toothed salmon (*Smilodonichthys rastrosus*) was a distant cousin of the salmon who swim in our rivers today.

Scientists first made this exciting discovery in 1917, when they unearthed teeth and skull fragments of a previously unknown fish. In 1950 and 1964, more complete fossil specimens of the fish were collected in northeastern Oregon. The life of the saber toothed salmon still remains somewhat of a mystery. Studying the fossil remains has provided a few clues; scientists think the salmon migrated from freshwater to the sea and fed on small ocean organisms. The saber toothed salmon also lived at the same time as *Oncorhynchus*, the ancestor of our modern day salmon.

Despite all of the study done on this unique salmon, one thing remains a mystery. Why



The saber toothed salmon as depicted by artist Ray Troll. Poster available at www.trollart.com.

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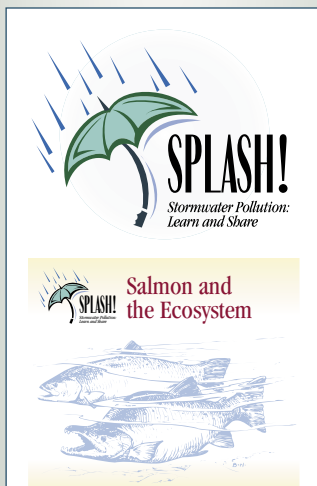
did this salmon become extinct? Like the giant mastodons and saber toothed tigers, the saber toothed salmon did not survive the massive extinctions that occurred in the Cenozoic era. Was it a cataclysmic climate change? Was it habitat destruction or competition for food?

Studying lessons of the past can help predict what could happen in the future. Today,

salmon are at risk. Destruction of habitat, polluted rivers, overfishing, and hydroelectric dams have all been factors in the decline of salmon populations. Global warming, acid rain and increases in human populations will continue to put pressure on a threatened species. Will modern day salmon adapt and survive or will they become an extinct relic like their ancient ancestor?

Fossils of this fascinating creature can still be found in the Owyhee-Bruneau Canyonlands in northeastern Oregon.

Illustration used with permission from the University of Oregon Museum of Natural and Cultural History



Teachers: For more information about SPLASH! Stormwater Learn and Share, and Salmon and the Ecosystem, call 682-8482.



SPLASH! Songs a hit in local schools

Teachers who attended a recent workshop got the latest update of the SPLASH! (Stormwater Pollution Learn and Share) curriculum and a new CD produced as a learning tool to help kids learn more about water quality issues. **SPLASH! Songs** is a collection of songs about salmon, watersheds, rivers and the problems of water pollution. This upbeat and inspiring music, written and performed by local musician Rich Glauber, will have everyone singing and dancing. Teachers from Eugene's 4J and Bethel school districts can get a free copy of the CD to go along with the SPLASH! curriculum by calling 682-8482. The SPLASH! curriculum is produced by the City of Eugene's Stormwater Management Program to encourage environmental stewardship.