

Salmon Otolith Collection Protocol

The otoliths (ear stones) are located within the brain cavity of the fish, which is approximately 1.5-2" back from the eyes and 1-1.5" down from the top of the head. There are two otoliths located on either side of the brain in posterior pockets.

Photo sources: Megan Brady, 2016 WDFW Chinook Otolith Technician

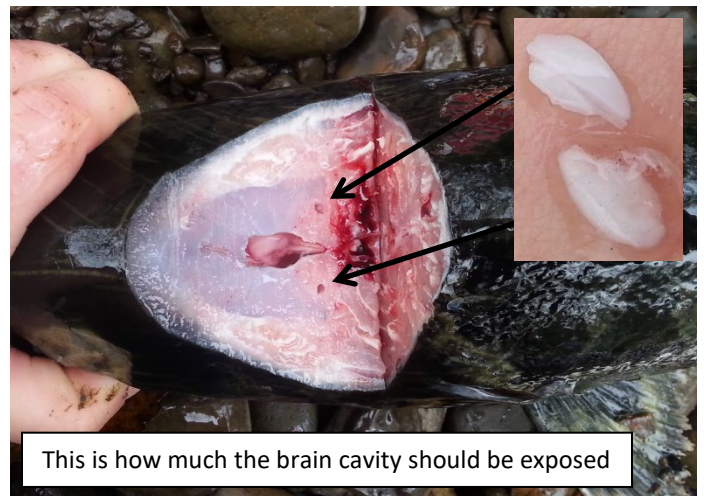
1. Use a sharp, preferably serrated blade to cut straight down 1.5" in front of the top of the operculum.



2. Slice perpendicular to your first cut to remove the top of the fish's head at a depth of 1.25". Any deeper and you may cut the brain and potentially break the otoliths. You can always slice more off later if needed.



3. When the top of the brain cavity is just barely exposed, you can use tweezers/hemostats to gently remove the otoliths from the two pockets located to the left and right just behind the brain.



4. Remove the membrane from each otolith before placing both otoliths in one sample vial.

