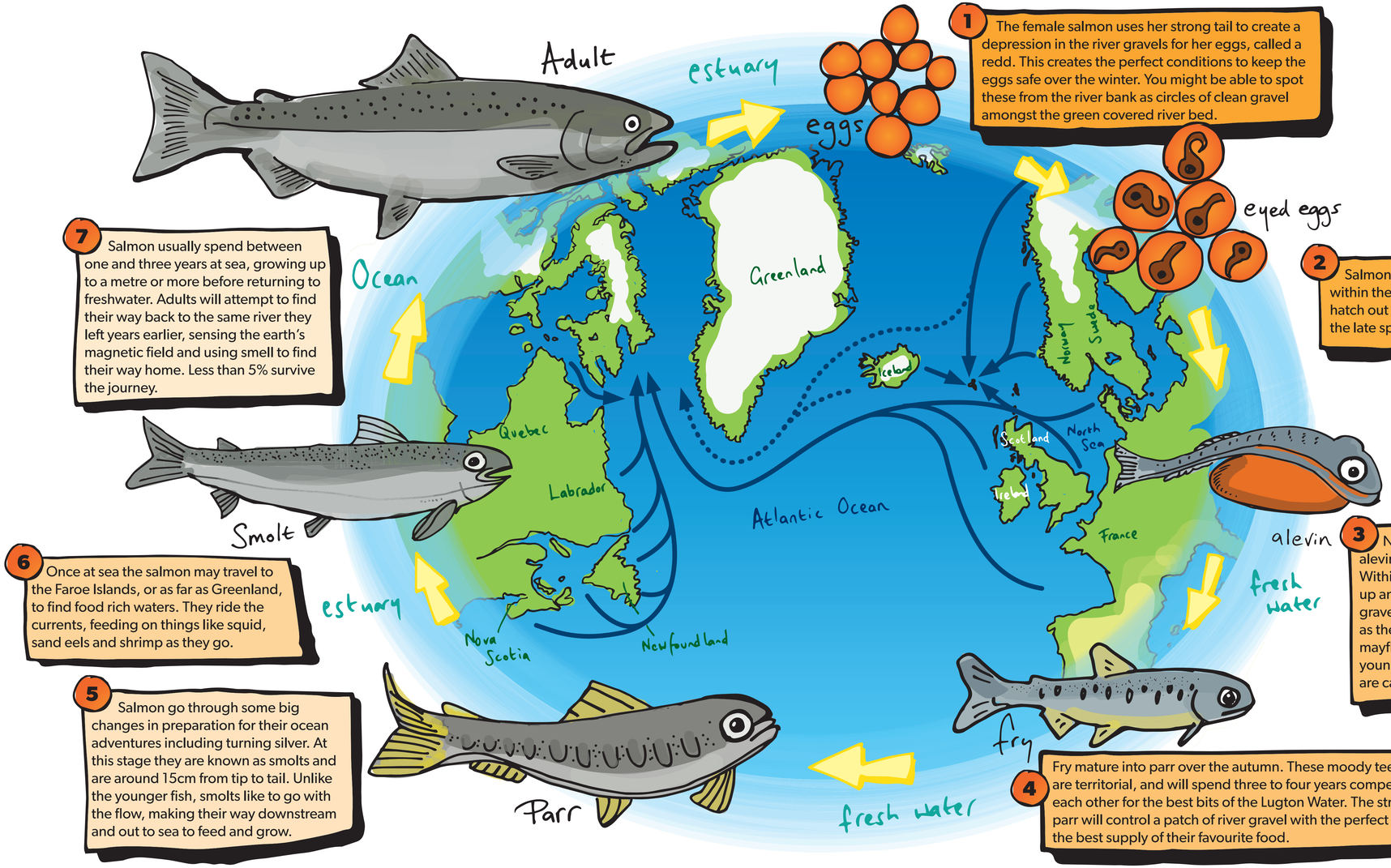

1 The female salmon uses her strong tail to create a depression in the river gravels for her eggs, called a redd. This creates the perfect conditions to keep the eggs safe over the winter. You might be able to spot these from the river bank as circles of clean gravel amongst the green covered river bed.

2 Salmon eggs, hidden deep within the river bed over the winter, hatch out into the Lugton Water in the late spring.

3 Newly hatched salmon are called alevin and carry a yolk sack for food. Within a short time, the yolk is used up and they emerge from the river gravels to feed on tiny creatures such as the underwater larvae of caddisflies, mayflies and stoneflies. These hungry young fish, swimming for the first time, are called fry.

4 Fry mature into parr over the autumn. These moody teenagers are territorial, and will spend three to four years competing with each other for the best bits of the Lugton Water. The strongest parr will control a patch of river gravel with the perfect flow and the best supply of their favourite food.

5 Salmon go through some big changes in preparation for their ocean adventures including turning silver. At this stage they are known as smolts and are around 15cm from tip to tail. Unlike the younger fish, smolts like to go with the flow, making their way downstream and out to sea to feed and grow.

6 Once at sea the salmon may travel to the Faroe Islands, or as far as Greenland, to find food rich waters. They ride the currents, feeding on things like squid, sand eels and shrimp as they go.

7 Salmon usually spend between one and three years at sea, growing up to a metre or more before returning to freshwater. Adults will attempt to find their way back to the same river they left years earlier, sensing the earth's magnetic field and using smell to find their way home. Less than 5% survive the journey.