The marine migration of post-spawning anadromous fish remains poorly understood. The present study examined survival and progression rates of anadromous brown trout Salmo trutta L. after spawning (kelts) during downriver, fjord, and sea migration. Kelts (n = 49) were captured in the Danish River Gudenaa, tagged with acoustic transmitters and subsequently recorded by automatic receivers. Kelts spent on average 25 d moving down the 45 km river and through the brackish fjord. The fish entered the Kattegat Sea between 14 April and 30 May. Eighteen of the 49 kelts disappeared in the river and fjord during outward migration, likely due to mortality. Survival was not significantly related to gill Na+/K+-ATPase activity, suggesting that physiological adaptation to saltwater may be less critical for adults compared to juveniles (smolts). Of the 31 fish that entered the Kattegat Sea, 45% survived and returned to the fjord. The duration of the entire marine migration, from leaving to entering the river, was on average 163 d. The fish returned from the Kattegat Sea to the fjord between 22 July and 21 October. Upon return, the fish spent 1–90 d passing through Randers Fjord, with most individuals completing the reach within 4 d, suggesting that the kelts spent limited time foraging after returning to the fjord. The total survival during the entire marine migration, including the fjord, was a minimum of 29%. Our study provides data that are important for management of anadromous brown trout, and the high survival highlights that kelts may represent a valuable resource for both population reproduction and recreational fisheries.

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