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NEWS

Waiting for the Water: The Salmon Gather

By Donna Vail November 12, 2026



Salmon circle in a pool on the Smith River, waiting for rain to raise the water level so they can continue upstream.



Salmon gather in the Smith River behind Donna Vail's home on South Bank Road, just downriver from Ruby Park.

There is a fascinating sight taking place in our local rivers. As salmon make their annual journey upstream, they can often be seen gathering in large groups, swimming in circles and moving around the same pools of water.

They aren't simply swimming aimlessly. When water levels are too low to navigate certain stretches of the river, the salmon gather in deeper pools and wait for rainfall to raise the water level. Once the river rises enough, they can continue their journey upstream toward the places where they were born to spawn.

Watching them circle beneath the surface is a remarkable reminder of the determination and instinct that drive these fish. They wait for the right conditions, sometimes for days, until nature provides a path forward.

It's one of those special moments in nature that reminds us to slow down, look a little closer, and appreciate the incredible things happening all around us.

Videos from Donna Vail's drone flights over the salmon in the Smith River are available at Triplicate.com.

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