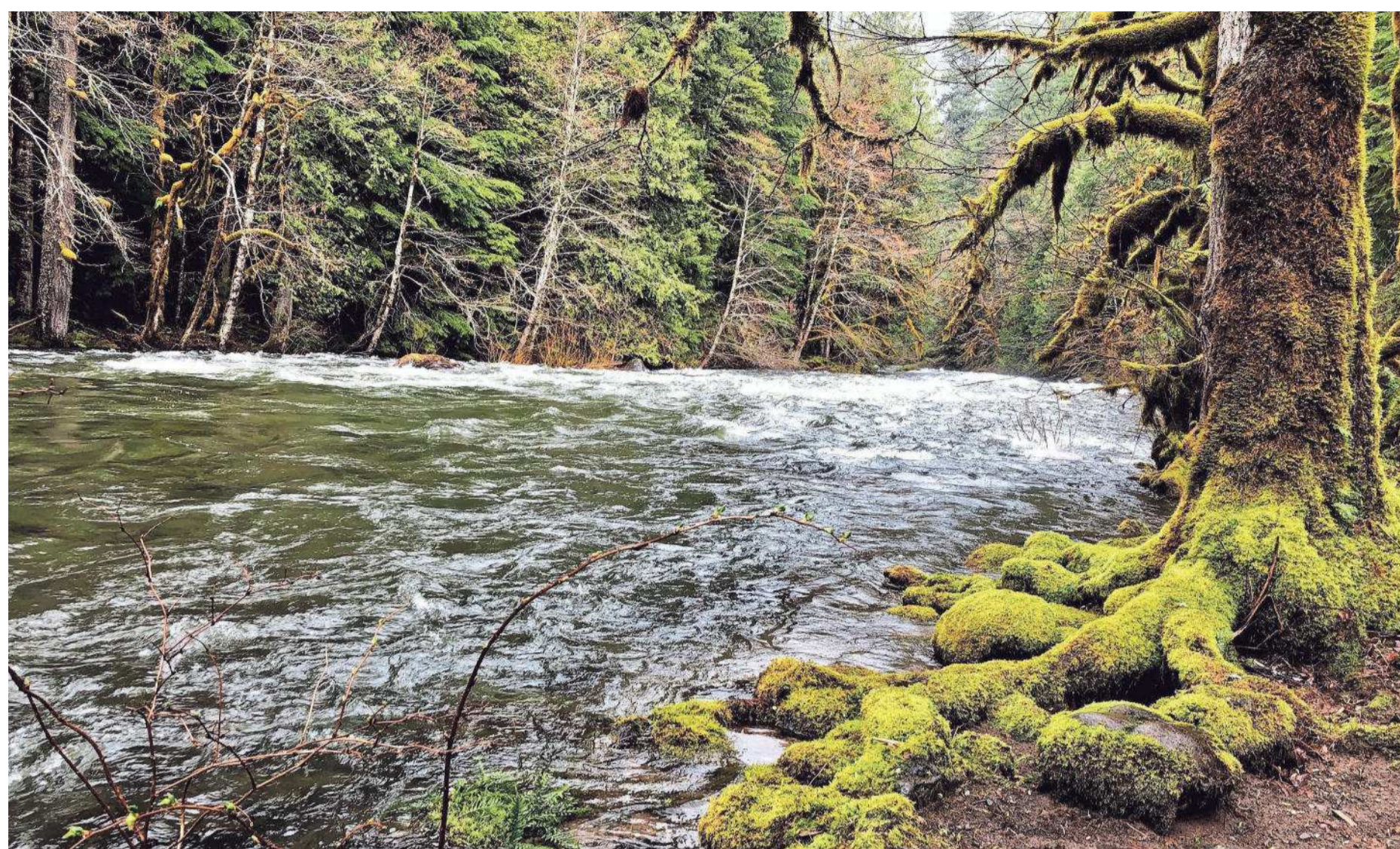


Outdoors



The Salmon River along the Old Salmon River Trail. BOBBIE SNEAD/SPECIAL TO THE STATESMAN JOURNAL

Flow of time

Explore the watershed at Old Salmon River Trail

Bobbie Snead
Special to Salem Statesman Journal
USA TODAY NETWORK

Rivers are hypnotic. As a kid growing up near one of Oregon's iconic rivers, I loved to steal away to a secret place under an old cottonwood tree and sit in silence as the mesmerizing current passed by. I found meaning in the river's perpetual flow.

Oregon is blessed with a multitude of pristine streams. 58 of them have been federally designated as Wild and Scenic. No other state has that many protected waterways. A great place to explore the banks of one of our free-flowing rivers is on the Old Salmon River Trail near Mt. Hood.

A soft drizzle falls from low hanging clouds as I close the car door and start down the trail. It is fitting weather for a hike in the temperate rainforest. Clumps of sodden moss hang heavily from branches as they release one single drip at a time. Tiny rivulets run down the muddy path ahead of me. I catch a glimpse of whitewater between the trees. As I wind my way past huge Douglas firs and descend to the shoreline, I am reminded that a river is more than just water. Every living thing in its watershed is part of the river's identity.

As the Salmon River first trickles out from the Palmer Glacier it has in its destiny a journey in which it will dampen lush meadows where elk graze and sandhill cranes nest. It will tumble

If you go

Directions: Drive Highway 26 east toward Mt. Hood. In the tiny town of Zig Zag, turn south onto Salmon River Road. Drive 2.7 miles to the marked trailhead on the right.

Length: 3 miles round trip

Duration: 2 hours

Elevation gain: 100 feet

Age range: suitable for all ages

through a narrow gorge where mist-moistened ferns cling to vertical rock walls. It will glide under overhanging cedar branches that sweep down from immense tree trunks in an ancient forest. The river's pace will slow through calm pools and over gravel bars where its namesake fish spawn each year. A river and the land that it drains form a living community where all the inhabitants are connected by the common water course. River and watershed are one and the same.

The fluid notes of river music fill my ears as I step to the water's edge. A green blur of liquid motion rushes by. Frothy waves part around emergent rocks as eddies swirl back on themselves. An American dipper flies low over the water and lands on a midstream rock. The small gray bird bobs up and down re-

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An old growth western red cedar along the Old Salmon River Trail.

A murder of crows, by crows and for crows

Henry Miller
Special to Salem Statesman Journal
USA TODAY NETWORK

"I think it might be shredded chicken," I said looking at the shards of grayish, stringy meat that I had just flushed out of the birdbath with the garden hose.

"No, wait, wrong color."

"It's pulled pork."

It is at times such as these that you feel like the coroner in a cop show when the lead detective asks if you've "checked the stomach contents of the victim."

As the weather warms, it's a busy time for one of the most prolific, and fascinating species of wildlife in our neighborhood, American crows.

So many cookouts, picnics and events going on, so little time ... with most of the pilfered leftovers washed, or lost, in the aforementioned birdbath by

tribal members of the clan *Corvus brachyrhynchos*.

Occasionally, the seasonal summer revelries will lead to an overstuffed dumpster or trash can, and the crows will eagerly break into the exposed trash bags, then drag out and scatter the contents.

"Looks like they had KFC at the church picnic last night," I'll muse, picking a drumstick bone out of the cement basin with a nitrile-gloved hand. "By the looks of what's still in the water, it was extra crispy."

Crows are smart and clever but sloppy scavengers with a dietary diversity similar to other omnivores such as bears, pigs, or people.

And with a dining etiquette similar to a fraternity pizza kegger.

"Hey, there's a crow washing something huge and disgusting in the bird-

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A crow soaks one of its less-disgusting menu items in the Miller stew pot, er, birdbath. HENRY MILLER/SPECIAL TO THE STATESMAN JOURNAL