

Have you noticed more people catching salmon in the Russian River this winter?



This doesn't necessarily mean there are more adult fish returning. It's more likely because they are confined to the mainstem of the river due to lower than average seasonal flow conditions. Coho salmon and steelhead spawn in tributaries to the Russian River, and while there has been just enough rain this fall to allow adult fish to enter the river, there isn't enough water to allow access to their spawning grounds. This means that coho and steelhead are forced to hold in the river until there's enough rain to open the streams to adult passage.

Concerned anglers will want to know that endangered coho are particularly vulnerable during this time. Anglers could easily catch one without intending to and, potentially, face penalties associated with harming them. Knowing how to identify coho salmon, steelhead, and Chinook is a critical skill for anyone fishing in the Russian River ([see ID guide](#)).

Before you head out to fish, take a moment to review your Russian River salmon species. Any time you catch a fish that looks like a salmon or steelhead:

- Land the fish as quickly as possible
- Have a rubber net ready for safe landing
- Immediately check for an adipose fin. It will be intact on coho, wild steelhead, and Chinook. In order to avoid injuring or killing these protected fish:
 - Keep the fish in the water at all times – even if taking photos
 - Carefully remove your barbless hook and release the fish as quickly as possible

Remember that targeting, harassing, or harming an endangered species is subject to prosecution under the law.

For more information on releasing fish in the best way possible, visit [Keepemwet](#)

To learn more about coho salmon in the Russian River, see: caseagrant.ucsd.edu/russianrivercoho

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Please fish responsibly to help recover our Russian River salmon fishery!