

# American

Salmon River  
NEW YORK

Okefenokee Swamp  
GEORGIA/FLORIDA

East Carson River  
CALIFORNIA

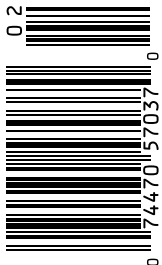
# FLY FISHING

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**Johnson's Rio Bandito**

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# Conservation

## Flyathlon Supports Coldwater Conservation Efforts

By Ryan Guest

The morning of September 21, 2024, broke cold and cloudless near Powderhorn, Colorado. As campers rose from their tents to enjoy coffee in a field near Red Bridge Campground, it would have seemed like any other beautiful autumn day. That is, except for the crowd gathered with assembled fly rods, running vests, and race bibs. The 8th annual Lake Fork Flyathlon, covering 11 miles and a fishy stretch of the Lake Fork of the Gunnison River through Gateview Canyon, was about to begin.

For people with a passion for the outdoors, conservation, and craft beer, there may not be a better event on the planet than a Flyathlon. Born in Colorado a decade ago by the non-profit Running Rivers ([www.runningrivers.org](http://www.runningrivers.org)), Flyathlons now raise nearly \$150,000 annually and more than \$800,000 since inception for native fish conservation across the country. These races bring together multidiscipline



CRAIG HOFFMAN PHOTOS



“flyathletes” from far and wide. Some are running legends, such as Jenn Shelton, a record-setting ultramarathoner featured in the book *Born to Run*. Some are International Game Fish Association world record holders. All are dedicated outdoor enthusiasts, both paying the fee to enter the race and committing to meeting a minimum fundraising requirement of \$250 (many of them hitting that mark multiple times over). Despite the caliber and pedigree of participants, these events feel truly inclusive. You would never know that the person sitting across the campfire from you after the race is an accolades-laden professional athlete unless you randomly asked. Or that the person next to that runner/angler just as likely walked the whole course or just went fly fishing for the first time.

The mission of Running Rivers is to conserve and restore native fish ecosystems by educating and inspiring a diverse community of recreationists to engage in conservation through responsible and thoughtful recreation, informed advocacy and philanthropy, and impactful projects. These projects include efforts across the country, ranging from reintroducing native Rio Grande cutthroat trout to Sand Creek in Colorado’s Great Sand Dunes National Park and Preserve to streambank stabilization projects on Little Paint Creek in Iowa.

Running Rivers holds four different Flyathlons across the United States. The Western North Carolina event is the first each year, taking place every April or May near Saluda on a 6-mile out-and-back course with about 1,900 feet of elevation gain and loss (not for the faint of heart). The flagship Middle Creek Flyathlon race comes next, in late July or early August, offering runners about 7 miles and 1,000 feet of elevation gain (and the opportunity to hang out in an aspen grove with Bunny the Bourbon Burro) in gorgeous Saguache County, Colorado. In September, racers can enjoy the Lake Fork festivities and cover a substantial 11-mile course near Lake City (fortunately, this one is relatively flat at only 500 feet of elevation gain/loss). Following quickly on its heels in September or October is the Driftless Flyathlon. A flat 5-mile trail greets entrants to this Midwestern

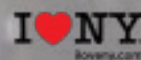
angling fixture, located in the Yellow River State Forest near Harpers Ferry, Iowa. All these events attract their own colorful characters, brand of beautiful scenery, excellent craft beer, and memorable moments.

In addition to awesome craft breweries, and even distilleries and restaurants, many fly-fishing-industry companies have helped sponsor Flyathlons with monetary donations and donations of product. Among them are Orvis, Patagonia, Airflo, Ross

Reels, Umpqua, Fulling Mill, Tenkara USA, PJ’s Fine Bamboo Rods, Cheeky, Dragontail Tenkara, and Costa.

If you want to test your mettle against some of the best multisport flyathletes in the world and/or want to support native coldwater fisheries, there is no better organization than Running Rivers and no better event than a Flyathlon. Check the Running Rivers website for 2025 dates and learn about how you can donate to freshwater ecosystem revival in the interim.

# OSWEGO COUNTY, NY



## WHERE THE WATERS RUN SILVER WITH STEELHEAD

Oswego County is a premier destination for steelhead fishing, drawing anglers from across the country to its pristine waters. The Salmon River, Oswego River, and other tributaries of Lake Ontario provide ideal habitats for these migratory fish, particularly during the colder months from late fall to early spring. During this time, steelhead make their way upstream to spawn, offering a thrilling challenge to those seeking to test their skills.

Known for their powerful runs and acrobatic leaps, steelhead are a prized catch for their fighting spirit. Anglers in Oswego County can try various techniques, including fly fishing, drift fishing, and float fishing, with excellent access points along the riverbanks. Guided trips are also widely available, offering expert knowledge to help both beginners and seasoned anglers maximize their chances of success.

Whether you’re chasing the excitement of landing a steelhead or enjoying the peaceful surroundings, the experience is unmatched. For anyone passionate about fishing or the outdoors, steelhead fishing in Oswego County is an adventure you won’t want to miss.

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