

# *Wildlife of Yellowstone National Park*



Yellowstone National Park is home to more than 200 species of animals—from the mighty grizzly bear seen here to the elusive cutthroat trout.

In this special section, you'll find:

- ◆ [Wildlife checklist](#)
- ◆ [Top safety tips](#)
- ◆ [Tips for watching wildlife](#)
- ◆ [How to tell a black bear from a grizzly](#)
- ◆ [How to tell a wolf from a coyote](#)

# ✓ Will You See These Animals In Yellowstone?



**Elk**

The wildlife you see in Yellowstone can depend on when you are visiting, what part of the park you are in, what time of day, and the weather.

**Elk** The most abundant large animal in the park, elk can be found browsing on plants in many parts of the park. They will seek shade during hot days. The best times to look for them are just after dawn and just after sunset. They are about the size of an average horse.

**Moose** These long legged animals are among the hardest to see in Yellowstone. Less than 200 live in the park, so count yourself lucky if you see one! They browse aquatic plants and willows, so look along creek and rivers—especially around Yellowstone Lake, the Northeast Entrance, and the East Entrance.



**Moose**



**Bighorn Sheep**

**Bighorn Sheep** With their rock-gripping hooves, bighorn sheep clamber up sheer cliffs and balance on narrow pinnacles. Look for them in the canyon between Mammoth Hot Springs and the North Entrance, the cliffs near Tower Fall, and on the slopes of Mount Washburn.

**Pronghorn** Also known as antelope, pronghorn live in the northern part of the park, where they browse plants in the open grasslands. They are built to run, and that is how they elude predators. Look for them around the North Entrance, and along the road from Mammoth Hot Springs through the Lamar Valley.



**Pronghorn**



**Mule Deer**

**Mule Deer** These big-eared deer live throughout the park. They are easier to see in the grasslands; but they may surprise you as they emerge from the forests too. Their big ears and bounding run distinguish mule deer from white-tailed deer, which are rare in Yellowstone.

**Bison** Called buffalo by many people, these huge brown animals are the largest animals in Yellowstone. Adult bulls are more than six feet tall at the shoulder and weigh more than a ton. Surprisingly, they can run faster than humans. Admire them from a distance. (More people are injured by bison than by any other animal in the park.) They graze in open areas throughout the park.



**Bison**

## Is It a Wolf?



**Wolf**

- ◆ Gray, black, white, or mix
- ◆ 80–100 pounds

**Coyote**

- ◆ Tan to gray fur
- ◆ 25–35 pounds

**Fox**

- ◆ Red fur
- ◆ Dark legs
- ◆ 9–12 pounds

## Is It a Grizzly?



**Grizzly Bear**

- ◆ Shoulder hump
- ◆ Rump lower than shoulder

**Black Bear**

- ◆ No shoulder hump
- ◆ Rump higher than shoulder

*What about color?* Color is not a reliable way to tell these bears apart. Both kinds can be golden, dark brown, black, reddish, and combinations too.

# Look Up! Look Down. Look All Around.



**Osprey**



**Bald Eagle**



**Clark's Nutcracker**



**Least Chipmunk**



**Golden-mantled Ground Squirrel**



**Yellow-bellied Marmot**



**Black Bear** Lots of black bears call Yellowstone home. Look for them in or near forests as they ramble about sniffing out rodents and insects to eat. They also eat fruit, roots, and grasses.



**Grizzly Bear** About 150 grizzly bears roam Yellowstone. A full-grown male can weigh 2 to 3 times as much as a black bear. And it can run fast enough to catch an elk.



**Coyote** Too many to count—coyotes live all over Yellowstone. You will likely see them trotting through grass. If you see one stopped, watch closely. It may have heard a mouse and is getting ready to pounce. Small mammals are its primary prey.



**Wolf** Wolf packs live in the park's big open areas such as the Lamar and Hayden valleys. In summer you may see one carrying a small animal to feed pups back at the den. By summer's end, the pups are joining their pack to hunt for larger prey such as deer and elk.

## How to Watch Wildlife Safely

**Never feed wildlife**—including birds.

**100 yards** = Distance you need to stay away from bears and wolves. This is the length of a football or soccer field.

**25 yards** = Distance you need to stay away from all other animals—including bison, elk, bighorn sheep, deer, moose, and coyotes. This is about six pickup trucks bumper to bumper.

**Pull off road.** Park in established turnouts and make sure your car is completely off the paved roadway. Put your vehicle into park, and engage the parking brake.

**Stay in or near your car.**

**Stand next to the road,** never in the road.

**Give animals room.** Never surround, crowd, approach, or follow wildlife; do not block their path.

**Do not run** or make sudden movements—this may cause animals to attack.

**Drive safely, too.** More than 100 large animals are killed by cars each year in Yellowstone. Slow down and save a life!

## How Many?

**Mammals: 67 species**

**Birds: 148 species nest here; 322 species have been seen here**

**Fish: 11 native species; 5 species not native to the park**

**Amphibians: 6 species**

**Reptiles: 4 species**

Yellowstone National Park offers the following checklists free for the asking at visitor centers:

*Children's Wildlife Checklist*

*Where to See Big Mammals*

You can also purchase a bird checklist for \$1.50 in visitor center bookstores.

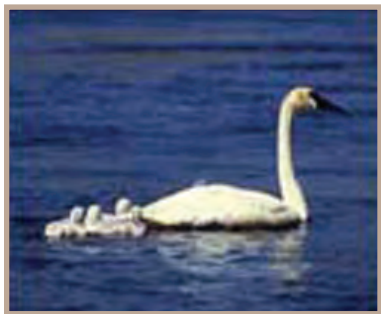
# Wildlife Projects



**The Yellowstone Park Foundation, the park's fundraising partner, supports many wildlife-related projects in the park, including:**

### ***Understanding Wolves in the Yellowstone Ecosystem***

It has been more than 15 years since wolves were reintroduced to Yellowstone, and understanding and monitoring their impact on the entire ecosystem is one of Yellowstone National Park's highest priorities. The Yellowstone Park Foundation (YPF) provides funding for the project's equipment, long-term research, sufficient aerial monitoring, and the seasonal staff necessary to run the project.



### ***Monitoring Peregrine Falcons and Trumpeter Swans***

Peregrine falcons and trumpeter swans faced extinction in the 20th century. Their small populations in Yellowstone were the focus of significant conservation efforts. The park's peregrine falcon population has flourished, while its trumpeter swan population has drastically dwindled. YPF is funding a project to monitor both birds and map their nesting sites. This will provide wildlife managers more information to determine why one bird species has recovered so well, while the other faces a much graver situation.



### ***Making Campgrounds Safe from Bears***

The recovery of the greater Yellowstone grizzly bear population has been deemed a huge success for species preservation. However, it is critical to minimize adverse human interactions, such as conflicts that arise from conditioning to human food, which can be dangerous for bears and humans alike. Less than 25% of the park's campsites have bear-proof storage boxes. YPF is helping to buy and install more of these boxes.

### ***Conserving Yellowstone's Fisheries***

Generations of anglers have come to Yellowstone seeking native species like Yellowstone and westslope cutthroat trout. Drought and exotic species now threaten these native fish. As a result, the entire food chain, including the bears and birds that feed on these fish, is at risk. YPF supports ongoing research and restoration of native fish and the Fly Fishing Volunteers Program, which recruits volunteer anglers each summer to gather data about park fish populations.



### ***Monitoring Bats for White-nose Syndrome***

White-nose syndrome (WNS), which kills bats while they are hibernating, has decimated bat populations in 11 eastern states and is moving westward quickly. All ten species of bats in Yellowstone are susceptible to WNS. Besides being fascinating animals worth saving for their own sake, bats serve as both predators and prey and are integral to the entire Yellowstone ecosystem. YPF is supporting a two-year monitoring program looking for evidence of WNS in Yellowstone's bat populations.



### ***Protecting Wildlife and Visitors***

Many of Yellowstone's bears, wolves, and other wildlife are exposed to humans at relatively close distances, especially at wildlife-related traffic jams. Almost 1,000 bear-related jams occurred in 2010, along with many wolf, bison, elk, and other wildlife jams. YPF supports extra teams of rangers who manage these jams to keep both visitors and wildlife safe, and to help visitors learn about the animals they are seeing.

### **To learn more about wildlife in Yellowstone:**

- ◆ [www.nps.gov/yell](http://www.nps.gov/yell) for videos and podcasts about wildlife
- ◆ Funding for many of these provided by Canon U.S.A., Inc., through a grant to the Yellowstone Park Foundation
- ◆ [www.greateryellowstonescience.org](http://www.greateryellowstonescience.org) for detailed briefs about wildlife
- ◆ *Yellowstone Today*, Ranger Program insert, for a schedule of programs and activities about wildlife, including the Yellowstone Wildlife Olympics



The nonprofit Yellowstone Park Foundation has been Yellowstone National Park's official fundraising partner organization since 1996. The Foundation works in cooperation with the park to fund projects and programs that protect, preserve, and enhance the natural and cultural resources and the visitor experience of Yellowstone. The Foundation receives no annual government funding; it relies instead upon generous contributions from private citizens, foundations, and corporations to help ensure that Yellowstone's great gifts to the world will never diminish. Learn more at [www.ypf.org](http://www.ypf.org)

Yellowstone National Park  
[www.nps.gov/yell](http://www.nps.gov/yell)

National Park Service  
U.S. Department of the Interior



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