

An aerial photograph of the Yellowstone River, showing its characteristic milky green color and white rapids. The river flows through a rugged landscape with rocky banks and dense evergreen forests. The sky is blue with light clouds.

INSIDER

YELLOWSTONE FOREVER

SPRING | SUMMER 2021

Yellowstone River from the Bridge
NPS/Jacob Frank

PROJECTS

UPDATES FROM A YEAR OF RESILIENCY

In response to the temporary park closure last spring due to COVID-19, Yellowstone Forever launched the Yellowstone Resiliency Fund to help support the park during these challenging times. And the response from Yellowstone Society members like you was phenomenal! Your steadfast support as a Yellowstone Society member helped essential park programs continue without interruption. Below are some of the immediate impacts from your support.

COUGAR PROJECT Funding for this research project relies solely on private donations. Thanks to your continued funding in 2020, the project team installed 90 remote cameras to monitor cougars throughout the winter, continued to monitor nine cougars wearing satellite GPS collars, and ran predation studies. By researching cougars along with wolves and elk, biologists can study the entire ecosystem with all its top predators and prey populations intact.

BEAR BOXES Preventing bears from obtaining human food is a top priority for Yellowstone's wildlife managers. At campgrounds, a proven way to minimize bears' access to human food is to encourage campers to store their food in bear-proof storage containers. Thanks to donors like you sponsoring the cost and installation of these boxes, 35 new bear boxes were installed at Yellowstone campgrounds in 2020.

WOLF PROJECT Generous support from donors has significantly helped the continuous research and monitoring of wolves in Yellowstone since they were reintroduced in 1995. This research helps inform wolf management policy and contributes to greater understanding of Yellowstone's ecosystem. Your support this year

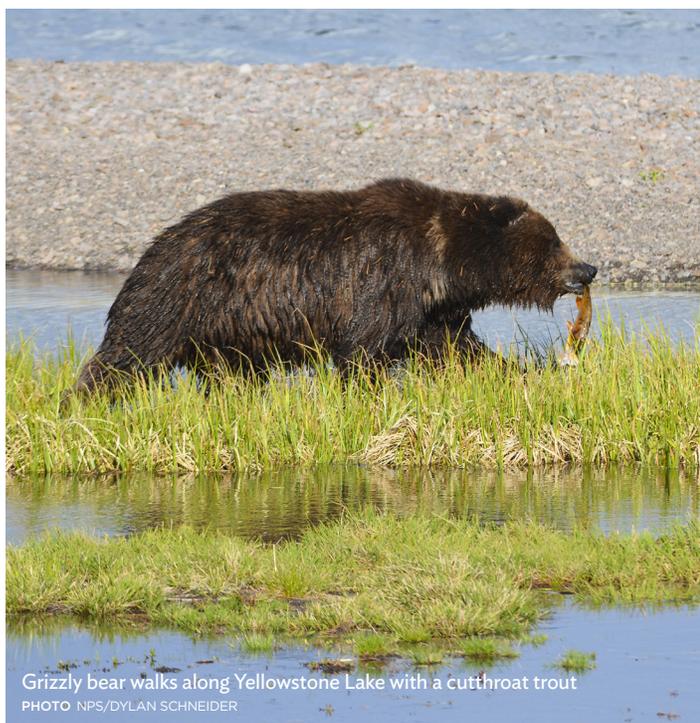


Trumpeter swan release
PHOTO NPS/MARY BETH ALBRECHTSEN

helped the project continue uninterrupted. Through monitoring and aerial flights, researchers identified 123 wolves in nine packs.

TRUMPETER SWAN The trumpeter swan population has been declining for decades in Yellowstone, to a low of only four birds in 2010. To help restore territorial pairs of swans in the park, eight young trumpeter swans were released at Alum Creek in Hayden Valley in September. Recent releases like this and other restoration efforts have helped increase the population to over 20 birds and five territorial pairs.

Your generous support is helping fund projects that protect Yellowstone's ecosystem and wildlife; preserve its heritage, cultural history and trails; and enhance visitor experiences and education. Thank you for helping ensure Yellowstone receives the resources it needs to remain resilient.



Grizzly bear walks along Yellowstone Lake with a cutthroat trout
PHOTO NPS/DYLAN SCHNEIDER

YELLOWSTONE CUTTHROAT TROUT CONTINUE TO REBOUND

Even one year without lake trout suppression efforts would be a step backward in Yellowstone cutthroat trout recovery efforts. Thanks to continued support from donors like you, biologists worked at 100% capacity during COVID-19 and reduced invasive lake trout numbers in Yellowstone Lake for the eighth season in a row. In 2020, 325,952 nonnative lake trout were removed from Yellowstone Lake.

As lake trout numbers decline, native Yellowstone cutthroat trout are recovering and providing an important food source for dozens of species like grizzly bears, bald eagles, ospreys, and otters.

Biologists believe we are close to being able to manage this effort with fewer resources once there is a "crash" in lake trout reproduction and populations. This could happen within the next three years. Support from donors like you will help to continue this aggressive approach.

Learn more about the Native Fish Conservation Program at [Yellowstone.org/native-fish](https://www.yellowstone.org/native-fish) or by contacting J.D. Davis, Chief Development Officer, at 406.579.3673 or jddavis@yellowstone.org.

SPOTLIGHT

MEMBER & CORPORATE PARTNER JEROME MAGE

Jerome Mage fell in love with Yellowstone on his first visit in 2012. What started as a vacation turned into a passion, one he has parlayed into a partnership with Yellowstone Forever through his company, Jacques Marie Mage. We recently talked with Jerome about what drew him to Yellowstone, and why he makes it a priority to give back through his business.

A Yellowstone Connection

Jerome moved to the United States from France and, like many, had heard of Yellowstone National Park. But it took some years to make his first trip. “When I moved to L.A. I kind of got stuck in the big city life,” he said. “It was a bit of a random trip with my son. Since then, I’ve been back every year!” During one of these yearly trips in winter 2014, Jerome had the chance to spend a week watching wolves. He saw most of the Lamar Valley Pack, and described the experience as life changing.

Passion into Partnership

After that 2014 winter trip, Jerome knew he wanted to do something more. “[Watching the wolves] made me really understand the ecosystem in a way I couldn’t before... it was kind of mind blowing,” he said. The story of wolf reintroduction in Yellowstone National Park, and how the return of the predator helped complete the ecosystem mirrors the story of how he views his company. “It can be your business, your family, it can be anything. But you realize at some point that to thrive you need everything to coexist together. Everyone has a role to play. And that’s really true about the wolf pack. This really resonated in me in a very powerful way.”

Jerome’s company, Jacques Marie Mage, is a handcrafted eyewear company based in Los Angeles. While Jerome knows that his product line has a niche audience, it’s an audience that has the



means to protect places like Yellowstone. “In luxury space I think people have a tendency to go to exotic places, but the national parks are in your backyard in America. We have an admirable almost Garden of Eden, right here in America.”

Jerome’s company has created a special line of eyewear that honors the wolves he has watched over the past six years. A portion of the sales support Yellowstone Forever. In addition, Jerome and his family give personally to the park.

Jerome Mage splits his time between Los Angeles, California, and Jackson, Wyoming. He owns Jacques Marie Mage, a handcrafted eyewear company. Learn more about the company and its commitment to giving back at jacquesmariemage.com.



TOP RIGHT Jerome and his youngest son Jax in Lamar Valley
PHOTO COURTESY OF JEROME MAGE

BOTTOM Jerome and his wife Erica on a winter wolf watching trip
PHOTO COURTESY OF JEROME MAGE

FEATURE

Room to Roam

BY ERIN FITZGERALD



If you are reading this in North America today, there's a good chance bison once walked the land beneath you.

An estimated 30 to 60 million bison once roamed the North American landscape. East to the Shenandoah Mountains, south across the Rio Grande into Mexico, west to the Snake River of Idaho, and as far north as current-day Yellowstone in the Northwest Territories of Canada, just 250 miles from the Arctic Circle.

Bison shaped the land and were critical to native people's way of life. The meat sustained them, the hides were used for clothing and shelter, the bones and horns for tools. Every part of the bison was put to functional use.

As settler colonists began to populate the land historically inhabited by native people, they brought with them agricultural processes that changed the landscape. Disruptions like cattle-borne diseases and competition for grazing impacted native bison habitat.

By the 1830s, the U.S. government and hunters began to kill off bison, the main food source for native people. By the end of the 1800s the majority of bison in North America had been killed, leaving a few hundred animals across the expanse of their native range, including about two dozen in the Pelican Valley of what is now Yellowstone National Park.

"In the blink of time, they were all gone. Of those left, 24 animals made their last stand here in Yellowstone," said Chris Geremia, wildlife biologist and lead of the Bison Conservation and Transfer Program in Yellowstone National Park.

As difficult as it is to imagine bison roaming through what are now cities and towns across North America, it is almost as difficult to imagine the near elimination of these herds over a mere 100 years, and the impact that had on the people who relied on these animals.

Today, thanks to conservation efforts made by the National Park Service, state and federal agencies, and tribal entities, bison have made a comeback on the Yellowstone landscape. But even now—despite the progress made over the past century—Yellowstone bison are being slaughtered.

Finding a better plan

Today, close to 5,000 bison call Yellowstone home, but that number has ebbed over time.

When the park took the first step to recover the bison population in the park in the early 1900s, they limited growth of the herds through culling—selectively reducing the population through slaughter. But in 1968 a moratorium on culling resulted in the rapid growth of population, from 500 animals in 1970 to 3,000 in 1990.

As the population grew, bison did what they were born to do: move and shape the land. They eventually started exiting the park. While the entirety of the Greater Yellowstone Ecosystem is historic habitat of bison, modern factors make this migration complicated.

Many homeowners now reside in the land surrounding the park boundaries, making free-range wild bison a difficult prospect. On top of that, some Yellowstone bison carry brucellosis, a nonnative disease that causes pregnant cows to abort their calves. While there have been no documented cases of bison transmitting brucellosis to cattle, ranchers and the livestock industry remain concerned about this possibility.

“This created one of the most, I don’t know what the right word is, challenging? Heartbreaking? Lifechanging? It created one of the hardest wildlife conservation dilemmas that our generation is facing,” said Geremia.

To manage the herd outside the park, about 3,100 bison were slaughtered between 1985 and 2000.

“We drew a box, we said bison can’t move much beyond the park. When animals moved down and exited the park, we rounded them up and mostly sent them to slaughter,” Geremia said.

For wildlife biologists and conservationists like Geremia, this was incredibly difficult. But it bought them time to come up with a better plan—the Bison Conservation and Transfer Program.

“Now we’re not talking about bison getting off trailers and going to slaughterhouses. We’re talking about bison getting off trailers and

going to native tribes that need bison. We’re finding places for them where there is room for them to roam,” Geremia said.

Yellowstone National Park’s Bison Conservation and Transfer Program is a significant step in realizing a future where wild bison are saved from slaughter and returned to their historic range on tribal land.

Beginning in 2018, some bison that exit the park have been rounded up and placed in a quarantine facility. Through a rigorous process of quarantining and testing that takes up to three years, the park is able to identify animals as brucellosis-free, allowing them to be transferred outside the park to tribal lands.

Since the start of the program, 154 Yellowstone bison have been transferred back to 16 tribes.

“To date, what we’ve accomplished I would say has been groundbreaking,” Geremia said. “I think others would say it’s been life changing.”

The first stop for transferred bison is the Fort Peck Reservation in eastern Montana. From there, after additional quarantine and testing, the InterTribal Buffalo Council transfers them to other tribal lands. Geremia said it doesn’t matter what time of day or what time of year the bison arrive at Fort Peck, members of the tribe are waiting there to welcome them.

But despite this large step forward in an effort to return bison to native land and save them from slaughter, Geremia feels like what has been done so far is mainly symbolic. Despite the 154 successful transfers, another 1,500 animals have gone to slaughter. And that’s mainly because this program takes a lot of space, and a lot of time.



TOP LEFT Cow and calf run through the sage in Lamar Valley

BOTTOM RIGHT Bison in the sorting corrals at a quarantine facility

PAGE 6 TOP Visitors on a snowcoach observe bison

PAGE 6 BOTTOM Bison cow and calf on the Northern Range

PHOTOS NPS/JACOB FRANK, NPS/JIM PEACO, MATT LUDIN (PAGE 6)



Expanding the program

The park is partnering with Yellowstone Forever and the Greater Yellowstone Coalition to help fund the expansion of this program. In part through fundraising efforts by these groups, the park will be able to build additional quarantine facilities and increase the number of bison they are able to transfer to tribes. And in turn, this will decrease the number of bison sent to slaughter.

“We have the chance, in the next five years, to prevent 460 bison from going to slaughter and move 530 bison to tribes,” Geremia said.

Yellowstone Forever’s members have already begun to step up and support this priority project, but there’s still more to do.

“The Yellowstone Bison is America’s Mammal. There is nowhere else in the world where you can see wild bison in such large numbers living like they were meant to,” said Yellowstone Forever’s Chief Development Officer, J.D. Davis. “If we have the opportunity to ensure that more bison are able to remain wild, we have to make sure that happens.”

But this won’t happen without help, said Yellowstone National Park Superintendent Cam Sholly.

“We’ve got to make progress even if it’s slow,” he said. “We’re starting to pick up the pace. But that’s got to be done in concert with our partners.”

Sholly said that consigning bison to slaughter simply because they transcend the Yellowstone boundary must change.

“That’s a paradigm that cannot work for the future. It’ll take some time to change it, but it’s got to happen.”

To learn more about the Bison Conservation and Transfer Program and how you can help, visit [Yellowstone.org/bison-conservation](https://www.yellowstone.org/bison-conservation).

Society Winter Excursion with Tom Murphy

JANUARY 29-FEBRUARY 2, 2022

Join us for a special excursion that is part wildlife expedition, part winter adventure, and part professional photography tour. Renowned photographer and naturalist Tom Murphy will be your guide as you search for wildlife in Lamar Valley and travel to stunning winter landscapes in Yellowstone’s remote interior via private snowcoach.

Please contact Marisa Griffith at 406.384.6168 or mgriffith@yellowstone.org with any questions or for assistance with registration.

More details available soon at [Yellowstone.org/society](https://www.yellowstone.org/society)

UPCOMING EVENTS





MESSAGE

LISA DIEKMANN, PRESIDENT & CEO

It's been a busy and exciting few months here at Yellowstone Forever, and I'm delighted to share some updates with you.

Educational programming has resumed, with COVID-19 mitigations in place. It is gratifying to hear from participants who were able to safely travel into the park this winter. I'll never tire of listening to someone describe their first wolf sighting—it's truly a defining experience!

Earlier this year, we announced a new partnership with the park and our commitment to raise \$250,000 for the Bison Conservation and Transfer Program. In March we hosted our first Virtual Yellowstone event and shared more about this important project in a live presentation with wildlife biologist Chris Geremia and Superintendent Cam Sholly. If you missed this event, you may view the recording on our website.

Since I joined the organization in August 2020, I have met regularly with Superintendent Sholly to ensure Yellowstone Forever's fundraising efforts meet the needs of the park's priorities. This year, we have committed to raising \$3.9 million for projects that will protect, preserve, and enhance Yellowstone National Park.

In February, I worked with our team to finalize a new Strategic Plan that sets us on a path to proudly support Yellowstone in a way that is strategic, impactful, innovative, transparent and inclusive. I am pleased to have this framework as we work to achieve our mission,

guided by our shared values of stewardship, integrity, respect, and collaboration. The Strategic Plan is available on our website (Yellowstone.org). I hope you will take a few minutes to read through it and learn more about our vision and priorities.

On a personal note, one of the most memorable experiences I've had since I returned was the opportunity to participate in the release of trumpeter swans in the Hayden Valley. While the trumpeter swan population is stable in the Rocky Mountain region, the population in Yellowstone has been declining. Our goal with the release was to help bolster the population and reverse the downward population trend of this magnificent bird.

In 2022 we will celebrate the 150th anniversary of Yellowstone National Park. This is a perfect opportunity to not only reflect on the park's remarkable history, but also to look to the future and how we can—collectively—ensure the world's first national park thrives for the next 150 years and beyond. I look forward to sharing more information with you in the coming months about how Yellowstone Forever plans to mark this important occasion.

Thank you for your continued support. It's an honor to work with you to protect and preserve Yellowstone for the enjoyment, education, and inspiration of this and future generations.

Leave a Legacy for Yellowstone

A planned gift to Yellowstone Forever is a simple and flexible way to meet your own estate and financial goals while providing a commitment to Yellowstone that lasts forever.

Contact J.D. Davis, Chief Development Officer, at 406.579.3673 to learn more.

"We love Yellowstone because it is Mother Nature in all her glory. From its beautiful valleys and majestic mountains to the rivers and lakes and the creatures that call it their home. Yellowstone holds a special place in our hearts. A day spent casting to a raising native cutthroat on the Yellowstone River is a day well spent for us and our way of experiencing peace and tranquility. That is why we keep returning year after year."

—Jane and Walt Massey
Yellowstone Forever Members



PHOTOS NPS/JACOB FRANK (LEFT), MATT LUDIN (RIGHT)



INTRODUCTIONS

AMANDA HAGERTY, INSTITUTE DIRECTOR

We are excited to introduce our new Yellowstone Forever Institute Director Amanda Hagerty. After almost a full year with limited programming, Amanda is working to ensure everyone involved, from students to employees to volunteers, remain safe, healthy... and educated!

1 | TELL US ABOUT YOUR NEW ROLE! Leading education at Yellowstone Forever, in short, is both surreal and an immense privilege. I have many “pinch me” moments where I realize that I am fulfilling my lifelong dream by serving in this position, for this organization, for the betterment of Yellowstone National Park.

It is an honor to follow in the footsteps of those who previously served our education mission, in addition to working alongside those who continue to support the mission today—from staff, educators, our partners at the National Park Service, Yellowstone Forever’s members, participants, and volunteers. The passion and dedication of these folks never ceases to amaze me.

2 | WHAT DREW YOU TO YELLOWSTONE? Although a multi-generational Montanan, it was not until I first worked in Yellowstone National Park over a decade ago as an interpretive ranger for the National Park Service that I started to truly appreciate everything this incredible place has to offer. There are moments I have experienced in Yellowstone that have forever changed my life.

3 | WHAT CAN PARTICIPANTS EXPECT FROM A YELLOWSTONE FOREVER EDUCATIONAL PROGRAM? Yellowstone speaks for itself! The varied landscapes of Yellowstone provide opportunities for transformative experiences—whether it is seeing your first wild wolf in Lamar Valley, witnessing a rare Steambot Geyser eruption, or listening to gushing waters of the Grand Canyon of the Yellowstone, there is something for everyone. Yellowstone Forever’s education team enhances these experiences.

This year, to maintain social distancing, we’re only offering one Field Seminar at the Lamar Buffalo Ranch at a time. But we’ve made up the difference with additional Field Seminars based in Gardiner, Montana!

To view all our programs and register, visit Yellowstone.org/education.



PHOTOS DOUBLET POOL, MATT LUDIN; BLACK BEAR IN LAMAR VALLEY, NPS/JACOB FRANK; PIKA, MATT LUDIN