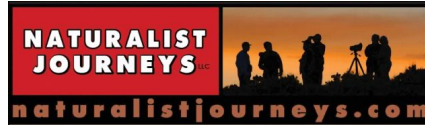


Yellowstone in the Fall

Species List | September 19-25, 2026

with Naturalist Journeys



Compiled by guides Robert Petty and Dave Mehlman. Our clients included Barbara, Will, Connie, Kristy, Marcia, Mark, Jess, and Ross.

Yellowstone National Park occupies the volcanic heart of the Greater Yellowstone Ecosystem, one of the largest intact temperate ecosystems remaining on Earth. Spanning more than two million acres, the park encompasses an extraordinary diversity of landscapes, from sagebrush valleys and expansive grasslands to alpine plateaus, conifer forests, rivers, lakes, and geothermal basins. The interaction of geology, climate, and elevation has created a rich mosaic of habitats that support an impressive array of wildlife.

September is a time of remarkable transition in the Greater Yellowstone Ecosystem. As summer gives way to autumn, the landscape begins to change—aspens turn golden, temperatures cool, and wildlife prepares for the approaching winter. Bull elk gather harems and fill the valleys with their distinctive bugles, migratory birds move south through the region, and bears enter hyperphagia, feeding intensively to build the fat reserves needed for winter. Across the landscape, the rhythms of life shift as plants and animals respond to the shortening days and changing seasons.

During our tour, we explored a remarkable diversity of habitats across the southern Greater Yellowstone Ecosystem, from the wetlands of Red Rock Lakes National Wildlife Refuge and the lakes and river valleys west of Yellowstone to the geothermal basins, forests, and wildlife-rich valleys of the park's interior. We visited iconic landscapes including Old Faithful, Grand Prismatic Spring, Hayden Valley, and the Grand Canyon of the Yellowstone before continuing south into Grand Teton National Park, where the dramatic Teton Range rises above the sagebrush flats, wetlands, and riparian corridors of Jackson Hole. Along the way, we encountered a rich diversity of birds, mammals, and other wildlife, while experiencing the ecological and geological wonders and the spectacular scenery of this extraordinary region.

The Greater Yellowstone Ecosystem is particularly remarkable because it remains one of the few places in the lower 48 states where the full complement of native large mammals still persists. Bison, elk, pronghorn, bighorn sheep, moose, black bears, grizzly bears, wolves, mountain lions, and other species continue to occupy much of their historic range, making Yellowstone and Grand Teton among North America's premier wildlife destinations.

BIRDS: 74 species were recorded of which 3 were introduced. Details of the birds we observed during the tour are detailed in the link below.

[Yellowstone in the Fall--Naturalist Journeys Trip Report](#)

Following is a list of the mammals we were fortunate to observe during the trip.

MAMMALS: — (11)

Pronghorn *Antilocapra americana* — We saw several herds of Pronghorn on our drive south on highways 191 and 20 enroute to Island Park. We also got some. Excellent views of a herd near the intersection of highway 191 and Elk Ranch Road just south of Moran on our way to Jackson.

American Bison *Bison bison* — We observed several herds of bison in the Hayden Valley as well as a few individual bulls along the West Entrance Road.

Elk *Cervus elaphus* — Surprisingly few elk were seen during this trip, but we did get a look at one distant bull and some great looks at some cow elk and their calves along the Madison River and the West Entrance Road. We also heard a bugling bull while stopped at the Granite Canyon Trail parking area in the Grand Teton National Park.

Mule Deer *Odocoileus hemionus* — Observed in various locations in both Yellowstone and Grand Teton National Parks.

Coyote *Canis latrans* — Two coyotes were seen north of Jackson Wyoming along highway 191.

North American River Otter *Lontra canadensis* — A group of five were seen swimming and feeding on fish below the Jackson Lake Dam in the Snake River.

Yellow-pine Chipmunk — Seen at several locations throughout the GYE in both Yellowstone and Grand Teton National Parks.

Least Chipmunk *Tamias minimus* — Seen in many locations throughout the park including Fountain Paint Pots and Slough Creek.

Uinta Chipmunk *Neotamias umbrinus* — Seen at Artist's Point in the Grand Canyon of the Yellowstone.

American Red Squirrel *Tamiasciurus hudsonicus* — Commonly seen and heard in the conifer forests in both Yellowstone and Grand Teton National parks.

Muskrat *Ondatra armatus* — We saw one muskrat swimming along the opposite shore of the Yellowstone River at LeHardy Rapids.

REPTILES & AMPHIPIAN: — (1)

Wandering Garter Snake *Thamnophis elegans vagrans* — Seen at Norris Geyser Basin along the trail.

BUTTERFLIES AND MOTHS: — (2)

Painted Lady *Vanessa cardui* — Seen at Madison Junction Picnic area along the river.

Alfalfa Looper *Autographa californica* — Photographed by Ross, uncertain of location.