

# Yellowstone: Birds, Bears, & Wildlife | Species List

## June 1 – 8, 2023 | with Naturalist Journeys



**With Naturalist Journeys guide Wes Larson, and participants Rachel, Gabrielle, Duke and Gordon**

We had an incredible trip to Yellowstone National Park with both bird and mammal sightings that all of us will remember for the rest of our lives. We also were amazingly lucky to have great weather during a time of the year when good weather is often hard to come by. Wes was able to leverage a lot of his connections in the park to put us in the right place at the right time throughout the trip, and we saw over 30 bears, including a remarkable and extended experience observing a female grizzly and her three-year-old subadult crossing a hillside and ridge. Our badger and fox sightings really stood out when it came to the mammals though, and both of these small mesocarnivores put on shows for us, filling the cards in our cameras. We saw 16 mammals throughout our week in Yellowstone, an impressive achievement!

But we weren't just here for the mammals. Bird sightings included Harlequin Ducks, Green-tailed Towhees and Western Tanagers, making it difficult to pick a favorite bird of the trip. Ultimately, the bright, citrus-colored Western Tanager won us over. Other highlights were Peregrine Falcons, Sandhill Cranes and Cinnamon Teal. Even though we spent a good deal of time observing Yellowstone's charismatic mammals, we still managed to record **90 bird species**.

A highlight for all of us was the great company and the easy comfort we found in our small group. Fond memories were created not only while watching wildlife surrounded by the stunning scenery of Wyoming and Montana, but also over meals in Cooke City and Gardiner, and while chatting in the van. Rachel, our dedicated birder, taught us all a lot about birding and living in the moment. Our two photographers, Gabrielle and Gordon, somehow managed to take sharp, beautiful photos of both fast-moving birds and much slower moving wildlife. Duke was there to soak it all in and spend quality time with his partner in one of the most beautiful places on earth, while Wes did his best to pull himself away from the bears and enjoy the other wildlife as well. It was a pleasure traveling with you all and I hope to see you soon!

### **DUCKS, GEESE AND SWANS: Anatidae (16)**

**Canada Goose** *Branta canadensis*—Canada Geese are plentiful throughout the park and the ecosystem, and we saw them every day.

**Trumpeter Swan** *Cygnus buccinator*—Nice looks at these elegant birds in the appropriately named Swan Lake, and in a small lake close to Norris.

**Cinnamon Teal** *Spatula cyanoptera*—We spotted this beautiful duck at Elk Meadows and in the Lamar Valley.

**Northern Shoveler** *Spatula clypeata*—We were lucky to see a pair of shovelers in Floating Island Lake.

**Gadwall** *Mareca strepera*—Sighted in Swan Lake.

**American Wigeon** *Mareca americana*—These ducks are common in the park, and we saw them at Swan Lake, around Slough Creek and in other locations.

**Mallard** *Anas platyrhynchos*—Mallards are plentiful in the waterways throughout the park.

**Green-winged Teal** *Anas crecca*—A quick sighting during our first stop at Swan Lake.

**Redhead** *Aythya americana*—Seen at Swan Lake.

**Ring-necked Duck** *Aythya collaris*—Sighted at Swan Lake and in Blacktail Ponds.

**Lesser Scaup** *Aythya affinis*—The most common diving duck in the park, we saw these small ducks throughout the park.

**Harlequin Duck** *Histrionicus histrionicus*—We had an amazing, close-up view of these gorgeous ducks at LaHardy Rapids, including a dramatic moment when some ducks scattered at the sight of a bald eagle. We also saw a few pairs in the Lamar Valley.

**Bufflehead** *Bucephala albeola*—We saw Buffleheads in the Hayden Valley.

**Barrow's Goldeneye** *Bucephala islandica*—A few sightings in both the Hayden Valley and Slough Creek.

**Common Merganser** *Mergus merganser*—Multiple sightings in different waterways in the park.

**Ruddy Duck** *Oxyura jamaicensis*—We had some nice sightings of both males and females, the males with bright blue bills as they were courting females.

### **PARTRIDGES, PHEASANTS AND ALLIES: Phasianidae (2)**

**Ruffed Grouse** *Bonasa umbellus*—A quick look at one when it ran across the road on the North Entrance Road.

**Dusky Grouse** *Dendragapus obscurus*—A Dusky Grouse crossed the road near Madison Junction.

### **PIGEONS AND DOVES: Columbidae (2)**

**Rock Pigeon** *Columba livia*—We saw a lot of these common, urban birds in the towns where we stayed.

**Mourning Dove** *Zenaida macroura*—We had a nice look at a Mourning Dove at Slough Creek.

### **HUMMINGBIRDS: Trochilidae (2)**

**Broad-tailed Hummingbird** *Selasphorus platycercus*—We saw these distinctive hummingbirds in Cooke City, Slough Creek and on the Beartooth Highway, often hearing them before seeing them.

**Calliope Hummingbird** *Selasphorus calliope*—We were incredibly lucky to have extended views of a spectacular Calliope Hummingbird pair on the Slough Creek trail.

### **RAILS, COOTS AND ALLIES: Rallidae (1)**

**American Coot** *Fulica americana*—Common in waterways in the northern section of the park.

### **CRANES: Gruidae (1)**

**Sandhill Crane** *Antigone canadensis*—We were treated to some wonderful views of Sandhill Cranes including a particularly colorful bird near Yellowstone Lake.

### **PLOVERS AND LAPWINGS: Charadriidae (1)**

**Killdeer** *Charadrius vociferus*—Killdeer were common in the Slough Creek area, and we watched as one adult tried to distract a coyote pair away from a likely nest site.

### **SANDPIPERS AND ALLIES: Scolopacidae (1)**

**Spotted Sandpiper** *Actitis macularius*—Spotted Sandpipers were common around Soda Butte Creek, the Lamar River and other rivers.

### **GULLS AND TERNS: Laridae (1)**

**California Gull** *Larus californicus*—While we saw a few gulls throughout the trip, a California Gull in Little America was the only one we could identify.

### **PELICANS: Pelecanidae (1)**

**American White Pelican** *Pelecanus erythrorhynchos*—We had a number of nice pelican sightings in both Paradise Valley and in the Hayden Valley.

### **HERONS AND EGRETS: Ardeidae (1)**

**Great Blue Heron** *Ardea herodias*—While we saw a number of herons, the standout sighting was counting eight or nine in a rookery near the Yellowstone River!

### **NEW WORLD VULTURES: Cathartidae (1)**

**Turkey Vulture** *Cathartes aura*—While these scavengers used to be uncommon in the park, their numbers have been increasing and we saw a lot of them soaring, often around suspected carcasses or ungulate kills.

### **OSPREY: Pandionidae (1)**

**Osprey** *Pandion haliaetus*—Osprey are a common sight in the park, and we found a number of nests both in Yellowstone and in the Paradise Valley.

### **HAWKS, KITES AND EAGLES: Accipitridae (4)**

**Golden Eagle** *Aquila chrysaetos*—Wes had a Golden Eagle sighting while driving the Beartooth Valley.

**Bald Eagle** *Haliaeetus leucocephalus*—We had several Bald Eagle sightings, including one that scared some Harlequin Ducks in the LaHardy Rapids, and a nice look at a nestling in Paradise Valley.

**Swainson's Hawk** *Buteo swainsoni*—While stopped at a restroom near Fishing Bridge, a very handsome Swainson's Hawk landed at the top of a nearby conifer and gave most of the group a nice look.

**Red-tailed Hawk** *Buteo jamaicensis*—These buteos are common throughout the park, and we saw them most days.

### **OWLS: Strigidae (1)**

**Great Horned Owl** *Bubo virginianus*—We had an obscured look at a nesting Great Horned Owl in the Mammoth employee housing area.

### **KINGFISHERS: Alcedinidae (1)**

**Belted Kingfisher** *Megaceryle alcyon*—One seen over the Lamar River.

### **WOODPECKERS: Picidae (3)**

**Downy Woodpecker** *Dryobates pubescens*—We saw several of these woodpeckers in Slough Creek, Lake Butte and elsewhere.

**Hairy Woodpecker** *Dryobates villosus*—We were lucky to spot a Hairy Woodpecker on our last day on the Slough Creek trail!

**Northern Flicker** *Colaptes auratus*—Brief looks at this ubiquitous flicker, the red-shafted subspecies found in The West.

### **FALCONS AND CARACARAS: Falconidae (3)**

**American Kestrel** *Falco sparverius*—We saw American Kestrels in Paradise Valley as well as in the Stephen's Creek area of Yellowstone.

**Peregrine Falcon** *Falco peregrinus*—Wes received a tip about a peregrine nest in the Tower area, and we were able to find both a fledgling and an adult on a warm afternoon.

**Prairie Falcon** *Falco mexicanus*—We had a brief look at a speeding Prairie Falcon on the Beartooth Highway.

### **TYRANT FLYCATCHERS: Tyrannidae (5)**

**Western Wood-Pewee** *Contopus sordidulus*—Great looks at this small tyrant flycatcher on the Slough Creek trail.

**Hammond's Flycatcher** *Empidonax hammondii*—Seen multiple times on the Slough Creek trail.

**Dusky Flycatcher** *Empidonax oberholseri*—Spotted one outside our hotel in Cooke City.

**Say's Phoebe** *Sayornis saya*—A brief look on the Slough Creek trail.

**Eastern Kingbird** *Tyrannus tyrannus*—We saw two Eastern Kingbirds in the Stephens Creek area of the park.

#### **VIREOS: Vireonidae (1)**

**Warbling Vireo** *Vireo gilvus*—Seen in a grove of aspens along the Slough Creek trail.

#### **CROWS AND JAYS: Corvidae (6)**

**Canada Jay** *Perisoreus canadensis*—A brief sighting in Hayden Valley.

**Steller's Jay** *Cyanocitta stelleri*—We saw several of these beautiful and loud jays in Cooke City.

**Black-billed Magpie** *Pica hudsonia*—These striking birds are common in the park, and we saw multiples each day.

**Clark's Nutcracker** *Nucifraga columbiana*—These cheeky corvids are often found in areas where human food is available and have earned the nickname, "camp robbers." We saw several in Cooke City.

**American Crow** *Corvus brachyrhynchos*—Seen flying in Bozeman.

**Common Raven** *Corvus corax*—Ravens are thought to be among the most intelligent birds in the world, and we saw them daily in the park, including one that seemed to be taunting a coyote, and one that stole food from a fox family in Cooke City.

#### **TITS AND CHICKADEES: Paridae (1)**

**Mountain Chickadee** *Poecile gambeli*—Nice sightings at the Tower Store as well as on the Slough Creek trail.

#### **LARKS: Alaudidae (1)**

**Horned Lark** *Eremophila alpestris*—We had a nice Horned Lark sighting while driving the Beartooth Highway.

#### **SWALLOWS AND MARTINS: Hirundinidae (5)**

**Northern Rough-winged Swallow** *Stelgidopteryx serripennis*—Seen at Nez Perce Creek.

**Tree Swallow** *Tachycineta bicolor*—Seen sporadically throughout the forested areas of the park.

**Violet-green Swallow** *Tachycineta thalassina*—These are the most common swallows in the area, and we saw them in many different locations, most noticeably around Cooke City.

**Barn Swallow** *Hirundo rustica*—We found a few Barn Swallows near Nez Perce Creek.

**Cliff Swallow** *Petrochelidon pyrrhonota*—We had an amazing look at a Cliff Swallow colony on the side of Soda Butte.

#### **KINGLETS: Regulidae (1)**

**Ruby-crowned Kinglet** *Regulus calendula*—We had very nice looks at this shy bird in a campground north of Cooke City.

#### **WRENS: Troglodytidae (1)**

**House Wren** *Troglodytes aedon*—A close-up sighting on the Slough Creek trail.

#### **DIPPERS: Cinclidae (1)**

**American Dipper** *Cinclus mexicanus*—Despite a heroic effort by Wes to find this bird, we only had a fleeting glimpse in the Lamar River canyon.

#### **STARLINGS AND MYNAS: Sturnidae (1)**

**European Starling** *Sturnus vulgaris*—Common throughout the area.

### **THRUSHES: Turdidae (3)**

**Mountain Bluebird** *Sialia currucoides*—We had great observations of Mountain Bluebirds, with some of the best being on the Beartooth Highway.

**Townsend's Solitaire** *Myadestes townsendi*—It took us a minute to ID this bird, but we had a nice sighting in the Hoodoos near Mammoth.

**American Robin** *Turdus migratorius*—Very common in the area and seen daily.

### **PIPITS AND WAGTAILS: Motacillidae (1)**

**American Pipit** *Anthus rubescens*—It was a treat to see the small American Pipit in the snowy parts of the Beartooth Highway.

### **FINCHES: Fringillidae (2)**

**Black Rosy-Finch** *Leucosticte atrata*—This was one of our favorite birds of the trip, and we all enjoyed watching them explore their unique habitat on the edges of melting snow on the Beartooth Highway.

**Pine Siskin** *Spinus pinus*—Seen in pine trees near Cooke City.

### **NEW WORLD SPARROWS: Passerellidae (6)**

**Chipping Sparrow** *Spizella passerina*—This sparrow was common, especially in the Slough Creek trail area.

**Brewer's Sparrow** *Spizella breweri*—Seen multiple times in the park.

**Dark-eyed Junco** *Junco hyemalis*—Spotted in both Slough Creek and in Cooke City.

**White-crowned Sparrow** *Zonotrichia leucophrys*—Common in Cooke City and on the Beartooth Highway.

**Lincoln's Sparrow** *Melospiza lincolnii*—Seen in Gardiner and Cooke City.

**Green-tailed Towhee** *Pipilo chlorurus*—Seeing this colorful and charismatic bird on our last morning in Slough Creek was a welcome surprise.

### **NEW WORLD BLACKBIRDS: Icteridae (6)**

**Yellow-headed Blackbird** *Xanthocephalus xanthocephalus*—This beautiful blackbird is common in wetland areas around the park.

**Western Meadowlark** *Sturnella neglecta*—We had a nice look at a Western Meadowlark in Paradise Valley as a handsome pronghorn buck passed underneath.

**Red-winged Blackbird** *Agelaius phoeniceus*—Common in the wetlands around the park.

**Brown-headed Cowbird** *Molothrus ater*—Commonly seen in areas where bison and elk are present, sometimes even riding on the backs of the ungulates.

**Brewer's Blackbird** *Euphagus cyanocephalus*—See above! Same general deal as the Brown-headed Cowbird.

**Common Grackle** *Quiscalus quiscula*—Seen sporadically throughout the park, sometimes hard to distinguish from the male Brown-headed Cowbird.

### **NEW WORLD WARBLERS: Parulidae (5)**

**MacGillivray's Warbler** *Geothlypis tolmiei*—With its gray head and yellowish-green body, we noticed a few of these warblers flitting around the trees in the Slough Creek bottom.

**Common Yellowthroat** *Geothlypis trichas*—Common in willows throughout the park. Can be recognized by their distinctive "bandit mask."

**Yellow Warbler** *Setophaga petechia*—We saw a number of these bright, flying lemons in willows around the park and in Cooke City.

**Yellow-rumped Warbler** *Setophaga coronata*—Seen commonly in the northern range of the ecosystem.

**Wilson's Warbler** *Cardellina pusilla*—We had a quick glimpse of a Wilson's Warbler near Nez Perce Creek.

### **CARDINALS, GROSBEAKS, AND ALLIES: Cardinalidae (1)**

**Western Tanager** *Piranga ludoviciana*—We had a wonderful, close-up look at a particularly showy Western Tanager in a grove of trees near Roosevelt Lodge. \*\*VOTED BIRD OF THE TRIP\*\*

### **MAMMALS (18)**

**Pronghorn** *Antilocapra Americana*—Common the prairies around the park and in Paradise Valley.

**American Bison** *Bison bison*—With over 5,000 bison in the park currently, we had no trouble finding these massive bovines around every corner, particularly in the Lamar Valley with their playful “red dog” calves.

**Rocky Mountain Goat** *Oreamnos americanus*—Seen along cliffs on the NE entrance road, and on the Beartooth Highway.

**Moose** *Alces alces*—We had a nice look at a bull moose through the scope in the Elk Meadows area.

**Elk** *Cervus elaphus*—Very common in Gardiner and the Mammoth area, and we were lucky to see a few new-born calves, including one VERY unfortunate calf that met a hungry black bear.

**Mule Deer** *Odocoileus hemionus*—Common around the Cooke City area.

**Coyote** *Canis latrans*—We had some very nice coyote sightings, and watched as one followed a raven in the Little America section of the park.

**Gray Wolf** *Canis lupus*—When out with Jack from Wolf Tracker, we saw a female wolf nursing pups at the Slough Creek den site, and a yearling wolf was nearby. We also got a good look at a solitary wolf on the shore of the Lamar River on our last day.

**Red Fox** *Vulpes vulpes*—Having a red fox den in Cooke City was a highlight of the trip. Each night and morning in Cooke City, several members of our group would go out to watch the fox kits as they played around the den and awaited the next meal from mom. Fox TV indeed!

**American Badger** *Taxidea taxus*—Wes had said that he really wanted to find this mammal for the trip, and we sure lucked out. Twice the female badger crossed the Slough Creek trail in front of us, and on the first sighting, we got to watch as she stuffed her face with rodents to take back to her kits. \*\*VOTED MAMMAL OF THE TRIP\*\*

**American Black Bear** *Ursus americanus*—We could hardly turn a corner without seeing a black bear, and we counted more than 20 of the forest-dwelling ursids as we traveled through the park. One of our best sightings involved a sleepy yearling in a tree, and of course there was the incredible sighting of a black bear eating an elk calf near Mammoth.

**Brown (Grizzly) Bear** *Ursus arctos*—We were very lucky to watch a female and subadult for an hour as they looked for food on the side of a hill near Lake Butte on the East Entrance Road. The bears were only about 150 yards away, and we were thrilled to spend so much time with them. Another great sighting involved a courting pair of grizzlies in the Hayden Valley.

**Golden-mantled Ground Squirrel** *Callospermophilus lateralis*—Common on the Beartooth Highway and elsewhere.

**Yellow-bellied Marmot** *Marmota flaviventris*—Common on the Beartooth Highway and elsewhere in piles of rocks.

**Yellow-pine Chipmunk** *Tamias amoenus*—Seen on the Beartooth Highway.

**Least Chipmunk** *Tamias minimus*—Seen up close on the Beartooth Highway.

**American Red Squirrel** *Tamiasciurus hudsonicus*—Common in the woods around the park.

**Uinta Ground Squirrel** *Urocitellus armatus*—We spotted dozens of these ground squirrels all around the park in sagebrush areas.