

Yellowstone in the Fall | Species List

September 16 – 23, 2023 | with Naturalist Journeys



With guides Hugh Simmons and Bryan Calk and participants Larry, Vicky, Mike, Barb, and Kathy

Compiled by: Bryan Calk

To view the detailed species report, visit: <https://ebird.org/tripreport/158265>

Summary:

It's impossible to be anything but awestruck and filled with joy in a place like the Greater Yellowstone Ecosystem. Our journey started by following the scenic Gallatin and Madison River valleys down to Island Park, Idaho where we stayed right on the banks of the Snake River with Bald Eagle, mergansers, and Mule Deer right out our back doors. Out at Henry's Lake and Harriman State Park, we set ourselves in quietly dynamic spaces away from the crowds, with mist rising with the dawn and a cool calmness in the lodgepole pine forest. We found bugling Elk, Mountain Bluebird, Pronghorn on the plains, and 14 species of waterfowl including several Trumpeter Swan - the result of decades of dedicated conservation work after once being near the brink of extinction. We then moved to West Yellowstone, a quaint town at the gateway of America's Original National Park. We wasted no time in exploring Yellowstone itself, focusing on the major geothermal features. Old Faithful was true to its name erupting right on schedule, but its extensive surrounding geysers were not to be outdone as several erupted during our visit, including the spectacular Beehive geyser. The Norris Geyser Basin, Fountain Paintpots, Mud Volcano, and West Thumb all dazzled with their spectacular array of colors, bubbling cauldrons of mud, and mysterious vents of superheated steam. We marveled at the Grand Canyon of the Yellowstone's steep and dramatic yellow cliffs at Artist's Point with a fabulous view of the lower falls, but Firehole and Gibbon Falls gorgeous cascades of water were equally as breathtaking. One surreal moment came as we were marveling at the vastness of Grand Prismatic hot springs, when a distant pack of Gray Wolves all started to howl in unison and earnest, stopping us dead in our tracks in disbelief. At LeHardy rapids, we were amazed at the fortitude and agility of Harlequin Ducks and American Dippers as they navigated the whitewater in search of food. Finally, it was time to head south to Grand Teton, where we were welcomed by American Pika popping in and out of the skree. During our time in the Jackson area, we found a frenzy of birds stuffing themselves in preparation for migration, including impressive numbers of American Robin and Cedar Waxwing, both kinglets, Mountain and Black-capped Chickadees, Orange-crowned Warbler, and Osprey that even caught a trout in dramatic fashion right in front of us. But best of all perhaps were our large mammals as we had several moments with Black Bears including an adorable cub, all gorging on hawthorn berries just feet away from the van. A couple of Moose gave us nice views including a stunning bull walking through the distant aspens which were all freshly brilliant gold on our last morning outing. But one of the most impressive stops during our time here was at the National Museum of Wildlife Art, where we were enraptured by the timelines and artists' interpretations of this endlessly inspiring region. In the end, we walked away with a new appreciation for what makes this place so special.