

# The YELLOWSTONE



## News

July 19, 1996

NPS Employee Newsletter

Next Deadline: July 31

### Housing Plan Open House Scheduled

The Planning Office will host an Open House to update all interested employees and their families on the Mammoth Housing Plan. The Open House will be held in the Fire Cache conference room on Monday, July 29, from 3 p.m. to 6 p.m. This is not a formal public meeting, but a chance for us to keep you informed. The Planning Office will be available to answer your questions.

The conceptual site plans for Mammoth, YACC Camp, and the Gravel Pit site (adjacent to the Gardiner School), have evolved since the open house held in May 1995. We want to give you the opportunity to see the changes we are proposing. If you are unable to attend and would like to discuss the alternatives, stop by or call Leigh Anne anytime, at extension 2019.

### Heartfelt Condolences

Our sympathies are with Lynn and Beth Kaeding after the recent death of Lynn's father Robert Kaeding. Robert passed away at the age of 72 on Sunday, July 7 in Randolph, Wisconsin. Memorials may be made to the Parkinson's Disease Foundation.

### Park Animals Getting Bolder

By Scott McMillion

(reprinted from the *Bozeman Daily Chronicle*, Sunday, July 21, 1996)

Last Sunday a teen-age angler was cleaning a fish at the cleaning station at a marina on Yellowstone Lake about 10 p.m. Then a pair of coyotes trotted out of the fresh darkness and kept coming. The boy dropped his fish, and one coyote grabbed it. Then the other one bit him on the thigh, tearing his pants and scratching him a little.

Rangers baited traps with fish, hoping to capture and kill the coyotes. But the coyotes proved too wary, said Dan Reinhart, a management biologist at Lake, and the traps were removed after a week.

It wasn't the first time such an incident has occurred. "Habituated" animals have been a problem in the park for years, and biologists say it's not going away. Animals that become too comfortable around people can become annoying or dangerous for tourists, and often bring harm to themselves as well.

Another coyote was causing problems in the Mammoth Hot Springs area last week, following small children and small dogs. That animal got off easy. Biologist Kerry Gunther, who helps manage habituated animals in the park, darted it Tuesday, put an ear tag on it and shipped it to the backcountry.

As Gunther spoke in his office in Mammoth, a few hundred yards away a couple of families gathered at a shady picnic table across a busy street from the dining hall. Children as young as 2 years old were feeding pretzels to chubby ground squirrels (which can harbor plague), who ate from their hand.

Could the coyote and squirrel incidents be related? Perhaps.

Before he darted the coyote, Gunther had spent two days following the animal around Mammoth, a place bustling with tourists. "It was spending most of its time around the ground squirrels, where people are feeding them," Gunther said. When people feed ground squirrels and chipmunks, it leads to artificially high populations, which draw in predators, which get accustomed to people and sometimes become dangerously aggressive, biologists say.

"It starts out with habituation, and they get bolder and bolder," Gunther said, adding that coyotes must be killed every year because they get too aggressive, sometimes biting people or jumping up on children.

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## ♀♂ New Arrivals ♀♂

Congratulations to proud parents Steven and Ellen Petrick-Underwood on the birth of their son Thomas August Underwood. Thomas was born on July 4 and was named in honor of Thomas Jefferson who was also born on July 4. He weighed in at 9 lbs. 3 oz. and joins brother Ben at home.

Congratulations also to Willie and Pam Burkhart who have welcomed son Cole Robert into their lives. Cole was born on July 5 at 5:29 p.m. and weighed 7 lbs.

## Co-op Recreation News

Remember the summer of 1996 by purchasing employee-designed Yellowstone t-shirts! The artists of Yellowstone have come out of the woodwork to produce some of the best designs ever. This year you'll find t-shirts, long sleeve shirts, sweatshirts, and night shirts in a variety of colors. Don't forget to buy one for a friend back home! Talk to your Yellowstone Employee Co-Op Rec program for details. Excited about getting into the backcountry, but don't have the right equipment? Check out your location Co-Op Recreation Program to make your next trip a little more enjoyable. They rent out five different backpacks, sleeping bags, rest pads, 2-person and 4-person tents, backpacking stoves and water filters. This is also a great way to try out equipment before you purchase it yourself. Great stuff—great rates. Need more info? Call your location recreation staff.

## Research Library News

The draft Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) for the New World Project is scheduled for release this (continued on next page)

Biologists and managers use a variety of terms to describe animals that have lost their fear or wariness of people; i. acclimated, tolerant, food-conditioned.

Many animals here are "tolerant" of people. Witness the antelope, elk and bison that allow people to approach them. Others are "habituated," like the elk drawn to Mammoth's carefully tended lawns or some of the bears that graze along roadsides, ignoring people. But the animals most likely to pose a threat - either to themselves or to people - are the ones that are "food-conditioned."

Aggressive coyotes have been an increasingly common problem in recent years, Gunther said, and most of them got that way after tasting human food. "It appears that feeding not only creates beggars but removes the fear that coyotes have towards humans, which can predispose these individuals to aggressive encounters in the future," wrote Bob Crabtree, a Bozeman biologist who has been studying coyotes in Yellowstone for years. "There is absolutely no evidence to suggest that coyotes are naturally beggars."

However, the problems are not limited to coyotes. Along the Madison River, where rare trumpeter swans nest, people often feed the magnificent birds, according to Park Service bird biologist Terry McEneaney. "People come in and think they're in a city park," McEneaney said. "They have this need to feed wildlife."

The handouts themselves may not hurt the swans, he said, but "when they lose their fear of people they lose their fear of predators." Plus, the bread and other snacks lure the birds out of the water and onto highways where they risk becoming roadkill.

Ravens have also learned that people are a source of food. Snowmobilers, bundled in thick suits and heavy gloves, often drop food scraps without realizing it, McEneaney said. Ravens then associate snowmobiles with food, and that can mean serious damage from the curious and aggressive birds. "Ravens are wonderful until they get on the back of your snowmobile, tear open the velcro on your pack, eat your granola and then fly away with your tiny little Olympus camera," McEneaney said.

Other birds cadge scraps around picnic areas and larger wildlife sometimes is endangered by human food, often in ways that people don't imagine. Bighorn sheep like bread, for instance.

Gunther said he's had reports of bighorns using their teeth to scrape mashed sandwiches from park roadways. That puts them in danger from traffic, and "it can't be good for their teeth," he added.

The problem is not new to Yellowstone or to other places, and wildlife managers have struggled with it for decades. "This is a learning experience for all of us," Gunther said, "They don't teach any of this in wildlife management courses."

However, there have been some notable successes in the park. After years of aggressive enforcement and effective public education, most people know better than to feed a bear in the park. From 1930 to 1969, bears ate a lot of human food and injured an average of 45 people a year in Yellowstone. That number is now down to an average of one injury a year, Gunther said, and those injuries usually happen in surprise encounters that are difficult or

summer. This document will be available for your review and comment at the Research Library. We hope to have adequate copies so that we can allow patrons to check out the materials on a restricted time basis. Watch for further details.

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In this time of budget cuts and restricted funds, it is always nice to have a donor who is interested enough in the library to be on the lookout for new books and materials for our collection. Also, as librarians can not survey every new book that is published, it helps to have someone who frequents bookstores, even used book sections, to find items we need. Such a person is Lee Silliman, a teacher and photographer from Deer Lodge, Montana. Over the years Mr. Silliman has visited our library frequently, and has donated many books and articles of historic and current interest about Yellowstone Park.

Within the last two years we have added the following titles to our collection, donations from this generous patron and friend: *A Grizzly Death in Yellowstone*, by Cal Glover; *10 Favorite Hikes in Yellowstone National Park and Day Hikes in YNP: West Yellowstone to Old Faithful*, by Robert Stone; *Promised Land: Adventures and Encounters in Wild America*, by Michael Frome; *Motoring to Yellowstone in Slim's Model T:1927*, by Charles R. Monroe; *In Search of the Golden West: The Tourist in Western America National Parks*, and the *Woman's Voice: a History*, by Polly Welts Kaufman - which is in the accession process. As you can see, this is a substantial contribution over several years, and all the books before 1994 have not been listed. We are indebted to Mr. Silliman for his continued interest in and support of our library.

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impossible to avoid.

That success hasn't spread to other animals, possibly because they lack the dangerous reputation that bears have. And enforcement of feeding bans has dropped in recent years.

All park visitors receive a newsletter that tells them not to feed any animals. But rangers rarely cite people who ignore the warnings.

According to statistics provided by Assistant Chief Ranger Mike Murray, only two people have been ticketed for feeding wildlife between 1993 and 1995. Rangers issued verbal warnings about feeding wildlife 541 times in the same three-year period, but the number of verbal warnings is down 44 percent, from 239 instances in 1993 to 135 in 1995.

The decline "doesn't necessarily mean better behavior" by visitors, Murray said. Rather, it may indicate shifting priorities as shrinking budgets result in fewer patrol hours and increased duties, Murray said.

Other citations and warnings are up, however. Total warnings to visitors for all types of violations are up 20 percent in the period and all citations are up 9 percent.

Some biologists call for more enforcement. "If we don't help police this feeding problem it's going to get a lot worse," McEneaney said. "I can tell you one thing. It hasn't declined any."

Noting the success in teaching people not to feed bears, Reinhart said, "we need to implement that kind of standard for all wildlife species."

There is something deep inside many people that makes them want to feed wildlife, McEneaney added. They usually think what they're doing is harmless or beneficial. But the reverse is really true. "The only real contact with the environment for a lot of people is feeding," he said. "People just have to remember where they are. The best advice is just don't feed wildlife."

## COMMUNITY EVENTS

☛ Vet Visit Veterinarian, Dr. Jim Murray, will be at the Gardiner Exxon on Friday, July 26 from 2:00 - 5:00 p.m. No appointment necessary. Housecalls available upon request. Next visit: Aug 2.

☛ 2nd Annual Buffalo Rendezvous, August 3, 1996 at the Lamar Barn. Dutch Oven Cooking and Homebrew Tasting! Bring a Dutch oven with your favorite recipe and we will show you how to cook it or bring a dish to share. All beer will be brewed by Yellowstone Homebrewers. Plan on Dancing! Questions, call Keator at 344-7986.

## Summer Picnic Planned

All students, instructors, and their families, who participated in "Exploring Yellowstone", this summer's school program, are invited to celebrate together at a picnic on Thursday evening, August 1. We will meet at the Yellowstone Park School in lower Mammoth at 6 p.m. Please bring a potluck dish. Drinks will be provided. Student participants can pick up their "Exploring Yellowstone" ball caps at the picnic. Please contact Nancy Loren at 848-7589 with any questions.

## Employee Association Hosts Lunches in Park

On Wednesday, July 17, barbecues were sponsored by the Yellowstone Federal Employees Association at Grant Village, Lake, Madison, Canyon and Mammoth. Representatives from the association were present at each location to familiarize employees with the purpose of the group, involve the interior locations with association sponsored events and to acquire new memberships. Each luncheon was well received and many new memberships were obtained. The Association would like to thank everyone who helped with the preparation and clean-up of the event. There will be more to come. Stay tuned.

## Sample Ballots Received

Sample ballots for the Republican and Democratic primary election for YNP Park County residents are available for your perusal in the Superintendent's Office. Also available are clippings of interviews with candidates who will be on those ballots. Stop by and take a look.

## CLASSIFIED ADS

**For Sale:** 1984 Ford Bronco II, high miles but in good condition and runs great. 4x4, AC, \$2,300 or best offer. Call Ed Humphries at Canyon Maintenance, 242-2530.

**For Sale:** Sailboard, BIC Star, \$300. Backswing, \$50. Weight Bench, \$10. Recliner, beige leather, \$250. Vacuum cleaner, Hoover upright, \$30. Call Dorothy Bishop at 344-7441.

**For Sale:** Set of four stake pocket tie-downs for slide-in truck camper. \$10. Call 344-7756 after 5 p.m.

**For Sale:** Emerald green Jeep Cherokee. 2 door, with 6 speed manual transmission, air conditioning, trailer hitch and hookups. Like new. Contact Tim or Charissa Reid for more information; evenings, at 242-2515.

**For Sale:** Moving Sale/Neighborhood Garage Sale! #04 Solar Mountain Road, Saturday, July 20 from 9:00 a.m. to 3 p.m. Lots of great stuff!

**For Sale:** 190 mile antenna. VHF, UHF, FM, with original box and papers. In good shape, asking \$45. Call Al at 545-8028.

**For Sale:** Jonsered 520SP chainsaw. \$175. Call 344-7788.

**For Sale:** 1994 Dodge 2500 Cummins SLT package. Lots of extras. Call (406) 333-4760.

**Wanted:** 30 gallon aquarium. Call Steve at 344-7319.

**Kayak Instruction:** The Waterdance Kayak School is now offering kayak instruction out of Gardiner, MT. First-time beginner through advanced clinics offered on flat water, moving water, and whitewater. \$20 for group lesson and \$35 for private. American Canoe Association Certified Instruction. For more information contact Bryan Peterson after 5 p.m. at 848-7777 and leave a message.

*The Yellowstone News is a bi-weekly newsletter for NPS Yellowstone employees published by the Public Affairs Office. To submit articles, ads, or notice of events contact:*

*Jan Laye, Editor, Superintendent's Office 344-2003*