

YELLOWSTONE'S NATIVE LIFE

Established as the first National Park in the world, the 3,472 square miles of water and land provide some of the finest plant and animal habitat in our nation. Most of the Park is essentially as it was when the white man first saw it. It is a living community of plants and animals dependent for their existence on the total environment. The loss of one species whether it be plant or animal could have a drastic effect on other forms of life.

To preserve the Park in its natural condition we need your help to perpetuate this complex web of life. Park regulations prohibit the picking of plants and the molesting of wildlife in any way. Only through the combined efforts of all citizens can the integrity of this great National Park be maintained.

Plantlife

Like all forms of life, specific plants are found in the environment best suited for their existence. One soon discovers that there is a gradual change in plantlife as we move from the lower elevations to the lofty mountain peaks. In the lower dryer sections of the Park such as Mammoth the Rocky Mountain Juniper and the Limber Pine gradually takes over. This hearty tree comprises approximately 76% of the forested areas.

Occasionally Lodgepole Pine forests will be interspersed with climax species such a Douglas Fir and Englemann Spruce. Higher on the mountains near tree line, Whitebark Pine and Subalpine Fir are common. Each type of plant, whether tree, shrub or herb is characteristic of a specific type habitat. Sagebrush and Rabbitbrush indicate the dryer sections of the Park while the Willow is an indicator of a moist, wet habitat.

Wildflowers grow most profusely at the higher elevation where heavier precipitation nourishes the growing plants. Open meadows are often ablaze with color. Some of the most common plants are Indian Paintbrush, Aster, Penstemon, Lupine, Mountain Bluebells, Fireweed and the official Park flower, the Rocky Mountain Fringed Gentian.

Birdlife

Yellowstone is a sanctuary for the rare Trumpeter Swan. This large waterbird nests in the Park and is commonly seen in Yellowstone Lake and Yellowstone River. Because of the vast fish resources, fish-eating birds such as the Osprey, Bald Eagle, Double Crested Cormorant, White Pelican and Great Blue Heron make Yellowstone their home much of the year. Ducks, Geese, Gulls and Terns are also common.

The smaller perching birds of wide variety may be seen at different elevations in the Park.