

ENVIROKIDS WORKSHOPS



YELLOWSTONE NATIONAL PARK



Yellowstone National Park – Most national parks are fantastic to visit but Yellowstone is one of the great wonders, the park is in Wyoming in the USA, the park spreads into parts of Montana and Idaho too. Yellowstone became a national park in 1872 and was signed into law by President **Ulysses s Grant**. The park is the first national park in the USA and most likely the first in the world. Yellowstone features some of the best ecosystems in the world and in 1978 the park was made a UNESCO World Heritage Site from canyons, rivers, and the 27 forest with such a variety of trees and plants, there are hot springs and gushing geysers, including its most famous, Old Faithful. The park is also home to hundreds of animal species, including bears, bison, elk and antelope and recently reintroduced wolves. Yellowstone National Park is nearly 3,500-sq.-mile the size of Dublin, Kildare and Meath combined. The park attracts 4 million visitors each year, with the thousands of wild walking trails and cycling paths, the park has a lot to explore. The park also has a loop road, allowing you to view the park from your car. The loop road is 142 miles long and has all the attractions that the park has to offer like the hot springs and roaming animals. In this, the final issue, we will take a closer look at a truly magical place, **Yellowstone National Park**.



The Parks Wildlife

The Yellowstone National Park has such a large variety of creatures and one the largest concentrations in the world. The wildlife that lives in the park includes Bears, Wolves, Badgers and otters, to name a few, and in total 61 different mammals. There are 500 Grizzly bears and over 350 wolves as well as Lynx and Wolverines resident in the park. In Yellowstone there are over 400 Moose but in recent years numbers have dropped due to drought and other factors. **Moose** are the largest of the deer family and Unlike elk, moose are solitary and can live up to 20 years in Yellowstone. Their favourite food is willows and aquatic vegetation. **Elk** have the biggest numbers in Yellowstone Park with over 15,000 and can be found in all areas through the park. In the mating season they crash their antlers together, push each other intensely, and wrestle to be the alfa male. While loud and extremely strenuous, fights rarely cause serious injury. The weaker male ultimately gives up and he will leave the area. Elk Calves are born in May and June. Another large animal to be see is the **Bison** their numbers have increase each year in Yellowstone Park. There are over 4,000 bison residing in Yellowstone. When they start moving to different areas in the park Traffic can be at a standstill for hours as they cross the roads in the park. Bison can exceed over 2,000 lbs and cause more human injuries than any other wildlife combined in the Park. Bison are large, but at full speed can travel up to 40kph. The young are born in April and May and like elk, bison have great numbers in the park. **Grizzly** bears are perhaps one of the most fabulous animals living in the park. Grizzly bears are identified by their large hump above the shoulders and their rump is lower than the shoulders. They are larger than the black bear and can grow up to 8ft tall and 800lb weight. 75% of a Grizzly diet will be berries, leaves and nuts. When a Grizzly is preparing for hibernation, they can eat up to 25 fish in a single day, they can have 2 cubs and the cubs stay with their mother for up to 3 years. All of these animals play a huge roll in the Biodiversity of Yellowstone national park and without them the park would not flourish.



One animal that is making a big impact is the **Wolf**, thanks to a phenomenally successful reintroduction program, wolves are now back in the park after an absence of almost 70 years. From January 1995 to September 1997, 41 wolves from Canada were released in the park. Those animals have done remarkably well, reproducing at a rapid rate. There are currently 13 wolf packs making Yellowstone National Park their home. Wolves are some of the most intelligent mammals on the planet but should be treated with respect. They live in groups of 5 to 7 in a pack, they feed on deer, elk and when hunting for food, they can travel up to 100km. The introduction of the wolf to the park in 1995 has proven to be a huge success, not only for the wolves but for the park. Since the Wolves were introduced, the parks ecosystem has thrived and more animals have made the park their home. Before the Wolves, the deer and elk had no predators, so their numbers soured and with this the natural flowers and fauna had vanished. When the wolves arrived in the park there was 1 beaver colony, now there are 9. There are more bird species in the park since the wolves arrived. For an ecosystem to work we need all aspects to work together. Also, in the park there are **Coyotes**. You can identify a wolf from a coyote from its size. A wolf can be 2 to 3 times larger than a coyote. Their face is rounder, the ears and nose are not as sharp. Most often than not, they are with a pack, whereas coyotes are often solitary. There are other animals to be seen in the park like the **otter**. The otters inhabit the shorelines of the lakes and rivers. Their main food source is the cutthroat trout, whitefish, clams, and anything else swimming within the area. They use old logs as their temporary shelter and often travel miles a day in search of food..



Old Faithful

Yellowstone is teeming with an estimated 10,000 thermal features, with 500 Geysers. Of these, only three percent are geysers. The rest are steaming pools, hissing fumaroles, bubbling mud pots or warm seeps. Most of the park's geysers are small, and splutter and splash, barely reaching ten feet in height. Only six grand geysers, those which erupt 100 feet or higher on a predictable daily basis, exist. **Old Faithful**, the most famous of these, erupts once approximately every 45 to 90 minutes. Old Faithful was first discovered in 1870 and is said to have had over a million eruptions since being discovered. The water coming out of Old faithful can be hotter than you get out of your kettle and the eruptions can be over 100ft high. Geysers are often found near active Volcanos because geysers are caused by Magma (Lava). Surface water usually goes down to 2,000 meters, there the water mixes with hot rocks. The pressurized water begins to boil and the steam bursts out of the geyser. On average, Old Faithful will expel over 12,000 liters every time it erupts" the average house in Ireland would use 1200 liters a day". The eruptions last between 2 and 5 minutes expelling enough water to last for 3 weeks. Old faithful is not the biggest Geyser in the park, there is one called The Steamboat which has 2 vents and eruptions are rare "between 1911 and 1941 it did not erupt at all but in the last 2 years Steamboat has erupted 40 times", the eruptions can reach heights of up to 400ft. In the park the Geysers are just another reason the park is such an important part of our ecosystem. Over the course of Envirokids Blogs, we have looked at how wonderful the world is and how, if left alone, nature will thrive, from the Amazon to the Great Barrier reef, nature has so much to offer. Unfortunately, all these fabulous places are under threat and if not protected, will vanish very soon. Through this tough time, during the Covid 19 crisis, nature has made a slight recovery and we are hearing the birds sing once more. We all need to be aware of what we do each day in our daily lives, we have one planet and we need to protect it.



Fun Facts

1. Yellowstone was established on March 1, 1872.
2. It is the world's first national park.
3. Yellowstone is 5 times larger than Dublin
4. The park is 96% in Wyoming, 3% in Montana, and 1% in Idaho.
5. The highest point in the park is 11,358' at Eagle Peak and the lowest point in the park is 5,282' at Reese Creek.
6. Yellowstone has 1000 to 3000 earthquakes annually.
7. There are more than 300 active geysers.
8. There are more than 290 waterfalls.
9. Yellowstone is home to 67 species of mammals, 285 species of birds, 16 species of fish, 6 species of reptiles, 5 species of amphibians, and more than 7 aquatic nuisance species.
10. Two threatened species call the park home - Canada lynx and Grizzly bears. Wolverines are a proposed threatened species.
11. Yellowstone has more than 1800 archaeological sites.
12. There are 5 park entrances and 466 miles of roads.
13. There are 15 miles of boardwalk.
14. There are 92 trailheads that access approximately 1000 miles of trails.
15. In 2015, Yellowstone National Park had over 4 Million visits - a park record.
16. Old Faithful, a geyser, erupts every 70 minutes on average.

Activities to do at home

You can do some searching at home about National parks in Ireland, their wildlife and how the park is important to our community.

Do a small project on how a Geyser works and why they work.



Answers from last issue our canal systems

- 1, What's the oldest canal in Ireland? Newry, started in 1731
- 2, When was the Grand canal finished? 1804
- 3, What is the name of an apprentice on a Guinness barge? Greaser
- 4, How long is the Royal canal? 90 miles
- 5, How many active canals are there in Ireland? 7 active canals
- 6, How did the first barges move? Horse drawn
- 7, How many barrels were carried in a Guinness barge? 300 barrels
- 8, Why are locks used on the canals? To move the barge to another level
- 9, How much did the Grand canal cost to build? £877,000
- 10, How many locks on the Royal canal? 46 locks



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