



# YELLOWSTONE FOREVER

## OWLS OF YELLOWSTONE

### Itinerary & Details

FIELD SEMINAR - SUMMER 2023

**INSTRUCTOR:** Katy Duffy, M.S.

**INSTRUCTOR BIOGRAPHY:** Katy Duffy has been a licensed bird bander specializing in diurnal raptors, owls, and songbirds for more than 40 years. She has also conducted late winter – spring surveys for advertising male forest owls in Yellowstone and Grand Teton National Parks for 23 years. She has counted diurnal raptors in Yellowstone National Park during fall migration since 2010. She has given programs and taught classes on diurnal raptors, owls, and other birds of the Greater Yellowstone Ecosystem for more than 20 years.

Katy worked for the National Park Service in Yellowstone and Grand Teton National Parks for 32 years. She was a supervisory resource education ranger in Yellowstone and a ranger-naturalist in Grand Teton. She has a M.S. in ecology from Rutgers University.

**ACTIVITY LEVEL:** This course is an activity **level 2** and students enrolled in this course are expected to be active participants. Be prepared to hike up to 3 miles per day, comfortably, with elevation gains up to 600 feet. Some off trail hiking possible.\*

*\*All field activities will be conducted as a group. If you cannot meet the activity level expectations during your program, you may be restricted from participation in daily outings. We will not alter program itineraries or activities to accommodate participants who cannot meet the expectations of the stated activity level.*

**LOCATION:** Course begins at the Yellowstone Forever classrooms located in Gardiner, MT.

**PROGRAM DATES & TIMES:** The program begins at 9:00 a.m. on Saturday, May 27, 2023, and ends on Sunday, May 28, 2023, at 1:00 p.m.

**LODGING CHECK-IN & CHECK-OUT:** No lodging is provided for this course, however, there may be limited lodging available through Yellowstone Forever at the Yellowstone Field Overlook Campus. For more information, please contact the Institute at [institute@yellowstone.org](mailto:institute@yellowstone.org). You can also find more information on Gardiner based lodging here: [Gardiner, MT - Lodging](#). (Yellowstone River Motel will grant you 10% off their rooms if you mention that you are taking a Yellowstone Forever Field Seminar.)

**MEALS:** You will need to bring your own food; lunch should be able to travel in the field with you.

For general information about the facilities, preparing for classes, what to expect, cancellation policies, and more, please see the [Gardiner Field Seminars - Summer General Information](#) document.

## FROM THE INSTRUCTOR

I am very pleased that you have signed up for this class! I freely admit that I am obsessed with birds in general and particularly raptors, but my most intense passion is reserved for owls with all their fascinating adaptations to a nocturnal lifestyle. That's the reason I have conducted field studies of owls for the past 40 years. I'm really looking forward to sharing this passion, and the knowledge I've gained, with you!

We will start with a classroom session to prepare ourselves for three field trips where we will read the Yellowstone landscape for owls: we will be looking at various habitats in the park and discussing why owls prefer these habitats. We will also cover ways to observe owls ethically so that we don't disturb them, especially while they are nesting or seeking prey. Our evening field trip will occur at Owl Time, which begins just before dusk when nocturnal owls begin to stir. We'll be using both our eyes and ears because much of owl observation is auditory. Owl nestlings loudly let their parents know how hungry they have become during the day. Mated pairs vocalize to each other for a variety of reasons, including announcing delivery of food for nestlings, as pair-bond reinforcement or as defense of their territory.

While **owl observations cannot be guaranteed**, we will explore habitat that various owl species have used as they attempted to attract mates in late winter and early spring. This will maximize our chances to detect owl activity and will allow you to be able to assess various habitat types for the likelihood of their use by owls.

I'm looking forward to meeting you and spending much of two days with you in Yellowstone immersed in owl natural history!

- *Katy Duffy*

## PROGRAM ITINERARY

The itinerary is designed to take advantage of the best opportunities in the park, but may be adjusted to adapt to weather conditions, wildlife activity, holidays, and road construction. *The details and timing of the agenda are subject to change.*

- Day 1** Welcome - classroom in the morning, field trips in the afternoon/evening
- 9:00 a.m.** Participants meet at the Yellowstone Forever office at 308 W. Park Street, Gardiner, MT. The class will gather in a classroom for meet and greet in addition to covering course logistics and itinerary.
- Participants will then delve into everything owl. Students will go over a PowerPoint program on owl species found in Yellowstone, including identification and ecology, and listening to owl vocalizations. The class will look at owl wings, tails, and feet on loan from Yellowstone National Park. This session is designed to prepare the class for field trips where we read the landscape for owls.
- 12:00 p.m.** Lunch – on your own or in the classroom
- 1:00 p.m.** Afternoon Field Trip; meet at the bus outside the YF classroom.
- The class will board the bus and enter Yellowstone National Park and travel to view and experience owl habitats. The group will walk short distances and discuss which owl species use these habitats. Participants should bring binoculars, water, sunscreen, jacket/rain gear.
- 4:00 p.m.** Dinner break – on your own
- 7:00 p.m.** Evening Field Trip; meet at the bus outside the YF classroom.
- Participants should bring warm layers, binoculars, water, and headlamp. The class will return to the park to experience 'owl time'. The group will look and listen for owls at several stops. Participants should plan to return to Gardiner by 10 p.m.
- Day 2** Classroom session and morning field trip
- 9:00 a.m.** Meet in the classroom
- Participants will review our discoveries of the previous day.
- 9:30 a.m.** Morning field trip
- Participants should bring layers, binoculars, water, and snacks. The group will board the bus to travel into the park to experience additional owl habitats.
- 12:45 p.m.** Return to Mammoth Hot Springs for class conclusion

## PROGRAM EQUIPMENT

For a full list of recommended equipment for all courses see the [Gardiner Field Seminars - Summer General Information](#) document.

### Items specific to this course are:

- Binoculars, if you have them - *loaners will be available*
- Headlamp
- Light day pack
- Waterproof clothing - *top and bottom*
- Light hiking boots
- Layers - *suited for spending time outside, including in the evening*
- Lunch and dinner

## RECOMMENDED READING

No prior reading is required or recommended for this course.

## WHOM TO CONTACT

**For any questions, concerns, or additional information please contact the following:**

- Program itinerary, health forms, payment, and activity questions please contact Yellowstone Forever at [institute@yellowstone.org](mailto:institute@yellowstone.org) or 406-848-2400
- Road updates, park conditions, and general park information please contact Yellowstone National Park Service at <https://www.nps.gov/yell/contacts.htm>
- If running late for a program, please contact 406-848-2400