



YELLOWSTONE FOREVER

ADVANCED WINTER WILDLIFE PHOTOGRAPHY

Itinerary & Details

FIELD SEMINAR – WINTER 2023/24

INSTRUCTOR: Meg Sommers

INSTRUCTOR BIOGRAPHY: Meg Sommers has been an outdoor enthusiast from early childhood. A resident of Cody, Wyoming, she has been photographing wildlife seriously in Yellowstone since 1990 and teaching wildlife photography here since 2010. Meg's nature photography covers the full spectrum, but her passion is to photograph wildlife and help to tell their stories. While her heart will always belong to the Greater Yellowstone area, she has traveled worldwide to seek out new and interesting wildlife. Through her award-winning digital photography, she has found a way to share the beauty and grace of these areas with others. A knowledgeable naturalist, her dual passions for both nature and photography combine with her enthusiasm for sharing the wonders of it all with her students.

ACTIVITY LEVEL: This course is activity level 1 and students enrolled in this course are expected to be active participants. Be prepared for leisurely hikes up to 1 mile per day through relatively flat terrain on maintained or snow-packed trails.

**All field activities will be conducted as a group. If participants cannot meet the activity level expectations during the program, they may be restricted from participation in daily outings. Program itineraries or activities will not be altered 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 7:00 PM on Sunday, January 21, 2024, and ends on Thursday, January 25, 2024, at 5:00 PM

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. More information on Gardiner-based lodging here: [Gardiner, MT - Lodging](#).

MEALS: This course is not catered. Participants will need to bring their own food; lunch should be able to travel in the field.

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

PROGRAM ITINERARY

Is your camera one of your best friends? Do you want to learn more about wildlife and how to tell their stories? Then come immerse yourself with fellow enthusiasts in the heart of Yellowstone's northern range. Witness the struggle for winter survival as its inhabitants go about their lives. The class will spend most of the time in the field, having ample opportunities to photograph wildlife and learn about their behaviors, all while practicing techniques and the ethics of wildlife photography. Participants will be out early to take maximum advantage of the light and animal movements and work on critiques in the evening.

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 Evening Orientation

Welcome and introductions

Day 2 Advanced Photography Techniques

Early morning will be spent in the field looking for wildlife. Mid-day the class will return to Gardiner to discuss a variety of topics including finding wildlife, wildlife photography ethics, approach techniques, masterful composition, telling the story and questions specific to the group. Late afternoon the class will again head out into the field to look for wildlife to photograph.

Days 3 - 5 Photography in the Field

Both days will primarily be spent out in the field. The group will depart for the field early in the mornings to take advantage of animal activities and good light. Along the way the class will discuss animal behavior, naturalist skills, nature photography code of conduct, and any technical questions that may arise. The instructor will be side-by-side with students throughout the day, answering any individual questions and providing pointers and helpful tips. In the evenings, the group will reassemble in the classroom for critiques and helpful tips on students' work those days. The final evening, we will post process student images taken during the class.

PROGRAM EQUIPMENT

This course requires participants to bring the items listed below. Additionally, for general program gear and for a full list of what is included in this course, check out the [Gardiner Field Seminars - Winter General Information](#) document.

REQUIRED CAMERA GEAR & EQUIPMENT

The class will be traveling through the park together on a 14-passenger bus. Camera equipment, except tripods, will be with participants in their seats. Many participants bring a camera bag packed with camera essentials and a separate small bag for other day essentials and personal items.

- ❑ **Camera Body**
- ❑ **Tripod** – sturdy with camera mount
- ❑ **Interchangeable Lenses** – participants can bring the longest lens they have, but shouldn't neglect smaller ones, such as a wide angle. Typically, this class uses everything from 16mm to 400- 800mm lenses. If students bring a large lens that cannot fit in the bus seat with them, they need to bring a protective case for it to ride in the back of the bus.
- ❑ **Manuals** - camera, lenses, computer software. Lens manuals can be beneficial but not required. If participants don't have a camera manual, they can look up camera manufacturer online and download the manual to refer to during the course.
- ❑ **Teleconverter** – if available.
- ❑ **Batteries** – for cameras and other gadgets. The number of camera batteries students should bring generally depends upon two factors: how quickly an individual camera consumes them and how cold it is outside. (Cold really draws down even the best batteries.) At a minimum, students should have at least one extra.
- ❑ **Battery Charger** – should be rechargeable. There will be plenty of outlets available to recharge devices.
- ❑ **Card Storage** – participants should anticipate that they will be out in the field all day and not able to purchase more card storage or download until later in the evening. Students will need to bring enough storage with them to get through the day.
- ❑ **Laptop** – not required but bring students should bring if they have one and want to use it. Be sure that the software has been preloaded to process images, because there is no internet available to students at the ranch.
- ❑ **Card Reader** - and attachment cord.
- ❑ **Jump Drive or Thumb Drive**
- ❑ **Rain Cover** – this does not need to be fancy, but it does need to be effective, even when the wind is blowing (lightly), for camera and lens as they sit waiting on a tripod.
- ❑ **Large Plastic Resealable Bag** – large enough for camera with largest lens (intact) and sealed up. Ziploc makes blanket-sized bags that work well for this.
- ❑ **Microfiber Cloth** - to dry and clean equipment with.

RECOMMENDED READING

There are books and reference materials at the ranch for the class to enjoy during the stay. In addition to those materials, the following recommended readings are not required but may enhance the visit.

- Camera Manuals
- Lens Manuals
- Computer Software Manuals – *If missing a manual or book and students use an Adobe product, Scott Kelby books are highly recommended. The book for the version of camera being used is recommended, regardless of how old or outdated. For non-Adobe products, participants should find a manual of some sort, as many can be downloaded online.*

WHOM TO CONTACT

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

- Program itinerary, health forms, payment, and general program questions please contact Yellowstone Forever at 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