



YELLOWSTONE FOREVER

RAVEN RENDEZVOUS

Itinerary & Details

FIELD SEMINAR – SUMMER 2024

INSTRUCTORS: John Marzluff, Ph.D & Colleen Marzluff, M.S.

INSTRUCTOR BIOGRAPHIES: John Marzluff is a professor of wildlife science at the University of Washington. Marzluff's early research focused on the social behavior and ecology of Jays and ravens. His current interest is bringing a behavioral approach to pressing conservation issues, and blending biology, conservation, and anthropology to understand the co-evolution of human and animal cultures. Marzluff's research has been featured in National Geographic, Audubon, Science, and Birding publications, and PBS Nature, NOVA, Bill Nye Saves the World, and Animal Planet. His recent books, *Welcome to Subirdia*, and *In Search of Meadowlarks*, suggest ways in which people can steward the splendid array of biological diversity in settled and agricultural lands.

Colleen Marzluff completed her bachelor's degree at Whitman College in Walla Walla, Washington in 1982. She returned to her native southwest to study biology at Northern Arizona University, where she completed a master's thesis on the feeding ecology of Abert's squirrels. After completing her degree, she worked with Dr. Russell Balda as a technician in his Avian Cognition Lab. Today she is involved in several local organizations and to keep her animal behavior skills sharp, she participates in pet therapy, agility, and herding.

ACTIVITY LEVEL: This course is 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 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: Lamar Buffalo Ranch – Yellowstone National Park, WY

PROGRAM DATES & TIMES: The program begins at 7:00 p.m. on Monday, July 1, 2024, and goes through Thursday, July 4, 2024, at 5:00 p.m.

LODGING CHECK-IN & CHECK-OUT: Lodging check-in begins at 4:00 p.m. on Monday, July 1, 2024 and lodging check-out is at 9:00 a.m. on Friday, July 5, 2024.

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, preparation for classes, what to expect, cancellation policies, and more, please see the [Lamar Buffalo Ranch - Summer General Information](#) document.

PROGRAM ITINERARY

You will be immersed in ongoing research into the raven's world during field tours, where you'll actively participate in the observation and tagging of ravens while engaging in discussions about our findings. As scientists, we encourage you to approach the natural world with rigorous curiosity and enthusiastic wonder, and we aim to instill these perspectives in our students. In this class, you'll learn firsthand about raven language, ecology, evolution, and behavior, with a focus on how this engaging species coexists among wolves and people. The connection between ravens and wolves serves as a dramatic example of a scavenger-predator relationship, and you will experience this connection by observing the many raven pairs we have tagged, from Tower Junction to Cooke City, as they interact with the Junction Butte Wolf Pack at kill and den sites. Currently, raven populations are expanding, and some managers propose lethal control to bolster declining populations of sage-grouse, shorebirds, and desert tortoises. You will confront this issue with an excursion to Gardiner that emphasizes a sustainable conservation approach: working with diverse stakeholders to reduce subsidies fueling raven population growth. In addition to field studies, you will engage in discussions about how ravens and wolves have inspired Yellowstone and the Pacific Northwest indigenous cultures, providing a contrast with today's relationship. Finally, you will explore past tribal injustices, such as why the Absaroka people were misnamed "Crow," and delve into current practices involving ravens, like the spring bison hunt, which is a major social event for both ravens and the Nez Perce and other NW tribes.

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

The program starts with an evening orientation. You will get to know one another and be introduced to the program. Throughout the evening, the itinerary and seminar key concepts will be discussed, as well as what to expect to pack for the field each day.

Day 2 Introduction to Raven Behavior and Ecology (focusing on nesting)

Through lectures by the Marzluffs and YNP field biologists, you will learn the basics of raven life and get updated on wolf and raven activity in the park, then into the field to see the variety of nest sites within the park and observe nesting behavior. In the evening you will watch a movie recapping raven behavior and their roles in human cultures.

Day 3 Raven Foraging and Movement Ecology

You will travel a common route taken by ravens that live within the Lamar Valley, emphasizing their long-distance commuting behavior to natural and human-provided resources. A guest lecture on the winter scavenger community will occur during the afternoon. The Marzluffs will lecture about their research on ravens in New England and contrast that with expectations in Yellowstone.

Day 4 Raven Social Behavior

You will start the morning early working with the Marzluffs as they attempt to catch and tag a raven as part of their ongoing research. Afterwards, you will travel to communal foraging and roosting sites to observe social behaviors. The movie about Marzluff's crow research (A Murder of Crows) will be shown in the evening.

Day 5 Check-Out

Check out of cabins by 9:00 a.m.

PROGRAM EQUIPMENT

For a full list of what is included in this course, in addition to recommended equipment check out the [Lamar Buffalo Ranch - Summer General Information](#) document.

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.

- The Marzluff's will provide you with copies of their books on ravens, including *Dog Days*, *Raven Nights*, and *In the Company of Crows and Ravens*. No prior reading is required, but participants might enjoy the following publication that complements the program and discusses the instructors' early research. Most publications are available at Yellowstone Forever's online store at shop.yellowstone.org Yellowstone Forever supporters receive a 15 percent discount and proceeds directly support the park.
- Heinrich, Bernd. *The Mind of the Raven: Investigations and Adventures with Wolf-Birds*. Ecco, 2007.

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.