



YELLOWSTONE FOREVER

FALL BASIC WILDLIFE PHOTOGRAPHY

Itinerary & Details

FIELD SEMINAR – SUMMER 2024

INSTRUCTOR: Meg Sommers, J.D.

INSTRUCTOR BIOGRAPHY: Meg Sommers has been an outdoor enthusiast since early childhood. A resident of Cody, she has been photographing seriously in Yellowstone National Park since 1990. Meg's photography covers the full spectrum from landscapes landscape and wildlife to flowers. Her passion, however, is to photograph and tell the stories of wildlife, and she has traveled worldwide to seek out new and interesting opportunities to do so. After 20 years in practice, in 2006, she decided to retire as an attorney and judge to photograph full-time.

Sommers has served as a judge in photo competitions and is a grand prize winner in the Wyoming Wildlife photography competition. She recently added to her list of awards the grand prize in the 2022 Outdoor Photographer Magazine's Wildlife Photo Contest. Sommers was also featured as a naturalist and professional photographer in a 15-minute video aired on French television about Yellowstone National Park. Since 2010 she has had the privilege to teach nature and wildlife photography in Yellowstone for Yellowstone Forever and for Road Scholars since 2012. Sommers loves teaching both the fundamentals of photography to adult students as well as teaching advanced photography skills. Her hope is that in doing so, she is helping her students gain a greater insight into the natural world that surrounds us.

ACTIVITY LEVEL: This course is activity **level 1** and students enrolled in this course are expected to be active participants. Be prepared to hike up to 1 mile per day, comfortably, through relatively flat terrain on maintained 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 p.m. on Monday, September 23, 2024, and goes through Friday, September 27, 2024, at 4:00 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. 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: 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 [Gardiner Field Seminars - Summer General Information](#) document.

PROGRAM ITINERARY

Do you love taking pictures, but your camera is a mystery to you? Do you want to learn more about wildlife and how best to photograph them? Do you want to take your photography to the next level while learning how you can help conserve what you love? Then come immerse yourself with fellow enthusiasts in the heart of Yellowstone. This is a basic class where you will learn not only the fundamentals of photography but also where and how to find wildlife. With your full days in the field, you will have plenty of opportunity to practice your new skills!

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 Photography Fundamentals and Beyond

On the first morning, your instructor will spend time discussing the fundamentals of photography, composition, exposure compensation, equipment selection, and how to use depth of field to your advantage. In order to find wildlife to photograph, you will also need an understanding of their habits and habitats. While some lecture is necessary, class time will be as interactive as possible. Your questions are welcome and will direct the discussion to the things that you as a class most want to learn. With your classtime well spent, you will venture out into the field in the afternoon to look for opportunities to put your new skills to work.

Day 3 - 4 Field Excursions

Wildlife, particularly large carnivores, are most active in the early morning and late evening hours. By happy coincidence, that is when the light for photography is best as well. The course will begin early (before light) and will stay out late with mid-days being spent either discussing animal behavior, photographic techniques, or just taking some well-deserved downtime.

Day 5 Image Review

Early morning starts with more field time looking for wildlife. Depending upon the weather and opportunities, the course will come back to the classrooms to spend some time reviewing images and working on digital darkroom techniques.

PROGRAM EQUIPMENT

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

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Suggested Camera Gear

The camera equipment that participants bring should be easily portable in a camera bag or day pack.

- **Camera body**
- **Sturdy Tripod with camera mount**
- **Interchangeable Lenses.** Bring the longest lens you have, but don't neglect the smaller ones such as a wide angle, as the instructor uses everything from around 16 mm to an 800 mm. If bringing a large lens that can't be kept at your side in the seat, be sure to bring a protective case so that it can ride in the back of the bus.
- **Camera and Lens manuals.** If you don't have a camera manual, please look up your camera manufacturer online and download the manual so you will have it to refer to. You will have access to the internet in the Gardiner classroom, but service in the park is limited.
- **Teleconverter.** If you have one, any size.
- **Batteries.** For your camera (and any other device you might bring). The number of camera batteries you will need will depend generally upon two factors, how quickly your individual camera consumes them and how cold it is outside. (Cold really draws down even the best batteries.) At a minimum, you should have at least one extra.
- **Battery Charger.** If yours are rechargeable. There are multiple power outlets in the classroom for students to recharge.
- **Card Storage.** Please anticipate that you will be out in the field all day and not able to purchase more card storage or be able to download until later in the evening. You will need to bring enough storage with you to get you through the day.
- **Laptop.** If you have one and want to use it. Be sure you have loaded the software you need to be able to view your raw images as well as the program you want to use to develop them.
- **Card Reader.** To download your images to your computer.
- **Jump or Thumb Drive.** On the last day we will be sharing, evaluating, and editing. It would be very helpful if you could put your selections on a drive to share.
- **Rain/Snow covering for your camera and lens.** Large enough for both as they sit waiting on a tripod. This does not need to be fancy, but it does need to be effective even when the wind is blowing (lightly)
- **Microfiber cloth.** This is just the ticket for wiping moisture off your equipment.
- **Manual or books for your post processing software.** If you don't have a manual or book, and you use an Adobe product, I would highly recommend you consider the library of books produced by Scott Kelby. He has written them for every version of Photoshop, Lightroom and Elements. His books are easy to follow and entertaining to read. Purchase the one for the version of software you are using, regardless of how old or outdated. If you are using a product other than Adobe, try to find a manual of some sort. Many can be downloaded online.

RECOMMENDED READING

No prior reading is required, but participants might enjoy the following publications, that complement the program.

- **Reading your camera manual is highly recommended as well as a manual(s), for whichever post processing software you prefer.**
- National Park Service. *2023 Resource and Issues Handbook*. NPS, 2023.

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.