

Name: _____

Date: _____

Lesson 08.01: Quote: The Rainy Rain Forest
Reading: Yellowstone National Park Text

Yellowstone National park Text

Read the text below. Remember to keep the topic of the importance of water in mind while reading.

Yellowstone National Park

Written by: Jaylin Montgomery

About the Park

Yellowstone National Park is located in the states of Wyoming, Montana, and Idaho. Yellowstone was the first national park in the United States and is considered to be one of the first national parks in the world. The park contains several hydrothermal wonders, which are natural vents on the earth's surface that emit heat. Some examples of these vents include hot springs. Water is a large part of the national park since there are more than 600 lakes and ponds, which cover around 107,000 acres of Yellowstone. Spanning around the park, there are over one thousand rivers and stream that make up 2,500 miles of running water and provide the necessary habitat for animals and plant life.

Climate

The climate of Yellowstone is largely influenced by its elevation. Precipitation levels change frequently and can range from little rain to downpours, depending on location. The climate of the park has been gradually becoming warmer over the last 50 years. This has led to the melting of the blanket of snow that covers the mountains, which, in turn, affects water levels, vegetation growth, and the habits of wildlife. Many species depend on deep snow to breed, raise their young, and hunt successfully. The snow provides protection and camouflage for prey and also cover for predators.

Animal Survival

Yellowstone has the largest public herd of American bison in the United States. It wasn't always this way, however. While bison once roamed wild through most of North America in great numbers, an intense hunting campaign in the 1880s led to a dramatic decrease in population. By the late 1880s, only about two dozen bison were left in Yellowstone Park.

In 1902, the park's management set about trying to help the bison population bounce back. By 1954, the herd had grown to over 1,000 animals. Park staff have worked hard in order to successfully bring these bison back from the brink of extinction. The bison that now live in the park feed primarily on grasses and plants in the open grasslands and meadows. They typically forage for 9 to 11 hours daily, and as a result, overgrazing is a continuous concern. Consequently, access to water is also very important to the bison herd that roam the park, since a herd of bison needs around 500 gallons of water each day.

Wildlife – What to Do

Since there are almost 400 species of different animals in Yellowstone, visitors may encounter a wild animal in Yellowstone Park. If you visit the parks, don't let curiosity kill the cat. Rule number one is to never approach the wildlife in the park. If you happen to encounter an animal on your adventures, there are a few important things to remember. These animals consider the park their home and may have babies nearby. You may seem like an intruder, and that is just the tip of the iceberg.

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Bison have injured more people in Yellowstone than any other animal. They are unpredictable and can run three times faster than humans. Other common animals in the park include bears. If you encounter a bear, remain calm and try to appear non-threatening. First, do not make direct eye contact with the bear. Next, speak to it in a calm voice so that it knows you are human. Then, leave the grounds calmly and slowly, never turning your back to the bear. Finally, if you have bear spray, remove the safety lock and keep it on hand in case of an emergency. Ultimately, the safest way to view wildlife is from the inside of a vehicle.

Water and Geysers

Water plays an incredible role in the ecosystems found in Yellowstone National Park and the surrounding areas. The water that flows through the park is a vital national resource. Precipitation in the mountains flows through networks of streams and rivers to provide important moisture and habitats for plants and wildlife. The park is home to the largest concentration of mammals in the lower 48 states, including more than 150 species of birds and six species of reptiles, all of whom rely on the fresh water.

Water drives the complex geothermal activity that occurs within the park. It fuels the largest collection of geysers on earth. Precipitation and groundwater seep down into geothermal systems, which is heated by the Yellowstone Volcano. This precipitation is heated and then rises to the surface in the form of hot springs and geysers. The most famous geyser in the park, Old Faithful, was the first to receive a name.

Old Faithful

More than one million eruptions have occurred at Old Faithful. On average, Old Faithful erupts once every half hour to two hours, and each eruption lasts 1.5–5 minutes in length. Some say that Old Faithful is slowing down after more than 100 years of eruptions. Eruptions occur by heated water rising toward the surface and being superheated due to the narrowness of the channels through which it travels.

Ultimately, the temperatures force steam bubbles and boiling water to the top of the channel and cause it to burst through. The eruption stops when the water basin is empty or when the entire system ejects enough water to cool down. Remember, getting too close to any of the hydrothermal features, such as Old Faithful or hot springs, can cause severe or even fatal burns. Scalding water lies under most of the thick, breakable ground surrounding these formations, so it is best to keep a safe distance.

Glossary:

- Hydrothermal—relating to or denoting the action of heated water in the earth's crust
- Extinction— (of a species, family, or other larger group) having no living members
- Forage— (of a person or animal) search widely for food or provisions
- Scalding—very hot; burning
- Ecosystem—a biological community of interacting organisms and their physical environment