



YELLOWSTONE FOREVER

FALL WILDLIFE PHOTOGRAPHY

Itinerary & Details

FIELD SEMINAR - SUMMER 2021

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 an 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 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 7:00 p.m. on Tuesday, September 14, 2021, and ends on Saturday, September 18, 2021, at 4:00 p.m.

LODGING CHECK-IN & CHECK-OUT: No lodging is provided for this course. You can find more information on Gardiner based lodging here: [Gardiner, MT - Lodging](#)

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

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? Then come immerse yourself with fellow enthusiasts in the heart of Yellowstone.

Welcome to the joy of photographing wildlife in Yellowstone National Park! Our days together will be spent primarily in the field photographing wildlife of all sizes and types. In our road-based travels, we will be looking for everything from large animals such as bears, wolves, elk, and bison, as well as smaller critters like pikas and birds. You will gain insight into how and where to find wildlife as well as how best to photograph them without interfering in their quest for survival.

Based in Gardiner, we will have access to the entire park during our time together. If you are familiar with the Park, you may know that Dunraven Pass will be closed all season which complicates access to the interior of the Park from the Lamar, where the Buffalo Ranch campus is located. While we will spend time in the Lamar, we will also seek out other opportunities in the interior of the Park where wildlife is often closer than you see them in Lamar.

My goal for this course is to help you become a better photographer with wildlife as your subject. What you will learn in this course will also help you to better photograph many other subjects. While wildlife is the focus of this course, if there are other opportunities for great scenic shots or abstracts, we will take these in as well.

While there are many digital editing programs available, I will be using the full version of Photoshop CC and Nik to demonstrate editing techniques. If you are using a different program and you would like help understanding what that program can potentially do for you, please be sure to bring the manual or user guide.

The camera equipment that you bring should be easily portable in a camera bag or day pack. Please bring a selection of lenses, including your longest lens, and a sturdy tripod. If your camera is a "point and shoot" type without interchangeable lenses, that is fine too, but please be sure to bring your manual and a sturdy tripod. If you have a laptop computer, bring that as well so that you can work with your images and prepare them for projection. If you are planning on making a purchase before coming to Yellowstone and you would like my advice on your options, please feel free to contact me before you buy it.

September is a transitional time in Yellowstone as the weather is moving from lovely summertime temperatures to a cooler Fall climate where it could snow at any time. The weather here can change very quickly also, sometimes going from one extreme to the other in less than an hour. This means you will need to come prepared for it all. Check the Gardiner Field Seminar General Information for a suggested clothing list. One of things listed there that I would like to emphasize is the waterproof and wind proof outer layer – *both jacket and pants*. If you don't have these, they are an excellent investment in your enjoyment of outdoor photography!

I look forward to meeting you and helping you advance your skills while experiencing the fabulous wildlife photography opportunities that Yellowstone has to offer.

- Meg Sommers

megsommers@gmail.com
www.megsommers.com
www.linkedin/in/megsommers
www.facebook.com/sommers.photo

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.*

Wildlife photography does not often coincide easily with mealtimes. The class will be out early in the morning and out late in the evenings. Participants will need to plan their meals to be portable so they can travel with them. Folks will need to plan accordingly.

Day 1 Welcome and Orientation

7:00 p.m. Participants will meet in one of the Yellowstone Forever Classrooms in the rear area of the Yellowstone Forever building in Gardiner for orientation. This building is across from the Roosevelt Arch at the North Entrance to the Park. Education staff will go over the program itinerary, discuss clothing and equipment needed for daily outings, and answer any questions participants may have.

Day 2 Photography Fundamentals and Beyond

The first morning we will spend time discussing the fundamentals of photography, composition, exposure compensation, equipment selection, how to use depth of field to your advantage, and working with captured images in the digital darkroom. In order to find wildlife to photograph, you will also need an understanding of their habits and habitats. While some lecture is necessary, I prefer the class time to be as interactive as possible. I welcome your questions and will direct the discussion to the things that you as a class most want to learn.

In the late afternoon, we will be going into the Park to look for wildlife to photograph and to practice your newly learned skills.

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. On these days, we will be meeting early (before light) and staying out late with mid-days being spent either discussing animal behavior, photographic techniques, or just taking some well-deserved downtime. We most likely will not return to Gardiner during these daytime excursions.

Day 5 Field Excursions and Image Review

Early morning, we will be out in the field looking for wildlife. Depending upon weather and opportunities, we will come back to Gardiner around noon and spend some classroom time reviewing images and working on digital darkroom techniques.

4:00 p.m. Class concludes

PROGRAM EQUIPMENT

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

Suggested Camera Gear

The camera equipment that participants bring should be easily portable in a camera bag or day pack. With the smaller class size this year, there should be ample room on the bus, so participants should bring what they think they will need. If students are planning on making a purchase before coming to Yellowstone and they would like Meg's advice on their options, they can feel free to contact her before they buy.

- **Camera body**
- **Sturdy Tripod with camera mount**
- **Interchangeable Lenses.** *You can bring the longest lens you have, but don't neglect the smaller ones such as a wide angle. I use everything from around a 16 mm to an 800mm. If you bring a large lens that can't be kept at your side in the seat, be sure to bring a very protective case so that it can ride protected in the back of the bus.*
- **Camera and Lens manuals.** *If you don't have your lens manual, that's okay, but sometimes they can be very helpful. If you don't have your camera manual, please look up your camera manufacture 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 very 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 student use 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 can 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 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. Most publications are available at Yellowstone Forever's online store at shop.yellowstone.org Yellowstone Forever supporters receive a 15% discount and proceeds directly support the park.

Reading your camera manual is highly recommended as well as a manual(s), for which ever post processing software you prefer.

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 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
- Specific photography questions or other questions which may be unique to the instructor, please contact Meg directly at megsommers@gmail.com