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YELLOWSTONE:
PREDATOR AND PREY
April 1-6, 2011
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For this tour, participants will experience the late winter/early spring season at incomparable Yellowstone National Park. This trip is timed for the period when winter's grip is easing, mammal viewing is excellent, winter/spring birding is good, and the park is receiving light visitation. Our focus is on providing a rich, all-around natural history tour. We will make a special effort to locate the high profile mega-fauna for which the park is so well known. We have opportunities to see mule and white-tailed deer, bighorn sheep, pronghorn, bison, elk, wolves, and with a little luck, grizzly bear, moose, and river otter.

In addition a limited variety of exciting birds can be found in Yellowstone during late winter. Time in the field may produce Trumpeter Swan, Barrow's Goldeneye, Bald and Golden eagles, Northern Pygmy-Owl, Bohemian Waxwing, Black Rosy-finch, Gray-crowned Rosy-finch, Red Crossbill, Pine Grosbeak, and others.

The trip also offers an educational theme which will cover the predator and prey relationships within the greater Yellowstone ecosystem. In addition, we will discuss adaptations animals have evolved to cope with winter, such as migration, hibernation, and toughing it out.

At around four million acres, Yellowstone stands as a monument to wilderness. The vastness of the park, the abundance of its wildlife, and its spectacular natural landmarks make it among the most beloved destinations on Earth. For Americans, the reverence we feel for our nation's first national park is limitless. As children we develop a fascination for a number of the park's trademark features, including Old Faithful Geyser and Mammoth Hot Springs. This fascination is life-long for many, as evidenced by the millions of visitors that make the trip to Yellowstone each summer.

We will have four full days to explore the north side of the park and the nearby Paradise Valley. Each day we will enter Yellowstone's north entrance. This is the original entrance to the park, and we will pass through the famous archway entrance, erected and dedicated to President Theodore Roosevelt in 1903. One road is open during the Yellowstone winter, and we will spend each day traveling it from Gardiner to Cooke City—scouting for wildlife.

Our lodge is certainly worth mentioning. Chico Hot Springs in Pray, Montana is a western lodge established in 1900 and is situated in the beautiful Paradise Valley, just north of the Gardiner entrance to Yellowstone. Although modernized for today's world, the lodge still gives the feel of old Montana with the setting, food, and decoration providing an exceptionally comfortable and fun atmosphere. And, of course, there are hot springs. Two pools collect natural hot water from the surrounding mountains and provide exuberant pleasure after a long day in Yellowstone's winter. The water in these pools averages 103 degrees in the small pool and 98 degrees in the large pool. It is worth a dip! The Paradise Valley will also give us the opportunity to look for such wintering birds as Rough-legged Hawk, Prairie Falcon, Northern Shrike, and Townsend's Solitaire.

April 1, Day 1: Arrival in Bozeman, Montana. Tour participants may arrive in Bozeman at any time today. A complimentary airport shuttle servicing the Holiday Inn can be found outside baggage claim. We will meet in the hotel lobby at 6:00 p.m. this evening for a brief orientation and welcome before going to dinner.

NIGHT: Holiday Inn, Bozeman, MT

April 2-4, Days 2-4: Paradise Valley and Yellowstone National Park. We will leave Bozeman on Day 2 and head south toward Chico Hot Springs, where we will stay for the next three days. The remainder of the day and the following two days will involve considerable time in the field birding and searching for wildlife in the Paradise Valley and the north side of Yellowstone National Park. Our exact itinerary will depend on where we think we have the greatest opportunity to encounter wildlife.

Yellowstone National Park is known throughout the world for its scenic grandeur, fantastic geothermal features, and wildlife. Historically however, it was well known to many of the local Native American tribes long before the travels of early fur traders and explorers. John Colter, of the Lewis and Clark Expedition, is often thought of as the first white man or mountain man to explore the park, in 1807 or 1808. By around 1825, many fur traders had entered the region and their stories of visiting "hell"—steam, hot springs, and geysers—were generally disbelieved by more educated Easterners. Gradually, more people explored the area, and eventually the United States government deployed teams to map and record the uniqueness of the region. In 1872, congress created Yellowstone, our nation's first national park.

Yellowstone National Park is approximately four million acres—much of it high plateau country averaging 8000 feet elevation. It is known as much for its geologic features as for its wildlife and landscapes. There are over 10,000 hydrothermal features in the park, the most of any place on Earth. Old Faithful Geyser, Mammoth Hot Springs, Grand Geyser, and numerous other hydrothermal marvels remind visitors of past and present volcanic activity. The variety of habitats is impressive, with valleys and hillsides covered in grassland-sagebrush, while cottonwoods line the creek bottoms at lower elevations. As one ascends in elevation, pines, firs, and aspen dominate the landscape. Eventually these trees give way to the spruce and fir trees of the upper forest zone, which ultimately yield to the harsh conditions of the highest-elevation alpine zone.

Outside Alaska, Yellowstone is among the best places in North America for viewing large animals. Bison and elk have long been symbols of the park, and studies of grizzly bears from 1959 to 1970 and wolf reintroductions by the United States Fish and Wildlife Service in the mid-1990s have made these animals some of the most popular to the public. In fact, the Yellowstone populations of the four species listed above are some of the highest numbers found anywhere in the United States. Some grizzly bears emerge from winter hibernation in March, and thus we will keep a keen eye for them also. Red Fox and Coyote are common and our chances are god for finding them. Mountain lions are common, but our chances of seeing one are unlikely.

A wide diversity of *corvids* winter in Yellowstone and Paradise Valley, and we hope to see Black-billed Magpie, Clark's Nutcracker, Common Raven, and Gray, Pinyon and Steller's jays. The magpies and ravens are some of our key species, as they often locate predator kills and thus alert would-be wolf watchers to an area where the predators are likely.

We will observe and discuss the natural history of all these species and bring together how the ecology of Yellowstone National Park is affected by the process. We will also cover aspects of snow ecology and geothermal features of Mammoth Hot Springs. Additionally, we will discuss how animals adapt to the extreme winter conditions that grip Yellowstone in winter.

NIGHTS: Chico Hot Springs, Pray, MT

April 5, Day 5: Yellowstone to Bozeman. We will leave Chico Hot Springs this morning and spend the day casually making our way back to Bozeman. We will take advantage of birding and mammal viewing where possible. Though the area may still be locked in winter, the earliest spring migrants may be in evidence. A

smattering of waterfowl, raptors, swallows, and blackbirds should be around and will. We will have a farewell dinner tonight at one of Bozeman's fine restaurants.

NIGHT: Holiday Inn, Bozeman, MT

April 6, Day 6: Departure from Bozeman. Participants can depart Bozeman at anytime today.

EXTRA ARRANGEMENTS: Should you wish to make arrangements to arrive early or extend your stay, please contact the VENT office at least two months prior to your departure date. We can very easily make hotel arrangements and often at our group rate, if we receive your request with enough advance time.

TOUR SIZE: This tour is limited to 14 participants

TOUR LEADERS: Denver Holt and 2nd Leader TBA

Denver Holt is a wildlife researcher and graduate of the University of Montana. He is founder and president of the Owl Research Institute, a non-profit organization located in Charlo, Montana. He is a field researcher and believes in long-term field studies as the primary means to understanding trends in natural history. Denver has researched owls in North and Central America, and in 2000 he was named Montana's Wildlife Biologist of the Year by the Wildlife Society of North America. Since 1978 Denver's particular focus has been researching owls and their ecology. He has published about 80 papers and technical documents, including three species accounts for the *Birds of North America* project. He was also the team leader for the Strigidae (owls) family species accounts for *The Handbook of the Birds of the World, Volume 5*, covering 189 species of the world's owls. Denver has co-authored, with two elementary school teachers, two children's science books on owls: *Owls: whoo are they?*, and *Snowy Owls*. His Snowy Owl research was featured as the cover story for *National Geographic Magazine* in December 2002. In 2006, he was a chapter author on owls for the book *Arctic Wings*, highlighting the birds of the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge. The foreword was written by former United States President, Jimmy Carter. The book has won the prestigious National Outdoor Book Award for Design and Artistic Merit. Denver's research has been acknowledged in many television programs on ABC, CBS, NBC, and CNN Science News. His research has also been featured in Audubon's *Up-Close* series, Disney, PBS's *Bird Watch*, and David Attenborough's *Life of Birds*, among others. His research on Snowy Owls has been featured in documentaries for National Geographic Explorer, NHK Natural History Unit of Japan, and the Norwegian Broadcasting Company Natural History Unit. Recently, his research has been the focus of the British Broadcasting Company's (BBC) new documentary series, *Frozen Earth*, the sequel to the highly acclaimed *Planet Earth* series. He also has been a keynote speaker at several major bird festivals in the United States.

FINANCIAL ARRANGEMENTS: The fee for the tour is **$1855** per person in double occupancy from Bozeman, Montana. This includes all meals from dinner on Day 1 to dinner on Day 5, accommodations as stated in the itinerary, ground transportation during the tour, park entrance fees, gratuities and guide services provided by the tour leaders. It does not include airfare from your home to Bozeman and return, airport departure taxes, alcoholic beverages, special gratuities, phone calls, laundry, or items of a personal nature.

The single supplement for this tour is **$380**. You will be charged a single supplement if you desire single accommodations, or if you prefer to share but have no roommate and we cannot provide one for you.

FUEL AND FUEL SURCHARGES: In the uncertain, often volatile oil market of late, it is difficult – if not impossible – to predict fuel costs over the long term, and more specifically, at the time of operation of this departure. Our prices are based upon the prevailing fuel rates at the time of itinerary publication. While we will do everything possible to maintain our prices, if the fuel rates increase significantly, it may be necessary to institute a fuel surcharge.

TOUR REGISTRATION: To register for this tour, please contact the VENT office. The deposit for this tour is **$300** per person**.** If you prefer to pay your deposit by check, your tour space will be held for 10 days to allow time for the VENT office to receive your deposit and completed registration form. If you prefer to pay your deposit using a credit card, your deposit must be made with MasterCard or Visa at the time of registration. The VENT registration form should then be completed, signed, and returned to the VENT office. Full payment of the tour fee is due 120 days prior to the tour departure date.

CANCELLATION POLICY: Refunds are made according to the following schedule: If cancellation is made 120 days or more before the tour departure date, a cancellation fee of **$150** per person will be charged unless the deposit is transferred to a new registration for another VENT tour that will operate within the next 12 months, in which case the cancellation fee will be **$50** per person. If cancellation is made between 120 and 90 days before departure date, the deposit is not refundable, but any payments covering the balance of the fee will be refunded. If cancellation is made fewer than 90 days before departure date, no refund is available. This policy and fee schedule also applies to pre-trip and post-trip extensions. ***We strongly recommend the purchase of trip cancellation insurance for your protection.***

If you cancel:	Your refund will be:
120 days or more before departure date	Your deposit minus $150*
Between 120 and 90 days before departure	No refund of the deposit, but any payments on the balance will be refunded
Fewer than 90 days before departure date	No refund available

*Unless the deposit is transferred to a new registration for another VENT tour that will operate within the next 12 months, in which case the cancellation fee will be $50 per person.

TRIP INSURANCE: A brochure and application form for optional coverage for baggage, illness, and trip cancellation can be obtained through the VENT office. **We strongly recommend that you purchase trip cancellation insurance as soon as possible to protect yourself against losses due to accidents or illness.** VENT recommends *Travel Insured International* as our preferred insurance provider. Check with your insurance agent regarding coverage you may presently have via other insurance policies that may cover illness during your trip. **Waiver for pre-existing conditions is available; however, stipulations apply, usually requiring the purchase of the insurance soon after registering.** Optional expanded insurance coverage is available and includes items such as work-related cancellation, medical upgrade, and a "Cancel for Any Reason" clause among others. Contact *Travel Insured International* prior to registration for details. Not all insurance providers provide the same levels of coverage. If you purchase insurance through a company other than *Travel Insured International*, please be advised that rules and stipulations may be different. Medical Insurance which covers you for emergency evacuation/repatriation during the trip is included in the "Worldwide Trip Protector" plan offered by *Travel Insured International*. A good website for information about emergency evacuation/repatriation insurance is: www.insuremytrip.com.

Victor Emanuel Nature Tours is not a participant in the California Travel Consumer Restitution Fund. California law requires certain sellers of travel to have a trust account or bond. This business has a bond issued by Travelers in the amount of $50,000. CST #2014998-50.

AIR INFORMATION: Victor Emanuel Travel is a full-service travel agency and wholly owned subsidiary of Victor Emanuel Nature Tours (VENT). Victor Emanuel Travel will be happy to make any domestic or international air travel arrangements from your home and return. Please feel free to call the VENT office to confirm your air arrangements.

BAGGAGE: As this tour is short, we do ask that you limit your baggage to one medium-sized bag and one carry-on per person. As a precaution, it is a good idea to pack your binoculars, a change of clothing, toiletry items medications, and travel documents in your airline carry-on bag.

CLOTHING: The late winter/early spring season at Yellowstone has weather conditions that can vary dramatically. For this reason, we recommend bringing a diversity of clothing that will keep you prepared, regardless of temperature or precipitation. Beautiful spring days can quickly turn into cold, late-winter snowstorms. Layered clothing is recommended. When packing, please consider these items for cold conditions: lightweight long underwear, such as cotton, polypropylene, capilene, or silk; a wool shirt; pullover or zip-up fleece;, wool pants or another type of insulated pants; an outer protective coat or windbreaker; insulated winter boots; winter socks; a warm hat that covers your ears. A scarf and gloves or mittens are of high importance. We guarantee that you will have a more enjoyable trip if you are warm. In the event we experience warm, balmy conditions, it is advisable that you be able to layer down to a flannel shirt, or even long-sleeved t-shirts. You should also bring a bathing suit or shorts for the hot springs at your hotel, and comfortable, informal dress clothes for dinning.

CLIMATE AND CONDITIONS: Although Yellowstone is beautiful and full of wildlife, it is also high plateau country, where winter is often harsh and late-lingering. Participants should be prepared for all weather conditions. The beginning of April is spring in many parts of the country; in our area of Yellowstone, however, it is still late winter. There will be snow, and temperatures will range from 20˚ to 40˚ Fahrenheit. A warm day would be 50˚, but we should be prepared for snowstorms and even blizzards with sub-freezing temperatures. The wind often blows very hard on the plateau, with accompanying wind chills that are downright cold.

Physical activity will be light, but participants should be prepared to walk through shallow snow fields or snow banks if necessary for better wildlife viewing.

EQUIPMENT: You should pack a pair of binoculars that are in good repair, along with a belt pack or day pack (for carrying books, sunscreen, etc.). As a precaution, it is a good idea to pack your binoculars, a change of clothing, toiletry items and travel documents in your airline carry-on bag. Your leader will have a spotting scope available for group use; however, you are encouraged to bring your own for this trip if you desire. Since mammal watching is the primary focus of the tour, you may find greater enjoyment in having your own scope. Be sure to bring your camera, for great scenery and remember that much of the wildlife-viewing will take place at considerable distances. Don't forget sunglasses and sunscreen! A travel alarm clock is always recommended.

HEALTH: If you are taking prescription medication or over-the-counter medicine, be sure to bring an ample supply that will allow you to get through the tour safely. Please consult your physician as necessary. Remember to pack all medication in your carry-on baggage, preferably in original containers or packaging. As airline baggage restrictions can change without warning, please check with your airline for procedures for packing medication. As standard travel precautions, you should always be up to date with tetanus shots.

SUGGESTED READING: Our website, www.ventbird.com offers an affiliated online store that carries a wide variety of items for birding and nature lovers, including over 6,000 books. A portion of the sales from this store benefits the Cornell Lab of Ornithology. You may also visit such other online stores such as www.amazon.com, and for those out-of-print or hard-to-find titles, www.abebooks.com or www.buteobooks.com which specializes in ornithology books.

Field Guides, Birds:

National Geographic Society. *Field Guide to Birds of North America*. 5th edition.Washington, DC: National Geographic Society, 2006. **The recommended bird field guide for this tour.**

Sibley, D.A. *The Sibley Guide to Birds*. New York, NY: Alfred Knopf Publishing Company, 2000. 544 pages.

Field Guide, Mammals:

Reid, Fiona A. *Peterson Field Guides: Mammals of North America*. New York, NY: Hougton Mifflin Company, 2006. **The recommended mammal field guide for this tour.**

Kays, Roland W. and Don E. Wilson. *Mammals of North America*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2002.

Olaus, J. Murie and Mark Elbroch. *A Field Guide to Animal Tracks.* 3rd Edition. New York, NY: Houghton Mifflin, 2005.

Other Resources:

Blevins, W. *Roadside History of Yellowstone National Park*. Missoula, MT: Mountain Press Publishing Company, 1989. 106 pages.

Eversman, S. and M. Carr. *Yellowstone Ecology: A Road Guide*. Missoula, MT: Mountain Press Publishing Company, 1992. 242 pages.

Forsman, KR. *The Wild Mammals of Montana*. American Society of Mammalogists, Special Publication No. 12, 2001. 278 pages.

Fritz, W.J. *Roadside Geology of the Yellowstone Country*. Missoula, MT: Mountain Press Publishing Company, 2003. 149 pages.

McEneaney, T. *Birds of Yellowstone*. Boulder, CO: Roberts-Reinhart Publishing Company, 1988. 171 pages.

TIPPING: Tipping (restaurants, porters, drivers, local guides) is included on VENT tours. However, if you feel one or both of your VENT leaders or any local guides have given you exceptional service, it is entirely appropriate to tip. We emphasize that such tips are not expected and are entirely optional.

RESPONSIBILITY: Victor Emanuel Nature Tours, Inc. (VENT) and/or its Agents act only as agents for the passenger in regard to travel, whether by railroad, motorcar, motorcoach, boat, or airplane and assume no liability for injury, damage, loss, accident, delay, or irregularity which may be occasioned either by reason of defect in any vehicle or for any reason whatsoever, or through the acts or default of any company or person engaged in conveying the passenger or in carrying out the arrangements of the tour. VENT and its agents can accept no responsibility for losses or additional expenses due to delay or changes in air or other services, sickness, weather, strike, war, quarantine, or other causes. All such losses or expenses will have to be borne by the passenger, as tour rates provide for arrangements only for the time stated. The right is reserved to substitute hotels of similar category for those indicated and to make any changes in the itinerary where deemed necessary or caused by changes in air schedules. The right is reserved to cancel any tour prior to departure, in which case full refund will constitute full settlement to the passenger. The right is reserved to substitute leaders on any tour. Where this is necessary, notification will be given to tour members. No refund will be made for any unused portion of the tour unless arrangements are made in sufficient time to avoid penalties. The prices of the tours are based on tariffs and exchange rates in effect July 13, 2010 and are subject to adjustment in the event of any change therein. The right is reserved to decline to accept or to retain any person as a member of any tour. Baggage is at owner's risk entirely. The airlines concerned and their agents and affiliates are not to be held responsible for any act, omission, or event during the time passengers are not on board their aircraft. The passenger ticket in use by said airlines, when issued, shall constitute the sole contract between the airlines and the purchaser of these tickets and/or passenger. The services of any I.A.T.A.N. carrier may be used for these tours, and transportation within the United States may be provided by any member carrier of the Airline Reporting Corporation.