

In Closing



Yellowstone National Park exists today in perhaps as pristine a state as any area can be in twenty-first century society. The Yellowstone and other powerful rivers still flow undammed through grasslands and towering forests. Yellowstone Lake remains a formidable body of water, dominating the landscape and influencing the ecology of the entire ecosystem. Yellowstone's wetlands—in all their diversity and complexity, in all their grandeur and wonder—still support waterfowl, fish, amphibians, and plant communities that nineteenth-century explorers would recognize.

Yellowstone's wetlands are essential to the survival of hundreds of magnificent creatures. While extinction may be a fact of evolution, the accelerated rate of species decline in today's world is contrary to evolutionary processes. Any endangered species may say to us, "Be careful of me my friend, for if you drive me to extinction, another heaven and earth must pass before you see me again."

Yellowstone National Park is a sanctuary for many plants and animals and their habitats, largely because of the variety of wetland resources it preserves. Here, humans find the opportunity to see and enjoy a landscape and associated species that have thrived for thousands of years. May it always be so.



The southeast arm of Yellowstone Lake. Top right: caterpillar on willow. Right: glacier lily. (All by J. Whipple).