

Wetland Resources of Yellowstone National Park

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Copies may be obtained from:

U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service
National Wetlands Inventory
Denver Federal Center
P.O. Box 25486
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National Park Service
Yellowstone National Park
Yellowstone Center for Resources
P.O. Box 168
Yellowstone National Park, Wyoming 82190

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Foreword



Wetlands are a cornerstone of Yellowstone's majestic qualities. Riverways have always provided the primary routes used by visitors to the region. Two centuries ago, John Colter, a member of the Lewis and Clark expedition, was probably the first Euroamerican to explore what is now Yellowstone National Park. He traveled upstream along the Yellowstone River, probably seeing his first thermal features along the banks below Tower Falls.

Later exploratory parties kept better records and, fortunately, documented the park's wonders with photographs and paintings to help disbelievers become believers. In 1869, David Folsom and two other private citizens journeyed across the Yellowstone plateau. Near present-day Bridge Bay on Yellowstone Lake, Folsom wrote:

"We came to a small grassy opening upon the opposite side of which was a beautiful little lake, separated from the main lake by only a sandbar, which the surf had thrown up across the narrow neck which formerly connected them. . . . Large flocks of geese and ducks were feeding near the shore or floating gracefully on its smooth surface. Beyond the lake the timber was tall and straight and to appearances as thick as cane in a southern swamp. This was one of the beautiful places we had found fashioned by the practised [*sic*] hand of nature, that man had not desecrated" (Haines 1996).

The accounts of early explorers make clear that they were awed by the array of waters, geologic wonders, meadows, forests, and wildlife they found, all of which contributed to the United States Congress' decision to enact the world's first national park in 1872. Due to its unique environment and early protection, Yellowstone retains the almost unbelievable features and ambience found by its first visitors. Today, the park's sensational wetland resources continue to be identified by visitors as highlights of their stay. If we do our job well, the Yellowstone experience will survive for future generations of explorers, young and old, to enjoy.

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