Understanding Park Support: Philanthropy and Other Support for Yellowstone National Park

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Understanding Park Support

Philanthropy and Other Support for Yellowstone National Park

Geoffrey Havens, M.S. and Norma Polovitz Nickerson, Ph.D.

4/29/2016

In-depth interviews of Yellowstone National Park supporters provided insight into who, why and how people provide support for the park.
Abstract

This report was conducted as one piece of a larger project on visitor support for Yellowstone National Park. Twenty-eight interviews were conducted with park non-profit supporters and repeat visitors to determine how these participants support the park and the reasons behind doing so. Additionally, other causes supported by participants were examined to place park support in a broader philanthropic context. Results revealed that beyond monetary support, activities such as sharing experiences, introducing newcomers to Yellowstone, and educating others about Yellowstone were common support activities utilized by all three groups. Repeat visitors were less likely to give monetary contributions, but otherwise equally active in other arenas of support. Reasons for providing these actions varied, but centered on aspects of Yellowstone that visitors valued, altruism, tangible benefits derived for support, and the efficacy of support actions. Participants were also actively involved in the larger field of philanthropy, supporting both other environmental causes as well as other typical non-profits.

Executive Summary

In-depth interviews with 10 Yellowstone Association (YA) members, 8 Yellowstone Foundation (YPF) donors, and 10 repeat visitors to Yellowstone were conducted to help in understanding who supports the park, how they support the park and why. Comparisons of the three groups revealed both differences and similarities.

- YA and YPF supporters are more likely to be broad philanthropic supporters but repeat visitors are more likely to donate to environmental causes only.
- Current donors and members were quite aware of the need for monetary help in the park compared to none of the repeat visitors being aware of the need. It is recommended that an awareness of need should be stronger with repeat visitors.
- “Acknowledged support” which entails donating, volunteering, or soliciting donors for the park was the type of support provided by all YA and YPF interviewees. Repeat visitors were much less likely to engage in these activities. “Unrecognized support” was engaged in by all interviewees including leave-no-trace, bringing friends to the park, and sharing what the park means through teaching or with family/friends.
- Personal experiences which created a place attachment to the park are likely key to both types of future support – acknowledged support and unrecognized support.
- Social Conditions and crowding in particular should be managed carefully as these conditions are likely to harm future support.

Summaries of the YA, YPF, and repeat visitor participants who were interviewed (Appendix B) allow managers to gain a better understanding of who were the interviewees and what their specific concerns and interests happened to be.

Interview excerpts addressing a day in Yellowstone for each of the individual participants accompanies the summaries. The Yellowstone experience from participants in their own words connect the findings to how these people interact with the park. These ‘day’ descriptions show how visitors schedule their day, what they want to do, and why they do so.
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Introduction

In 2015 Yellowstone National Park (YNP) saw over four million visitors pass through the entrance gates, setting a new visitation record for the park (NPS 2015). The first national park in the United States and often considered the flagship of the National Park Service (NPS), Yellowstone was created and is managed to, “Preserve unimpaired the natural and cultural resources and values of the National Park System for the enjoyment, education, and inspiration of this and future generations.” Federal funding to meet the needs of this up-swell in visitation has been largely insufficient to provide for the operations, projects, and maintenance required by the park, necessitating that alternative funding for the park be utilized. One such additional funding source of interest is that of private donations. Donations to Yellowstone take several different forms and total in the millions of dollars each year (YPF 2014). Such donations are collected by the NPS in partnerships with non-profit organizations such as the Yellowstone Association (YA) and Yellowstone Park Foundation (YPF) and utilized to provide managers with additional funding for operations and projects. With an increased reliance on donations as a funding vehicle, understanding those who donate to causes such as a park non-profit organizations has taken on greater importance.

Very little work has been done to examine why members and donors of park non-profits provide the forms of support that they do. Furthermore, past research conducted on park support has paid little attention to another group of park-supporters, the non-monetary donors. Of the millions of visitors to national parks such as Yellowstone each year, a large proportion of that visitation consists of repeat visitors. This group, though not necessarily directly contributing to non-profits or the NPS, provides support to the parks in other ways. Dollars spent in the gateway communities around parks, entrance and other park fees, practicing Leave No Trace measures and bringing new visitors to places such as Yellowstone all help benefit the park, if not in the same way as monetary donations.

Purpose

The purpose of this study was to explore the reasons and mechanisms that lead to park support by donors, association members, and repeat visitors to Yellowstone National Park. These visitor segments were examined to uncover the reasons people support a specific park and the potential differences between the groups. The four main objectives were to explore:

1. How and why do Yellowstone Park Foundation donors and Yellowstone Association members support Yellowstone National Park?
2. What ways do repeat visitors to Yellowstone see themselves supporting Yellowstone National Park and why do they provide that support?
3. What other types of organizations or causes do Yellowstone supporters donate to and how similar or different are these to supporting a national park?
4. What are the differences and similarities in the three groups in park support rational and reasons for beginning that support?
Explored Concepts (Literature Review)

Before delving into methodology for this study, the concepts that helped comprise the idea of park support and past work in the subject area need to be introduced. To address the broad range of support found within the park, a number of different areas of academic work are discussed. These include an introduction to park support as a whole and past work on common reasons for philanthropic giving both at large and to parks and protected areas specifically. Furthermore, the subject of non-monetary support was examined in the context of place attachment and repeat visitation to locations such as parks to address non-monetary support actions.

Definition of Park Support

Park support as an idea was initially identified and examined by Jorgenson and Nickerson (2014) and, “Consists of direct or indirect actions taken by people exhibiting pro-environmental behaviors that assist in the preservation and livelihood of the ecological and social functions of national parks.” This definition identified both direct support actions such as charitable donations and volunteering and indirect actions such as sharing park experiences and introducing others to the park. Thus the concepts examined for this study followed this split closely, examining charitable ‘philanthropic’ behaviors as well as other non-philanthropic pro-environmental behaviors.

Philanthropic Giving

The term philanthropy reaches back centuries in history, and while the definition has changed, the emphasis behind the term, “Private giving for public purpose”, has largely remained the same over the centuries. Scholars have produced many different hypotheses and models to explain philanthropic behavior, with most modern academics agreeing that giving derives from a number of different factors that intertwine with each other (Schervish 1995, Bennet 2006, Bekkers and Wiepking, 2010). This study utilized Bekkers and Wiepking (2010) categorization of mechanisms or reasons for giving to examine past work done in the field. These mechanisms are listed and briefly discussed below.

Eight Mechanisms of Giving

- **Awareness of Need**: Established by common sense in addition to the particular literature, a donor must first be aware of a need present in society requiring help before making a decision to give.
- **Solicitation**: The act of asking for support, monetary or otherwise. Bennet (2005) observed that solicitations, similar to marketing approaches are either tangible in form (letters requesting a donation, billboards, online approaches, etc.) or intangible in form (a door to door campaign, interaction with a person helped by a cause, media broadcast, etc.).
- **Cost and Benefits**: Giving to a charitable cause once a potential donor has been solicited has prerequisite costs and potential benefits. Costs included tangible things as time, effort, and the cost of the actual gift itself, while benefits include tangible items such as thank you gifts, recognition in public, and special attention from the non-profit organization.
- **Altruism**: Altruism is defined by Merriam-Webster as, “Behavior by an animal that is not beneficial to or may be harmful to itself but that benefits others of its species.” In philanthropic literature, altruism is generally defined as giving due to care about the consequences of donation.
- **Psychological Benefits**: Two subsets of psychological benefits have been extensively studied in the context of the decision to give, the ‘warm glow’ of giving and the effects on self-image. The
idea of warm glow refers to the feel-good effect that giving instills in donors while self-image refers to how donors view themselves in a social context as a result of giving.

- **Reputation:** Giving makes a donor stand out in the public sphere, and as a result the donor gains status in the eyes of other donors and community members. Hardy and Van Vugt (2006) noted that donations made in public could inspire or pressure others to give and those donations tended to be higher due to the greater social awareness.

- **Values:** Bekkers and Wiepking (2010) defined values in the context of giving as, “intangible phenomena located within individuals, originating from donors, and targeted at themselves as well as beneficiaries.” The authors further observed that what that ideal world looks like depended on one’s value system. Through giving, donors have the power to change the world such that it moves closer towards their system of values. Supporting a cause that changes the world in a desired direction is a key motive for giving that has received very little attention in the literature (Bekkers and Wiepking, 2010).

- **Efficacy:** Last of the eight mechanisms of giving is that of efficacy. Efficacy was defined as, “The power to produce an effect” by Merriam-Webster and by Bekkers and Wiepking (2010) as, “the perception of donors that their contribution makes a difference to the cause they are supporting.”

Philanthropic Giving and the NPS

Due to federal law, park units are prohibited from directly soliciting funds from the visiting public. Donation tools such as collection boxes are allowed, but these monetary sources provide relatively little income (NPS 2014). As a result of these restrictions, many of the 408 units of the National Park Service partner with non-profit friends groups, foundations, and associations that provide fiscal, programmatic, and advocacy support to the individual park units. A National Park Foundation (2003) report estimated that park partners gave some $70,000,000 a year to the parks, providing the bulk of outside funding. Considering the growth in the number of non-profits since then, that monetary amount has likely increased.

Comparing this to philanthropy on a national scale, park philanthropy is a very small piece of the whole picture. Americans gave $358.38 billion dollars to charitable organizations across the country in 2014 alone (Giving USA, 2015). Giving specifically to the national parks fell under two relatively small categories according to the report. Findings indicated that three percent of all donations (just over a billion dollars) were given to environmental and animal based causes with an additional seven percent (over two billion USD) given to causes labeled as public-society benefits. In context, this indicates that giving to parks is a small subset of an already (relatively) small piece of the giving sector.

Donation Boxes

Some research has been conducted on the role of social norms in influencing charitable giving for public lands. Loftin (2007), Martin and Randal (2008), and Alpizat et al (2008) all performed work with park donation boxes to see what variables affected both the decision to give and the amount given. These studies focused on the influence of variables such as prior donations, existence of entrance fees, gifts, and solicitation requests in affecting the decision to give and the amount given. Results showed that the establishment of entrance fees negatively influenced donations, while gifts and solicitations generally resulted in donations, though amounts were typically small. These empirical studies focused primarily on external factors that influenced giving, and avoided entirely other internal reasons donors could have for giving, thus presenting an incomplete picture of the choice to give.
Non-Profits and Parks

A growing body of work on non-profit groups that support recreation areas like national parks has emerged in recent years, focused on the examination of organizations dedicated to supporting a national park or multiple parks politically, socially, and financially. Vaughn and Cortner’s work on philanthropy in the National Park Service have identified two primary types of non-profits in which most federal and many state and local parks partner, ‘friends groups’ and ‘associations’. ‘Friends groups’ were commonly defined as organizations that help fund park projects through fundraising, sponsorships, grants, and more. Associations were generally labeled as ‘the bookstore people’ and supported the park through material revenue as well as funds gained through educational classes and membership fees.

Non-Monetary Support Actions

In examining support for the national parks, all of the work conducted thus far has revolved around the idea of charitable giving. While important, this direct form of support is only one of several ways that people can support parks. Indirect support, more commonly known as pro-environmental behaviors (Halpenny 2010) are less recognized but important aspects of park support. Sivek and Hungerford (1989, 1990) defined pro-environmental behaviors as, “actions by an individual or group that promotes or results in the sustainable use of natural resources.” Such actions can manifest as many different behaviors such as; political or social advocacy, upholding park rules, and leave no trace ideals. Understanding motivations for such pro-environmental behaviors has been a study of subject for some time, particularly within the last fifteen years.

Pro-Environmental Behaviors

Stern (2000) proposed a framework for understanding motivations behind pro-environmental behaviors modeled off a value-belief-norm approach, and noted that understanding such behaviors in general and the variables that influence them were dauntingly complex. The author’s framework consisted of attitudes, personal capabilities, contextual factors, and habits that all influenced two distinct kinds of pro-environmental behaviors, environmental activism, and private sphere environmentalism. The former consisted of actions such as policy support, protests, joining groups, financial action, and similar behaviors while the latter was more concerned with lifestyle choices such as shopping behaviors, waste disposal versus recycling, and conserving resources such as water and electricity.

Pro-Environmental Behaviors and Place Attachment

A number of scholars have examined the role played by place attachment in motivating visitors to engage in pro-environmental behaviors and generally agreed that place attachment and its sub-elements play an important part in predicting pro-environmental behavior. Work by scholars (Lokocz, Ryan and Sadler, 2011; Chen, Wu, and Huang, 2013; Tonge et al., 2014, Lee, 2011;) and others all agreed that place attachment was an important predictor and needed component that led to pro-environmental behaviors. Work by Scannell and Gifford (2010) proposed that two separate types of place attachment, civic (attachment at a group i.e. city level) and natural (attachment to varying natural features), be considered when examining such behaviors, and found that natural attachment contributed to visitors engaging in pro-environmental actions while civic did not.

Place Attachment and Repeat Visitors

For this study, repeat visitors were examined in regards to pro-environmental behaviors rather than first time visitors due to the different nature of the repeat visitor and the greater amount of
Understanding park support is a new undertaking which could result in helping parks now and into the future in monetary donations, political backing, and resource preservation. The purpose of this study, therefore, was to explore the reasons and mechanisms that lead to park support.

**Methods**

To understand the types of and reasons behind visitor support for Yellowstone National Park, a qualitative research design utilizing semi-structured in-depth interviews was adopted. As Hesse-Biber (2010) noted, “The goal of intensive interviews is to gain rich qualitative data on a particular subject from the perspective of the selected individuals.” Adopting semi-structured interviews for the project not only allowed specific questions related to park support to be asked, but also gave study participants the ability to talk about topics not directly covered in the interview guide, and provided information relevant to the study that would have not been covered otherwise. Interviews were held via phone call for convenience of study participants and allowed a much greater geographical reach in selecting interviewees than would have otherwise been possible. Calls were undertaken via speakerphone and recorded via digital recorder.

**Sampling Frame and Procedure**

For this study of Yellowstone supporters, the population was defined as all visitors who were members of the YA, donated to the YPF, or had visited the park five or more times but were not a YA member or a YPF donor. A sample of thirty participants was sought, with each group of park supporters (YA, YPF, and Repeat Visitors) being represented by ten interviews each. Selection of participants for the sample broke down into three stages: initial recruitment of YA and YPF supporters, repeat visitor recruitment, and additional YA and YPF supporter recruitment.

The Yellowstone Park Foundation and the Yellowstone Association divided their list of donors or members into three groups (small, medium and large monetary donors), then selected a total of 25 names to be contacted for this study. Introductory letters, mailed out by YA and YPF, were sent to the 25 participants from each of the two non-profits. The letter explained the study, requested participation, and informed those selected that they will be contacted within two weeks by the interviewer to arrange an interview time if they are interested in participating. Calls began a week after the mailing went out, and continued until the list was exhausted.

In agreement with park managers, those visitors who had come to Yellowstone five or more times were also invited to participate as a repeat visitor to Yellowstone. Visitors were intercepted at the park exits during the summer season and asked to participate during a short on-site survey. During the survey, visitors were asked how many times they had visited Yellowstone and whether or not they were
a member of YA or had donated to YPF. Only those who were not supporters of the non-profits and who had visited the park five or more times were invited to participate in the longer phone interview at a later date.

Similar to the recruitment method for repeat visitors, additional YA and YPF participants were needed to reach study goals therefore visitors were intercepted at the park exits. If identified as YA or YPF supporters via the survey, the researcher asked a follow-up request for a longer phone interview, and scheduled those calls accordingly.

Study Design

This study of YNP supporters included the development of an interview guide in support of the planned qualitative methodological approach. Interviews were conducted over phone rather than in-person for matters of practicality and sample consideration. Due to the initial exploration manner of this study, little qualitative work in the area of park support existed to derive questions for the interview guide. As such, material was taken from past qualitative work in the philanthropic field at large, and adapted with material from park support studies. The interview guide consisted of four sections that covered a variety of subjects derived from past research in the philanthropic and park support fields of research (Appendix B).

Each interview was professionally transcribed. After receiving the transcribed interviews, each text was converted into an appropriate file form and uploaded to the qualitative software program QSR NVivo which served as a research tool to aid in interview analysis. The program acted as an organizational system and coding instrument where similar sections of text were highlighted and assigned to representative themes. These themes were then sorted into appropriate categories. Two levels of analysis from the hermeneutic approach were used for this study, ideographic and nomothetic (Patterson and Williams, 2002). Ideographic analysis involved each interview being separately examined, meaningful units of text identified, and coded into relevant themes. As Patterson and Williams (1996) stated, this step allowed the researcher to, “identify predominant themes through which narrative accounts of specific experimental situations can be meaningfully organized, interpreted, and presented.”

Similarly, nomothetic analysis was then utilized to examine themes and topics important to individual park supporters across all participants. Themes initially used for individuals, but that occurred across multiple participants were applied to make comparisons and identify contrasts among groups of supporters. These relationships among park supporters helped lead to a more general understanding of why park supporters provide the support that they did. Furthermore, the results helped identify what set the indirect supporters apart from the direct supporters of Yellowstone. The interpretation of these relationships help unravel a general rational for park support for direct and indirect supporters.

Limitations

In this qualitative study of park support, participant contact was one limitation. Many of the selected names provided by the YA and YPF could not be reached or did not wish to participate in the study. The process of an initial contact letter sent prior to a phone call from the researcher did not appear to be particularly effective, and indeed, a secondary tactic of intercepting potential participants in-park proved more effective at gaining participants and also helped provide a greater quality of interviews as a level of contact-trust had been formed between researcher and participant.
A technical limitation that arose for several interviews was that of phone clarity and call connection. Many interviewees utilized cell phones to participate in the study and on occasion were in poor service areas. As such, a few interview transcripts are incomplete, missing sections of text, when both the transcriptionist and researcher were unable to determine what was being said. Upon realization of this, an introductory step of verifying decent phone service was included as part of the pre-interview contact, but was not always successful.

A final challenge for the study was ensuring the representation of all support levels among direct financial donors. Ten of the twenty YA and YPF donors were easily categorized by donor level due to help from the YA and YPF. The remaining ten, contacted in person, were not asked this information directly. Support level was therefore inferred from interview dialogue when possible, however, no direct questions about level of monetary donation were asked. This was to comply with non-profit partner wishes and guidance from the Office of Management and Budget. Despite these limitations, the data provided by the study participants revealed ample insights on reasons for park support discussed in the next chapter.

Results

The following section begins with an overview of types of park support and the reasons uncovered for that support. Next, individual types of park support and the reasons for those forms of support are examined in more detail and supporting excerpts from interviews provided. Other important themes that emerged from the interviews are then discussed and further example excerpts provided. Finally, a brief comparison and contrast of the three participant groups is undertaken to highlight the differences between non-profit supporters and repeat visitors. Also included in Appendix B are individual summaries of study participants as well as a description of a day in Yellowstone in their own words to provide an understanding of who the participants were that made up this study.

In total 28 interviews were completed: 10 YA respondents, 10 repeat visitors, and 8 YPF respondents. Interviews ranged in length from 30 minutes to slightly over one hour.
Types of Support Introduction

The 28 completed interviews revealed numerous insights about how the three visitor segments supported Yellowstone and the reasons behind that support. One of the broadest results of the study was to provide a holistic picture of park support as a subject. Figure 1 provides an illustration of how park support was interpreted. All of the actions identified as park support fell under the broader topic of pro-environmental behaviors. Actions ranging from monetary support to introducing others to Yellowstone fit the common definition, “an action by an individual or group that promotes or results in the sustainable use of natural resources.” (Sivek & Hungerford, 1989/1990). Under this broad header, support actions were divided into acknowledged and unrecognized support actions.

Acknowledged actions were those that were recognized as support by the park or its partnering non-profits. The most common of these actions was making a donation to the park’s non-profits. In contrast, unrecognized support actions were those that were not recognized as support actions by the park or its partners. Common unrecognized actions included: sharing park experiences, introducing newcomers to the park, and environmental actions such as picking up litter. Table 1 provides a full list of the support actions described by participants and the number of participants who did the given activity.

Figure 1: Description of Park Support
### Table 1: Types of Park Support

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Support Type</th>
<th>YA Supporters (10)</th>
<th>YPF Supporters (8)</th>
<th>Repeat Visitors (10)</th>
<th>Totals</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Sharing Experiences</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Introducing New Visitors</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Park Monetary Contributions* (YA &amp; YPF)</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Staying Informed</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Park Promoter</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Visiting and Enjoying Park</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. Educating Others</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. Environmental Actions</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9. Political or Issue Actions</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10. Soliciting other Donations*</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11. Volunteering*</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Acknowledged support includes donations to YA, YPF and volunteering
Reasons for Support Introduction

Reasons for supporting Yellowstone were divided into the ‘Acknowledged’ and ‘Unrecognized’ categories to match types of support. Figures 2 and 3 provide a graphic for the common reasons stated or implied by participants for supporting Yellowstone. Generally speaking, these reasons corresponded well to past studies in understanding reasons for philanthropy and pro-environmental support.

Acknowledged support included the following actions: Monetary donations, volunteering at Yellowstone, and non-profit volunteering.

Figure 2: Reasons for Acknowledged Support
Direct Unrecognized Support includes: Visiting and Enjoying, Environmental Actions*, Political or Issue Actions, and Educating Others**.

Indirect Unrecognized Support includes: Sharing Experiences, Introducing Newcomers, Staying Informed, and being a Park Promoter.* And ** Indicates a reason for support that was tied to specific direct unrecognized support type.

Table 2 lists the identified reasons for support given by participants along with the number of interviewees who reported that reason. This table includes reasons for both acknowledged and unrecognized support actions that were directly stated by a participant. In contrast, Table 3 presents several additional passive, or implied reasons for support. Again covering both acknowledged and direct
support actions, these three reasons for support were not directly tied to actions, but are cited in past literature to influence the decision to provide support actions.

Table 2: Identified Reasons for Support

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Reasons</th>
<th>Repeat Visitors (10)</th>
<th>YA Supporters (10)</th>
<th>YPF Supporters (8)</th>
<th>Totals</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1: Values and Interests</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2: Awareness of Need and Altruism</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3: Tangible Benefits</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4: Efficacy</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5: Psychological Benefits</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6: Reputation</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7: Solicitation</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 3: Implied Reasons for Support

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Reasons</th>
<th>Repeat Visitors (10)</th>
<th>YA Supporters (10)</th>
<th>YPF Supporters (8)</th>
<th>Totals</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Values</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Psychological Benefits</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Place Attachment</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Acknowledged Support

Acknowledged support for the park took several different forms, and was typically philanthropic in nature. For Foundation donors and Association members, the action referenced most often by participants was that of direct monetary contribution to the non-profits in which they belonged. While other types of acknowledged support, such as volunteering for the park or its partnering non-profits, and soliciting donations from others were also identified, monetary action was the only acknowledged support action that was commonly identified by participants among all three groups.

**Figure 4: Types of Acknowledged Support: Respondent Statements**

**Monetary**
- It’s not significant but it’s a reasonable amount of money that we contribute every year to the Yellowstone Foundation in support of the wolf project. We support it at a level of over $2,500 a year.
- We are YA members and we’re sustaining members so we support them that way and in our trust. When the last one dies, some money will go to Yellowstone Park.

**Volunteer**
- In the early 2000s, I was a volunteer for four seasons in a row and then I came back here for family reasons… I volunteered for the park archeologist, the park photographer, the park cultural anthropologist. That was really, really fun.
- I sure would love to. If my husband’s health held up, once he retires, that’s something he would like to volunteer to do in the summers. That’s just our favorite place to be.

**Advocacy/ Solicitation**
- [We help] All the time through the park foundation. Yeah, we’ve got a capital campaign going on, trying to raise $40 million through the park over 5 years. With the campaign, we travel and solicit contributions or pledges and so it’s a busy time.
- Well, I was introducing them to an organization that I thought could provide some meaningful funding to them for our project.
Acknowledged Support Reasons

A large proportion of identified reasons for acknowledged support fell under the direct action of monetary support due to the nature of most study participant’s association with the YA or YPF. Discussion about reasons for support with these non-profit donors largely focused on the monetary gifts made and produced a number of explanations which have been organized into larger themes representative of Bekker and Wiepking’s mechanisms of support.

**Figure 5: Reasons for Acknowledged Support: Respondent Statements**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Values and Interests</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• I don’t know if you’ve heard from others about – or if you’re familiar with the circumstance with the need of cutthroat trout in the park – that’s really the key reason that we also support the Yellowstone Park Foundation because I really want to see the native trout restoration succeed in Yellowstone Lake...</td>
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<tr>
<td>• I think it’s important to preserve it for future generations so they have an opportunity to enjoy it as much as my husband and I do.</td>
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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Awareness of Need</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• It's regretable that there isn't more tax money available for some things to be done in the park, but I think the Yellowstone Park Foundation is successfully supplementing that.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• There’s a lack of funds if they are to provide for parks and stuff like that. I kind of feel like you want to help close the gap. I mean, obviously, it’s not much, but that was the primary incentive for joining it.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Tangible Benefits</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• And then I started looking at the other foundations that were there, and I saw that, oh, wow, I can get this cool picture on a credit card, which people constantly comment on when I use it.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• The primary reason is that I appreciate the stores and the books about the park and the ability of the people to get them.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Altruism</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• (I joined because of) the shutdown. Back seven years ago, they were talking shutdowns of the national parks. And if we don't support them, they're going to shut them down.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• So even though we don't contribute a lot, hopefully there's a lot of us that are contributing so that they can enhance what the National Park Service is able to do with their extra funding.</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
Figure 6: Reasons for Acknowledged Support: Respondent Statements (Continued)

**Efficacy**

- In fact, it was on a winter Association trip that we made the decision to support the Foundation. We were looking for an avenue where we could give direct dollars to support specific projects.
- I think the primary reason that we chose the park foundation is because we can designate where our gift goes and support not only what we like to support, the wolf project, but what the park deems are their priority projects.

**Psychological Benefits**

- Probably the most important reason...it made me feel good. It was some small way that I could give back to these places that were so meaningful to me.
- Well, I mean, I enjoyed it so much and, you know, what I can do financially that I can afford is to be able to make sure the park keeps happening.

**Solicitation**

- And I felt like when I was shopping in the store and they were telling me about it, I thought, you know, if someone like me who has connections to it doesn’t do it [join], why should I expect other people to do it?
- It probably was just being in the park and seeing the Yellowstone Association (which) has got a little bit more visibility because, they’ve got – little shops and souvenir shops and they’ve got more visibility to be in that area and I think probably on one of my visits I said, ‘Gee what’s this all about’ and got some literature.
Unrecognized Support

Direct Actions

Direct unrecognized support actions were ways unmeasurable by quantifiable means that park supporters could give something back to Yellowstone. These actions commonly took the form of visiting the park, educating others about Yellowstone, performing environmental actions in the park, and serving as an advocate for park issues. Several interviewees cited educating others about Yellowstone more generally. This included teachers who brought Yellowstone up in a programmatic context, wildlife supporters sharing information about specific programs, and those who tried to convey the importance of the parks informally to others.

Figure 7: Types of Direct Unrecognized Support: Respondent Statements

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Environmental Actions</th>
<th>Education</th>
<th>Visitation</th>
<th>Issue Advocacy</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• And then, obviously I support the park by following the rules and regulations and not doing things you’re not supposed to, not walking off the boardwalks or not parking where we’re not supposed to, things like that. &lt;br&gt; • You know, its simple things like doing the recycling and, it’s those kind of things where you have to support the park. Clean up after yourself. Pack in, pack it out.</td>
<td>• I think its (Yellowstone) a really interesting opportunity for me to see how our democratic republic works in action and then also bring that back to my students. I just like learning.&lt;br&gt; • Those are the small ways that I think I’ve contributed, other than educating other people about how important a place like Yellowstone is and I’ve brought other people there.</td>
<td>• Well, we feel like we’re the first and most important way that we support it is to visit it frequently and to enjoy the park experience and do the things that I’ve been talking about.&lt;br&gt; • You know, one of the things we do, obviously, is visiting the park so our entrance fee and things like that help support the park.</td>
<td>• And I’m somehow or another connected with a lot of the online surveys and such to support the park. And I have mailed the National Park Service a number of times about issues at the park.&lt;br&gt; • We often voice our opinion on management questions and things like that...So you can comment on these things on the Internet. And I make my voice heard through organizations like Trout Unlimited.</td>
</tr>
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</table>
Indirect Actions

Indirect unrecognized support actions were those that were not identified as support actions by the study participants, but that have been labeled such by past work (Jorgenson and Nickerson, 2014; Stern, 2000) and emerged when asked specifically in the interviews. Common indirect unrecognized support actions were sharing general park experiences, introducing newcomers, promoting the park, and staying informed about park issues.

**Figure 8: Types of Indirect Unrecognized Support: Respondent Statements**

**Sharing Experiences**
- Oh I talk about Yellowstone all the time. I talk about my research all the time. Every time I see that place in a picture, or I've got a scrapbook in here of places I've gone to and why wouldn't you share that?
- Quite often. I mean, if you have a receptive audience people are like, what did you do last summer? I mean, I'd say often. Anybody that I think it would be a meaningful topic for them.

**Introducing Newcomers**
- My husband brought his brother one year. And we have other family members who want to come because of what we've told them but they haven't been able to do that yet.
- Well, I can tell you I've never gone alone. I usually drag someone with me. Sometimes it's dragging, sometimes they're willing. If it's someone's first visit there, I do take them to Yellowstone Falls and the geyser and Fishing Bridge.

**Park Promoting**
- We go through and we tell everybody about it. Actually a large family from our church has just now been there visiting on our recommendation...
- Another way that we support the park is that we really advocate for it for people who visit us from out of state. We always encourage them to make a trip through Yellowstone and we can provide them with suggested itineraries and routes and whatnot.

**Staying Informed**
- I Facebook every once in a while when I catch something on the news, then I go to Facebook, and we can see what it was all about.
- Well, I like to get information about goings on in the park itself. It's really a way for me to keep in touch, particularly when I lived in Pennsylvania. I was 2,000 miles away from the area so these organizations communicated by e-mail.
Unrecognized Support Reasons

Participants were much less likely to discuss reasons for the varied types of unrecognized support due to the nature of the interview guide. However supporters who reported educating others as a form of support or who performed environmental actions while visiting Yellowstone did discuss reasons for these forms of support. Similar to acknowledged support, values again played an important role in these actions.

Those participants who discussed educating others about Yellowstone in general or about park specific issues most often highlighted personal values and interests driving their actions. Supporters wanted to share the opportunities the park offered and also saw the park as a valuable teaching tool for their students, hoping its use in an educational setting would have a positive learning outcome. Park supporters who reported engaging in environmental actions also discussed values and interests as the leading reason for this support. Topics such as responsibility, respect for surroundings, and support for clean energy were discussed by park supporters as reasons for picking up litter, making lodging choices, following park rules, and practicing Leave No Trace (LNT) rules.

Figure 9: Reasons for Identified Unrecognized Support Actions: Respondent Statements

**Education**

- I also talk about Yellowstone and why it is important that we have places like that, not only for animals but for people.
- Sometimes I talk with my students because I live in rural Appalachia, and they are not great travelers. They seem to be very place bound. So I do what I can to think that maybe they’ll get curious about somewhere else.

**Environmental Actions**

- I think it’s important just to let people know about it and to talk about how important it is to respect the animals and all of it, I mean, the wildlife and the flowers – not to pick the flowers, just enjoy them, just everything that’s there, not to do anything to disturb the terrain or any of that kind of stuff.
- By making sure that I don’t vandalize either the property and that I keep my trash out of there and that I’m respectful, that I’m attentive and respectful to the animals and their moments and to the other people in the park.
When asked about other non-profits they had supported, all three groups interviewed reported a wide range of philanthropic activity, almost universally monetary in nature. Causes supported matched to literature on the subject, with religious, educational, health care, and poverty related non-profits all being supported by participants. Repeat Visitors were more likely to support only environmental or community issues while non-profit supporters were much more active in the philanthropic field, often supporting multiple other causes.

**Figure 10: Other Causes Supported by Park Supporters: Respondent Statements**

**Repeat Visitors**
- [In regards to donations] It’s very infrequent. I believe in the work of conservation organizations and I am one of the founders of a service learning academy and we talk about environmentally issues, but my money, which is not a lot of it, usually goes to social justice issues.
- I mean, we’re there, we go every year and when we visited Mount Rushmore, we donated money there and at Crazy Horse and that sort of thing.

**Yellowstone Association Members**
- Churches, a camp down in Rockport that’s sort of near and dear to our heart, all sorts of Christian organizations. Lots of them. At least 4 different universities. Categorically, those are probably [the ones I give to], universities, museums, camps for underprivileged kids, high schools, [things] like that.
- I support the Boy Scouts of America; I support the Heart Association, the American Heart Association. I support some local art groups—there’s a couple of art museums that I support. I have [provided] some support for Special Olympics.

**Park Foundation Donors**
- We give to a lot of organizations – like Salvation Army and the Children’s Home Society in Minnesota. We give pretty generously to our church. We give to a lot of different things – to our universities where we graduated.
- Well, [I support] arts organizations, universities, pay-based organizations, health organizations, and custodial care organizations. The core reason for [supporting] all of them is I believe in their mission. I believe in the work that they’re doing.
Additional Influences on Support: Positive and Negative

Beyond this study’s primary goal to examine the types and reasons behind park support, several other topics that were important to participants emerged from interviews due to the semi-structured nature of the study. Figure 11 displays the topics of concern to interviewees that frequently arose without prompting. Many were related to social conditions within the park.

Figure 11: Additional Influences on Support: Positive and Negative

Topics that Could Aid Support

- Personal Interests
  - Conservation
  - Childhood
  - Wilderness
  - Personal Restoration

- Place Attachment
  - Experience
  - Emotion
  - Dependence
    - Transformative
    - Love for the Park
    - Uniqueness
    - Irreplacable

Topics that Could Harm Support

- Social Conditions
  - Crowding
  - Visitor Behavior
  - Commercialization

- Emotions
  - Sadness
  - Anger
Some of these topics arose out of experiences within the park and the importance of Yellowstone while others came from the open-ended prompt “Is there anything else you would like to tell me about Yellowstone today” at the end of the interview. While these topics were not necessarily tied directly to the idea of park support, their potential to affect the actions of park supporters should be recognized. Failure to address the concerns and interests present could ultimately drive away supporters or make recruitment of new supporters significantly more difficult.
Four additional topics emerged from supporters that could aid support. These consisted of experiences, emotions, dependence, attachment, and personal interests. Within these topics there was frequently a great deal of overlap, and if one topic could be considered an overlying guide to them, it would be that of attachment. Place attachment has been commonly broken down by scholars into themes of place identity and place dependence, both of which are touched upon by the topics brought up by participants. As such, dependence on the park, its uniqueness, experiences in Yellowstone, and emotions, are examined in connection to place attachment while personal interests are examined separately.

**Figure 12: Topics that Could Aid Support: Respondent Statements**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Experience</th>
<th>Emotions</th>
<th>Dependence</th>
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</table>
| • We were just standing knee deep in the Soda Butte River and she just looked around and I saw a little tear go down her cheek and I said are you okay? And she said absolutely. I just love it. She had come home. And it’s funny she – like I said, she choked up a little bit and we were with a fishing guide and he said don’t be embarrassed, you’re not the only one who feels that way. Lots of people feel that way when they come to the park. | • I don’t know. I absolutely love that place and the area around it. And it’s why I think Bozeman is home, it’s because of the park. It’s because I want to be in a place like that forever. So I just have a lot of love in my heart right now and a big smile on my face.  
• Honestly, it has always been a place that – and this might sound too cheesy – it’s one of the places for me where I go to get filled up. It’s a place where I can – it’s the peace and the solitude. | • Well, Glacier is a close second, Glacier’s up close. But I don’t know that there’s another park that has more meaning.  
• I live in Utah, and there’s nowhere that I can get that kind of experience in Utah, at least not for the wildlife that I care about the most, which is the wolves and the grizzlies.  
• Last year we decided we wouldn’t go (to Yellowstone). But by August we both missed it so much that we went anyway. We ended up planning a trip in August and went. It’s just such a beautiful place. Good memories. |
A number of personal interests were discussed in the context of Yellowstone, but were not tied directly to reasons for park support. Personal interests were typically related to Yellowstone specifically or the outdoors more generally and emerged primarily from discussion of the importance of Yellowstone as well as questions on why supporters visited the park at all. Specific interests included such ideas as conservation, childhood behaviors, Yellowstone’s uniqueness, and wilderness ideals.

**Figure 13: Topics that Could Aid Support Continued: Respondent Statements**

**Childhood**

- I think that comes when I was a kid, any chance I could roam around outside. And in Minnesota, the northern half of the state there’s a lot of woods and a lot of water and a lot of hunting and fishing and canoeing and great lakes and – or at least Lake Superior and other things. I mean, that’s just the way I like to do things. I’ve always been interested in fishing and hunting and hiking.
- My dad started taking me when I was about 5 years old to the American Falls Reservoir.

**Conservation**

- I also enjoy the whole focus on conservation. When you leave Yellowstone, you recycle more and you’re more aware of the environment I think that’s a big emphasis of Yellowstone as well. What would come to mind was (how it’s) important to preserve, those types of areas, and Yellowstone is important to me mainly for the emphasis on conservation.

**Wilderness**

- You know, it’s just a vast wilderness. It’s incredibly beautiful. It’s different at every turn. I don’t know that I would ever in my lifetime see the whole park. It’s always a joy to come up and watch the trees grow over the years and see the tourists.
- I’m a real fan of wilderness. I recently retired and most of my vacations, even with my family as my kids were growing up, was west of the Mississippi and primarily had goals as either national parks or monuments or wilderness areas and even state parks.

**Personal Restoration**

- You want the really real reason? It’s because I kind of re-center myself when I’m there. Well, it’s sort of a reasonably short story. When I’m going into Yellowstone, I’m behind some slow driver and I go, ‘How can you be going 40?’ The speed limit is 45. Well, if you’re only going 40, when I leave Yellowstone, I’m that slow driver. It just calms me down.
In the course of the interview process, study participants also occasionally discussed topics that they viewed as harmful to either the park or the experiences they sought to enjoy in Yellowstone. The two common subjects discussed in this regard were social conditions in the park as well as emotional reactions to events that had happened in Yellowstone. While these subjects were not tied specifically to support, or even spoken about in the context of support, they were matters that affected participants and could have implications for a participant’s future support for the park.

**Figure 14: Topics that Could Harm Support: Respondent Statements**

### Crowding
- Well, we like the park best early in the morning before all the crowds get there plus that’s when the animals are out. So we start about 5:30 in the morning. We like to be in the Lamar Valley so we normally are somewhere over there.
- Well, I think that I touched on my view of Yellowstone during the high summer when it’s open to the public and everything is open and the crowds are going in Yellowstone and how much it takes to support the crowds. I don’t know if you’ve been there often in the summertime, but it turns into a large metropolitan area, which is not what wilderness is to me.

### Visitor Behavior
- And I think a lot of people don’t appreciate it that haven’t been and stayed long enough to really look at the park with all of its varied features and everything that’s offered there. It’s amazing.
- And then the bad memory is just the people that don’t seem to be able to understand how to use the pull off and that they have to photograph a bison standing on the side of the road from the middle of the road and they have to stop and get their photograph and that blocks up the next person.

### Commercialization
- And some things have changed. It’s gotten a wee bit more commercialized in a way. I mean, you have to have cell phone service. There’s a lot of new building going on. Thank goodness they’re trying very hard to leave as little a footprint as possible.
- And I know some people complain there wasn’t enough space along the roads or whatever, but I think if they did that, it would ruin it. I’m not quite sure what people want more of – people just don’t want to take nature as nature. I mean, to have a whole bunch of places more than what they already have for pulling off the road I think would ruin it. I think it would be commercialized. I hope they never do that.
Things that were identified as loses or destruction in the park were likely to evoke sadness in comments from park supporters. Wildlife deaths, fire in the park, and historic building removal were all topics that were brought up as sad events. Events that were defined as sad frequently had a personal component to them further indicating place attachment to a specific aspect of Yellowstone. A wide range of other emotions arose in interviews with park supporters but the only other one that could be related to potential harm of park support was that of anger. A few participants noted being mad at visitor behavior or when experiencing traffic jams in the park.

**Figure 15: Topics that Could Harm Support Continued: Respondent Statements**

- **Sadness**
  - It would devastate me if I saw a fire again in Yellowstone. It makes me sad to think that, you know, there’s fires right now— in other places, but anything that people can do to protect it, I think we need to keep doing it.
  - And the park service actually called us up, and one of the biologists said we’ve got horrible news to tell you, it’s bad enough that the one was killed and we just got word yesterday that 754 was shot; one in Wyoming, one in Montana. So don’t get me on that subject. That was – I told my wife, I said, well, there goes $7,500 shot to hell. I mean, just mindboggling.

- **Anger**
  - But to stop to take a photograph just starts a chain reaction (traffic jam) – that’s why I go there (to Yellowstone) so I don’t have to deal with people and traffic. I find myself more and more angry and my blood pressure going up instead of down.
Conclusions & Recommendations

Yellowstone National Park has supporters from across the nation that care deeply about the park for a wide variety of reasons. Throughout the interview process it was clear that all the participants enjoyed and treasured Yellowstone for the opportunities it provided them and further showed the park has a wide base of visitors who are helping or who want to help in some way.

Results from this study revealed two distinct types of pro-environmental support provided to the park in the form of acknowledged and unrecognized support actions. Of those activities identified as support actions, the top three utilized by all three groups were sharing experiences, introducing new visitors to the park, and making monetary contributions. The former two were indirect unrecognized support activities and visitation based, suggesting that supporters who undertook these activities believed that visiting the park itself is a support activity. If so, subsidiary questions such as when newcomers are taken to the park the first time (typically summer) and what they’re told about the park (wildlife experiences, other park features) could also play a role in opinions formed about the park and subsequent direct support.

Examining the reasons for the two types of support, results generally matched well with more general past philanthropic and pro-environmental research. Examination of reasons for park support primarily focused on monetary donations due to the design of the interview guide and nature of non-profit participants interviewed. Other support such as environmental, educational, and advocacy were also addressed, but in less detail than responses to monetary donations. Like types of support, one of the important ideas that emerged as a result of this study was how varied reasons of support were and how participants had multiple contributing reasons that influenced the decision to support. For example, a park visitor’s awareness of the need for funding, plus matching values about what is important in life, along with tangible benefits gained once support is provided, can all play a role in leading the decision to provide support.

One of the few subjects where repeat visitors and non-profit supporters differentiated themselves notably in this study was in this subject of other causes supported. YA and YPF supporters were both commonly involved in several philanthropic causes ranging from education and healthcare to religious causes and environmental concerns. In contrast to this frequent involvement, repeat visitors to the park were far less actively involved in the philanthropic field, supporting environmental concerns and some community or social justice issues. This suggests that while a great number of the repeat visitors to the park are concerned and involved in environmental support or varying types, a smaller group of (first time or repeat) park visitors are those more active philanthropists and more likely to become acknowledged (monetary) supporters.

Beyond this notable split in the groups, all three groups did mix frequently in both the types of support that participants performed as well as the reasons behind that support, some general trends did emerge that helped to distinguish repeat visitors from non-profit participants. Repeat visitors were the least likely to engage in acknowledged philanthropic support actions, with only four reporting making a monetary contribution to the park, while non-profit supporters were universally involved in philanthropic actions, and a number of them in multiple such actions.

In contrast to the lack of philanthropic support, repeat visitors were more likely to engage in a range of direct unrecognized actions, and were the group who identified actions they performed inside of the park most often. These things like cleaning up litter, recycling, and practicing LNT rules while in Yellowstone indicated that repeat visitors are not totally unaware of the impacts they have on the park, and shows that even when not donating they can provide some form of direct support to the park. A few non-profit visitors also mentioned these types of internal actions when asked about ways they supported Yellowstone.
The idea of a participant undertaking an action because they valued some aspect of Yellowstone was the most frequently cited reason for giving across both philanthropic and pro-environmental support actions. Philanthropically, Bekkers and Wiepking (2012) commented that, “Supporting a cause that changes the world in a desired direction is a key motive for giving that has received very little attention in the literature.” This wanting to change the world in a desired direction is perhaps the best way to think of Yellowstone monetary supporters, though ‘preserve’ might be a more apt word than that of ‘change’.

In addition to thoughts and reasons directly related to support, several other thematic areas emerged from the interviews that could also play a role in influencing park support. These subjects were not tied to the idea of park support and were most commonly uncovered when talking about experiences in the park, the importance of Yellowstone, and other areas they commonly visited to recreate. These interview questions brought forth indicators of place attachment and personal interests as being key topics that could help aid support, while revealing several social conditions as well as negative emotions as topics that could harm support.

Numerous types of non-profits were discussed when participants were asked about other causes they supported, and several general categories emerged. Other environmental causes were the single largest category listed by park supporters, and suggests that those who visit Yellowstone frequently or who give money to the park could broadly be considered environmentalists, concerned about both specific places and issues in the wider world. Non-environmental causes such as educational institutions, religious organizations, human service charities, health services, and local community causes made up the other categories of causes commonly given to by park supporters.

Implications

- **YA and YPF supporters are more likely to be broad philanthropic supporters:** Perhaps one of the most important implications from this study comes from the information gained about other causes supported by park supporters. If the participants from this study are representative of the larger population of park supporters, then it will prove a serious challenge to significantly increase the number acknowledged (particularly monetary) supporters from the broader category of repeat visitors. Repeat visitors often noted that they faced financial constraints that prevented them from donating to the park that prohibited giving when they wanted to. In contrast, non-profit supporters were actively involved in multiple philanthropic causes and able to support those involvements.

- **Aim to raise awareness of need among these broad philanthropic supporters:** Both non-profit group supporters reflected on being aware that Yellowstone had a need for support while repeat visitors did not mention the topic at all. Finding ways to raise this awareness of need among those philanthropists visiting Yellowstone should be a priority going forward to bring new supporters onboard. Some ideas could include in park and online material connecting support of park needs (road repairs, facility refurbishment, and staffing) with the ability to help preserve specific (wildlife) or more general park experiences for the future. Roadside markers, staff acknowledgement of the help of support at the end of programs, and expanded media outreach would all aid in raising this awareness of need. If possible, involve the park in these activities to provide better reach of the message.

- **Money isn’t everything:** Park support is not only about the money. This is not to say that donations are irrelevant, for they are critical to the idea of park support. Rather, this study suggests that monetary donations are just one piece in a much greater support scheme and that
ignoring these other facets and focusing solely on monetary gifts would be a potential mistake. Acknowledged supporters (monetary, volunteer, etc.) provide immediate support, while unrecognized supporters provide more generational support, ensuring the park is well thought of, visited, and supported in realm of public opinion.

- **Utilize or recognize the unrecognized support actions**: Unrecognized supporters could further serve to introduce additional visitors to Yellowstone who do have the potential to provide monetary support. Furthermore, these unrecognized supporters (along with acknowledged ones) are the leverage point for greater funding change overall either through the ballot box in both local and national elections, as well as providing continued belief in Yellowstone’s greater purpose and mission. Failure to utilize these supporters as more than monetary funders could be a mistake in an era where government agencies are under ever-increasing scrutiny and budget cuts common. The park has already taken steps to connect with visitors on social media, and should continue those practices.

- **Personal experiences are key to both types of support**: Examining both types of support, another key idea that emerged was the personal experiences of visitors. These experiences were commonly cited as reasons for giving. Wildlife experiences and activities off the road were the moments most often cited as having led to support. If possible, managers could ensure these types of moments continue to occur. This may take the form of encouraging visitors to get off the beaten track, provide more roadway spaces for wildlife viewing in general (while ensuring traffic snarls do not form because of them) and sharing the stories of those who have already had such experiences to incite others to go and pursue their own special moments.

- **Social Conditions and crowding in particular should be managed carefully**: Participants from all three groups were very aware of how busy the park has become in the last several summers. As a place people come to get away from the crowds and the build-up of cities, managers should be aware that a continued increase in such conditions could drive away long-time supporters. Further investigation into the effect of these conditions on loss of support should be considered, and acted upon by managers if necessary.
Works Cited


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Appendix A: Survey instrument

Yellowstone Telephone Interview Guide

Introduction
Script for visitors recruited at the exit gates

“Hello, I am calling today because you recently visited Yellowstone National Park. As you may recall, you agreed to participate in a telephone interview after you completed a roadside survey. This conversation will take about 30 minutes and we will talk about your experiences in and park support for Yellowstone. Do you have time now?”

➢ If NO - interviewer will ask for a better time to call back.

➢ If NO – and not at all interested, interviewer will say, “Thank you and have a nice day.”

➢ If YES - interviewer will ask if the interview can be recorded.
Before we begin, I would like to let you know that this survey has been approved by the Office of Management and Budget. I am also required to tell you that a Federal agency may not conduct or sponsor, and that you are not required to respond to, a collection of information unless it has a currently valid OMB control number. The control number for this collection is 1024-0224. Secondly, your participation is voluntary and your name will never be connected with your individual responses. Finally, if you have any questions about this survey, I have a name and contact number available if you would like to have it. Can we begin?

Script for the members of Yellowstone Park Foundation and the Yellowstone Association

“Hello, I am calling today because you were recently contacted by the Yellowstone Park Foundation [or the Yellowstone Association] and asked if you would be willing to be interviewed by a graduate student from the Univ. of MT. This conversation will take about 30 minutes and we will talk about your experiences in and park support for Yellowstone. Do you have time now?

➢ If NO - interviewer will ask for a better time to call back.

➢ If NO – and not at all interested, interviewer will say, “Thank you and have a nice day.”

➢ If YES - interviewer will ask if the interview can be recorded.
Before we begin, I would like to let you know that this survey has been approved by the Office of Management and Budget. I am also required to tell you that a Federal agency may not conduct or sponsor, and that you are not required to respond to, a collection of information unless it has a currently valid OMB control number. The control number for this collection is 1024-0224. Secondly, your participation is voluntary and your name will never be connected with your individual responses. Finally, if you have any questions about this survey, I have a name and contact number available if you would like to have it. Can we begin?
Interview Questions

The first topic I’m interested in concerns your experiences with Yellowstone in general, and the connection you have to the area.

1) How many times have you been to Yellowstone during your lifetime?
2) How old were you on your first visit?
3) In the past five years, about how many times have you visited Yellowstone?
4) What is your average length of stay while visiting Yellowstone?
5) We are interested in your memories of a past experience or event at Yellowstone. Please describe the memory that first comes to mind of an experience or event at YNP?
6) During a typical visit can you describe your day in Yellowstone from the time you get up to the time you go to sleep.
7) Why is Yellowstone important to you?
   a) Are there other places that hold similar meanings?
8) Why do you come to Yellowstone?

Thank you. Next I’m interested in how you interact with the park and the area at large.

1) What are some of the ways you support the park?
   a) What are some of the ways you support the local communities?

⇒ If interviewee has been previously identified as a Yellowstone Association or Yellowstone Park Foundation affiliate, go to Yellowstone Association/Yellowstone Park Foundation Section.
⇒ If interviewee has not been previously identified as an affiliate with YA or YPF, go to Repeat Visitor Section.

Yellowstone Association/Yellowstone Park Foundation Section:

Interviewees will be previously identified as being a member of the Yellowstone Association or contributor of the Yellowstone Park Foundation. Depending on which organization they are affiliated with, the questions will reflect their involvement with that select organization.

As a member of the Yellowstone Association [or Park Foundation] I would like to ask you a few more questions about your affiliation with the organization.

1) How many years have you been a member of the Yellowstone Association [or Park Foundation]?
2) Can you tell me why you are a member of the Yellowstone Association [or Park Foundation]?
3) What was it that inspired you to join the Yellowstone Association [or Park Foundation]?
4) What other types of non-profit organizations have you supported in the last year?
   a) Why do you support these causes?
5) Are you aware of the Yellowstone Park Foundation [Or Yellowstone Association]? ☐ Yes ☐ No
   a) Are you a supporter [ or member]? ☐ Yes ☐ No

Repeat Visitor Section: (If they are a return visitor of at least 5 visits and are not a part of either the Yellowstone Association or Yellowstone Park Foundation.)

As a repeat visitor to Yellowstone I have a few more questions for you, associated with your many visits to the park.

1) Would you mind telling me why you are a frequent visitor to Yellowstone?
2) Are there other similar areas, over three hours away from your home that you also visit frequently?
   a) Where?
   b) Why those places?
1) Are you aware of the Yellowstone Association? □ Yes □ No
2) Are you aware of the Yellowstone Foundation? □ Yes □ No

Park Support Section (Asked of all interviewees at end of interview):
1) Here are some additional ways people can support Yellowstone National Park. Can you please respond with how often you do these activities? How often do you...
   c) Share (talk about) experiences in Yellowstone with others?
   d) Spend nights in lodging facilities in Yellowstone National Park?
   e) Spend nights in gateways communities outside of Yellowstone?
   f) Become a member of the Yellowstone Association?
   g) Donate money to other conservation organizations?
   h) Donate money to the Yellowstone Park Foundation?
   i) Bring visitors to Yellowstone who have never been before?
   j) Spend nights camping in Yellowstone?
   k) Visit Yellowstone’s Facebook page?
   l) Volunteer time with Yellowstone National Park?

Is there anything else about Yellowstone that you would like to share with me?
Thank you so much for your time, and have a great day.
Appendix B: Interview Summaries

Participant summaries were written to provide readers with short ‘snapshots’ of study participants. These snapshots allow readers to understand who a particular participant was as a whole, and helps further the understanding of the varied quotes used from any given interview. Each synopsis includes information about a participant’s activity in Yellowstone, their thoughts about the park, and the types of and reasons for supporting the park.

Repeat Visitors

RV Memo 1: Lily

Lily is a ten time visitor to Yellowstone, and lives outside of the inter-mountain west. She’s a wildlife enthusiast and photographer and structures her trip specifically to view wildlife in the park. Lily and her husband have brought their kids to the park, but not together like most families, brings one per every trip. This is because specific features and places in the park hold special memories for each child. She sees Yellowstone as important because it’s one of the few places remaining that she can visit at her own pace. Furthermore, she thinks of the park in the context of Christian creation, the variety of the landscapes, and how every lake, waterfall, and other feature can be different and beautiful. Animals, not just wildlife hold meaning for Lily and her family. Some of the other places they view as special also revolve around horseback trips and trail rides.

In terms of supporting the park, Lily and her family always stay somewhere in the Yellowstone area, typically in Grand Teton. She also tells friends and extended family about the park, and actively encourages others to visit. She additionally shares experiences via pictures on Facebook and other media. Lily enjoys the connections that the park can bring about, and likes meeting both visitors and rangers and hearing their stories about Yellowstone and the wider world.

Key Terms: Wildlife watcher, Photographers, Religious, Scenery, Family meanings, Indirect support

Day in the Park

“Well, ours varies. Sometimes we will go down to Cooke City and come into Yellowstone at that northeastern entrance, and wherever we had seen something in the past, we’ll always stop and pull out our binoculars and our camera. And, when you drive along the road and see huge crowds stopped, you always look and see what people are looking at. Lots of times we’ll stop and see what’s going on there.

Typically we take snacks and drinks with us, our water, lunch, sitting along the road somewhere that we enjoy, and we just drive and stop wherever we go. I’m a photographer so I love getting pictures of the buffalo, the moose, and whatever. We try to see a lot of times what other people don’t see. We will stop where we know we’ve seen something in the past, even if there’s nobody there, and stop at our favorite spots that we’ve seen [things at] in the past. We look for clues about something that’s happening there. We don’t stop much at the [big] stops anymore. We used to stop at each of the visitor stations and just kind of check them out. Most of the time we don’t unless we’re hungry or thirsty or have to go to the bathroom.

So we just drive. We’re just in our car and out of our car all day long. I don’t know if it’s typical but the last time we were there when we met you, we actually would come back home to our cabin at about 2pm and take a two hour nap so we could get back out, have dinner and get back [to the park] before sunset and try to catch a bear or two. Our days vary a lot. But typically when we’re there, we’re in the park to see the wildlife.”
RV Memo 2: Madison

Madison is a five time visitor to Yellowstone, who has made just one visit in the last five years. She lives close enough to do primarily daytrips from her home, and has made a single trip where she stayed overnight in the park. She and her husband own a boat, and spent that one overnight trip boating and fishing on Yellowstone Lake. The other trips were mostly sightseeing via car, with little activity off the roads in the park. The park’s natural qualities and wildlife make it stand out as beautiful to her, and the fact that it’s relatively close to her home make it something she’s able to appreciate relatively frequently. The park is important to her because it’s the first of its kind and set a precedent all other parks followed. Additionally, she enjoys the fact that visiting it is so convenient. Fishing is a family tradition for Madison, and is one of the common recreation activities she participates in when on vacations.

When it comes to support for Yellowstone, Madison sees herself as providing support by not abusing the park and following park rules. She supports the surrounding communities via tourist dollars on her visits, primarily buying food and gas. Madison has considered supporting the park financially, but their current income as retirees and other obligations make it impossible at the current time. It is something she would consider doing if income allowed.

Key Terms: Daytrips, Road-Based, Wildlife Watcher, Fisher, Boater, Environmental, Income Restrictions

Day in the Park

“Well, the one time we went we took the boat and we went to Yellowstone Lake, and we stayed overnight 2 nights there. We boated Yellowstone Lake and fished. And the other times [we’d stay in] Island Park. And then one other time we went early in May. In May, we went up to Jackson, went up through Teton Village around that way and drove all the way clear around by the Madison River and came out and stayed in Gardiner that night. Mostly just sightseeing.”

RV Memo 3: Owen

Owen is a Yellowstone visitor and enthusiast who has made 12 visits to Yellowstone in his life. A visitor of convenience, he often stops by the park for a day or two on his way to other places, and will go out of his way to stop at the park if the distance isn’t too great. Longer trips are rarer in occurrence but have been made in the past. Owen (and his family) are somewhat multi-activity Yellowstone visitors, getting up early to look for wildlife, hiking, and geyser watching among other activities.

The geothermal features are what are most prominent to Owen about Yellowstone, and his interest in geysers and similar features has fueled his park trips since he first visited with his parents as a child. Yellowstone holds a wonder for Owen, and it’s a place where he can come to recreate and escape the daily stresses of life. ‘It’s nice to know it’s there.’ Owen also commented how the park has a magical quality to it that most other places don’t.

Owen supports Yellowstone by visiting and contributes monetarily via his entrance fees as well as by following the rules of the park. He’s considered joining the park foundation, and mentioned that his daughter is really interested in wildlife, particularly wolves, and that he’s considered signing her up for a Yellowstone Institute class on the subject in the future. He also mentioned how much his family likes to share Yellowstone experiences with others via social media. Owen used to belong to the NPCA, enjoying the idea of a national voice being able to speak out on how the parks were being managed.

Key Terms: Geothermal, Family, Wildlife, Relaxing, Considered Donation, Scenery

Day in the Park

“Well, like on this most recent trip, I had the whole family there. So [we would] get up, go have some breakfast, then we’ll usually head out, try to do a little sightseeing for wildlife, try to get out there
early enough in the morning maybe we’ll see the critters out and about. And then if we can find a day hike or something like that, which we didn’t do any of that this particular time, other than the boardwalks in the geyser basins. Sometimes we’ll do that. And then sometimes we’ll actually drive around in the evenings too for the same purpose, looking to see if we can see any wildlife, any wolves, or elk or moose or whatever the case may be. That’s typically what the day looks like. And then of course if we’re down in the Old Faithful area we’ve always got to stop and watch Old Faithful once or twice. That’s about how it works.”

RV Memo 4: Jacob

Jacob is a resident of Montana who moved to the state after retiring and has been to Yellowstone a dozen times since moving to the state. An outdoorsman, Jacob is a wildlife watcher, photographer, hiker, and skier who has been to Yellowstone in all four seasons to take advantage of all the park has to offer. The geothermal features of Yellowstone are some of the most important to Jacob. He noted the thrill being on top of a volcano brings and the additional adventure and risk that is brought to mind when exploring geyser areas. Jacob is mostly a front country user, doing day hikes and ski trips before heading back to his campsite or lodging for the night.

Jacob doesn’t see himself as a Yellowstone supporter specifically, but mentioned belonging to the entire NPS system as a whole and traveling to many parks. In this travel behavior, Yellowstone is one of his favorite parks. Similarly for the local communities, he spends the occasional tourist dollar for fuel but not much else due to his local status. In contrast, Jacob is a firm supporter of the Nature Conservancy and the Rocky Mountain Elk Foundation, supporting causes he has friends at and those causes that preserve natural lands and allow recreation as their goal. He attributes this lifestyle and support due to his upbringing as a child, when he was always outside roaming around.

Jacob has a friend group of other people who’ve been to Yellowstone before, and shares his experiences in the park with that small friend group. Most of the people he has visited the park with have been family members, and he doesn’t really see himself as having introduced anyone to the park as such.

Key terms: Conservation ethic, Wildlife experiences, Photography, Hiking, Geothermal, Risk, Adventure

Day in the Park

“That depends on what time of the year. When I first started going, it was in the fall and it was all about elk and bugling and having the park all to ourselves because back in the ‘70s, there weren’t a lot of people there. It kind of caught on later on. But I would say in most cases, we’re earlier risers, get up in the morning, make some coffee, go out and walk and look for animals and watch the fog lift off the Madison and then go out to some of our favorite places to hike. I’m not much of a fisherman there. I’ve done it a couple of times but I didn’t find it all that exciting so I don’t do any fishing during the day. Usually hiking and photography and looking for animals.”

RV Memo 5: Hannah

Hannah is a repeat visitor to Yellowstone with 30 or more visits to the park. She resides in one of Montana’s neighboring states and has easy access to the park. A photographer and wildlife enthusiast, most of her 3-5 day trips are built around a viewing schedule that is primarily early in the morning and late in the day. While wildlife is important, Yellowstone’s scenic beauty and ‘difference’ also plays a role in bringing her back to the park so frequently, as well as the people watching she can do. The park’s diversity in wildlife and landscape, over such a ‘small’ area is one of the key things that makes Yellowstone an important place in Hannah’s life.
When it comes to park support, Hannah recalled donating years ago to something in the park, but couldn’t remember to what specifically, and further said that she doesn’t typically give to conservation causes in general. She has thought about giving to the YA or YPF in recent times but wants to do it when she decides the time is right. Interestingly she has given to other park areas elsewhere. On the flip side, Hannah sees herself as actively and frequently supporting the communities around the park via lodging, shopping, and partaking in such activities as the local theatrical scene.

Hannah is a frequent sharer of Yellowstone experiences, sending pictures to friends, family, and coworkers all the time about past trips and encouraging them to visit. Aside from family, she’s never brought any first timers to the park. In terms of technology and social media, she occasionally checks with the website, researching ranger programs and other activities to do if the grandkids are with her on a given trip. Hannah and her husband have also considered volunteering in the future when both are retired.

Key terms: Wildlife watching, Photography, Past donation, Diversity, Scenery, Local supporter, Experience sharing.

Day in the Park

“Well, we like the park best early in the morning before all the crowds get there, plus that’s when the animals are out. So we start about 5:30 in the morning. We like to be in the Lamar Valley so we normally are somewhere over there. We’ve stayed at Roosevelt several times. And so we go several places in the Lamar Valley from Roosevelt over to Cooke City. And then we typically go up towards Mammoth or Mount Washburn. We leave the park around 1pm, and then we go back in in the evening, maybe around 5pm until just before dark. And we take a few short walks, get out and see some of the features but our favorite thing to do is see animals. And so when we go, we spend a lot of time in the park.”

RV Memo 6: Taylor

Taylor is an exception to the criteria of 5 visits needed for someone to qualify as a repeat visitor, nor is she a member of the YA. However due to her 3 visits, additional Yellowstone Institute trip, and subsequent donation, she is being included under the nominal category of repeat visitor.

From Colorado, Taylor talked mostly about the winter trip she and her husband took to the park as part of the Yellowstone Institute expedition. More generally, she comes to Yellowstone for the wildlife, and really enjoys watching the various behaviors of animals in the wild. Second to the animals would be the geothermal features of the park, like geysers and mud pots. Taylor and her husband really enjoyed the winter visit in particular due to the quiet as well as the winter viewing of geothermal features in the park. In fact, they enjoyed the trip so much they provided a donation to the YI after their trip was finished.

For all her trips, Taylor sees Yellowstone as important for a few reasons. The scale of the park and its features fascinates her. Additionally, now that she’s older she has a greater appreciation of what Yellowstone is (in terms of scientific hot spots). Other special places for her are the sandstone areas in Utah like those around Moab. Taylor sees Yellowstone support as entrance fees, purchases in the bookstores and similar activities. Taylor is a member of the Rocky Mountain National Park Association, which is how they tied into the YI trip for wintertime. She did note they’re very vocal in their family, encouraging those with kids to travel to the park and experience it. It terms of other non-profit support, she focused more on human cause organizations.

Key Terms: Education, Teaching, Outdoor ethic, Wildlife, Winter, Hiking, Human Causes, YI Trip, YA Donation
Day in the Park

“Well, one of my trips was in the winter, and it was a guided naturalist trip so that was really different. But a typical day we are pretty early risers and we want to try to beat the crowd so we would get up quite early, hopefully what we think is earlier than more tourists to get into the park. And [we would] probably go to some sites where we can do some hiking for a while, at least an hour or so, so get out on a trail a little bit away from the roads, from people.

We would probably either pack in our lunch or purchase something at one of the places that you can do that inside the park. And eat lunch and then somewhere stop in a parking lot, out in the woods or whatever. And then probably not stay too late in the afternoon, so probably leave the park around 2 just because that’s when things start to get crowded and it becomes like the city on the road, especially in the Lamar Valley and it’s a little nutty and drives us crazy. So we go do other things in the afternoon. So it would be an early start, like 6:00 in the morning or something, 6:30, until 2 and then bug out.”

RV Memo 7: Jessica

Jessica is a ten time visitor to Yellowstone, whose primary reason for visiting isn’t the park itself but rather the annual hot rod convention right outside the park in West Yellowstone every summer. She enjoys meeting up with friends they’ve made at the convention over the decade of auto-trips and participates in a circuit of car shows over the summertime, with West Yellowstone being one of the major stops. In regards to the park itself, she enjoys its scenic beauty, particularly the rivers and lakes that it’s possible to drive along in the park. Jessica is a road-based visitor and does not stop to participate in many non-driving activities. The wildness of Yellowstone, and watching the change over time in both scenery and location are some of the things she finds most important about the park itself.

When it comes to supporting the park, Jessica views herself as mostly a non-supporter, though she does believe in people coming to visit and experience the park. In terms of local communities, she saw herself supporting the local economy via tourist dollars in the form of lodging, food, and gas. What Jessica shares with people when talking about Yellowstone are the people she meets and becomes friends with and how beautiful the area is. They’ve also brought friends and family to visit from other parts of the country for the annual car show as well.

Key Terms: Hot Rod Convention, Beauty, Road-Based, Friends, Tourist dollars, Auto show circuit.

Day in the Park

“Well, I don’t know that it’s typical. We come for the West Yellowstone car show. So typically get up, have breakfast, visit with some friends up there that we’ve made over the years. We visit with them. We stay in a campground. We’ll take a ride into the park sometimes or just kind of hang out with them. And by then, it’s time for margaritas and then we have dinner and visit more and go to bed.”

RV Memo 8: Olivia

Olivia is a frequent visitor to Yellowstone who’s been to the park over 60 times. A wildlife enthusiast who enjoys the wilderness and solitude that Yellowstone has to offer, she describes her trips to Yellowstone as slower, and peaceful. She enjoys stopping at overlooks and favorite spots in the valleys to scope out those areas and see what’s happening in terms of wildlife and other activity. Olivia tends to visit the northern part of the park more than the southern, wanting to avoid the crazy crowds but occasionally goes back down to Old Faithful and the surrounding basins when she’s showing the park around to someone new.

With an early connection to the parks by way of her ‘wild woman’ grandmother, Olivia has always been around parks and natural areas and Yellowstone is one of those areas where she can get
‘filled up’. Filled-up was described as being in truly peaceful areas, seeing wildlife and relaxing away from the normal stresses of life. Olivia noted that while it’s always great to see animals, she can adopt the mindset that seeing wildlife doesn’t really matter and still get that same filled-up-ness.

In terms of park support, Olivia noted that she always gets her annual park pass, and recalled a few other fuzzy donations in the past. Beyond that she spoke about Leave No Trace in the park, and being respectful to the wildlife and other people she interacts with in Yellowstone. When asked about community support she commented that her only real contribution was that of tourist dollars.

Olivia is a voracious sharer of park experiences and has brought 20 or so first timers to the park, a few of which have become hooked like she is. When asked why she doesn’t directly donate she replied that she’s starting her own non-profit for native cultures and that’s where most of her funding and energy is going.

Key Terms: Wildlife, relaxed, scenic beauty, outdoorsman, preservation, gratitude, cultural non-profit.

Day in the Park

“A day in the park for us consists of generally avoiding the southern piece of the park, not completely avoiding it, but we spend most of our time above the road that kind of cuts across the middle of the park. Whatever that road is, we tend to go up and usually start from West Yellowstone and go in and go up around Mammoth and then back down toward Roosevelt. We like to go down to Tower. We go down probably about as far as the fishing bridge and take that more northern piece of the park.

We tend to get out at loads of overlooks. Ours is like a really peaceful way. We just kind of stroll through the park, get out at practically every overlook on our way, take our binoculars and kind of sit and look for wildlife. We tend to get up really early. So we tend to be in the park as the sun is coming up or way before the sun is coming up and we tend to stay until the sun is going down, particularly because we really enjoy scoping out the wildlife. So, we take our cooler and we usually are eating granola bars on the way in and stopping somewhere at a picnic table and making lunch for ourselves, still in the park. And we typically don’t tend to lodge in the park. My husband and I used to constantly camp, and we would tend to camp at Tower. That’s an area that we really like so we would tend to camp at Tower. Mostly it’s that northern piece looking for wildlife. And we really like to spend time in the Lamar Valley and as far as Hayden looking for the wolves. That’s kind of a typical day for us.”

RV Memo 9: Alyssa

Alyssa has visited Yellowstone eight times in her life, and comes specifically for the wildlife opportunities the park has to offer. Involved extensively with the Red Wolf project in South Carolina, most of her trips to the park are based around wolf watching either in a work context or leisure setting. Yellowstone helps her put perspective in life and relax away from the stress of the world. She thinks the park is important as it connects people with their soul, and helps refresh those visitors. She also remarked on the park’s importance for its status as a wildlife refuge, and cited the impact that its own management policies on wolves can impact her own world in South Carolina. Alyssa also enjoys visiting the mountains of the West, both in the park and outside and wants to explore more of the wilderness in Montana to continue that exploration.

As part of the Red-Wolf Coalition and helping a child through college, Alyssa explained she doesn’t have the ability to monetarily support the park, but does talk about it all the time. This is both among friends (a few of whom she’s brought to the park) and in her work, when she talks about the wolf program in Yellowstone in relationship to the Red Wolves. When she visits the area, Alyssa does believe in actively buying local goods. Nearby to several wildlife refuges, she enjoys the atmosphere the areas
provide (similar to Yellowstone) and also enjoys biking those same areas to slow down, stop, and enjoy what the area has to offer.

Key terms: Wolf advocate, non-profit leader, wildlife watching, scale, buy local, educational support

Day in the Park

“Well, let me back up and tell you, I work for the Red Wolf Coalition, and so my first visit we went to watch wolves, and so typically my visits there are with a group of people and we watch wolves so we get up very early in the morning, load our spotting scopes in the van and head off to find the wolf crew. So we spend the morning following them and looking at wolves and then we come back and do the same in the afternoon. I also like the bears so I always want to try to get in any bear sightings that we can. But the majority of the time it’s following the wolf crew around.”

RV Memo 10: Julia

Julia is the youngest of all the interviewees, and is currently a college student at a university in Montana. She’s been to Yellowstone over 20 times, with most of those comprising daytrips from the time she lived in Bozeman, near the park. An outdoorswoman and hunter, Julia enjoys hiking, wildlife watching, and snow shoeing when she visits the park. Having visited with both family and friends, her trips with friends are far more likely to result in getting off the road and onto various trails in and near the park. Beyond her traditional visits, Julia also discussed involvement with past research in the park, and while no longer active in that community has fond memories of that project.

Julia does see herself as Supporter of the park, but explained due to her status as a poor college student she hasn’t been able to properly express that support other than by visiting the park and sharing experiences and special places in Yellowstone with others who are intending to visit the park. She does believe in supporting the local communities around Yellowstone, explaining that those who live there deserve to make a living and that she’ll go out of her way to make some purchase, even if small, on a visit to the park.

Julia further discussed how she was able to support other environmental causes in small ways via purchase donations at her work and when shopping elsewhere. When talking about Yellowstone, Julia described the park as God’s Country, and discussed in depth how and why she loved the park, going into memories of past relationships and numerous happy memories the park had provided her.

Key Terms: College Student, Local, Shares Experiences, Hiker, Winter Sports, Wildlife Watcher, Religious, Environmentalist

Day in the Park

“Wake up on campus, we'd sneak food out of the dining hall and then drive down. I would always drive to Livingstone, because I always wanted to take the back roads on the way down. And then we'd always see how many deer we could count going down Paradise Valley. Anyways, so we go down to the park, get in, we always argue whose pass we're going to use because we're trying to see who can figure out who's gonna get the most money out of their pass (laughter). And we love that whole Wyoming Montana border because, is that just the Yellowstone River? Yeah! So the whole Boiling River part is always really pretty. I’m convinced there’s mountain goats but I haven't seen one yet. And we always hit Mammoth... And we always laugh at all the elk and bison in the middle of the roads. And then that's kind of where we split. If we go to the Lamar Valley we don't stay in Mammoth very long, we take that road over and drive straight through because we're headed to Cooke City.

If we're going down into the park then we always spend time around the Liberty Cap area and go up to the top. I don't know if I need to mention that I studied the hot springs, so I was interested in seeing as many as I could. So we would always go to the top and count and see if the colors had changed
from the last week or not. So we would always go up there and then we'd head down and head over to look for my Hot Spring, Norris number 32. And I'd always tell everyone my research and they go, "You've told us six times already. You need to stop talking about this." And I never would. You know, WE never did a lot of hiking in that basin area. Because it is fragile enough, we never really wanted to go off and do the trails.

We'd always start around Madison. There's a peak on your right, right before you hit that meadow and we'd always go up there. I would always beg to go down to Old Faithful, because that's my favorite part. I always like just sitting there all day on the benches waiting, walking around to all the little hot springs and then looking over and going, 'They're nothing compared to Old Faithful.' I like it. So that's when we were driving down into the park and exploring. We never did a lot of that because we could never pick a place. We'd always just drive around and say, 'We should go there!' and someone else would go, "No! We need to find a different spot." So a lot of what we did was Electric Peak over in Gardiner.

That's where we hiked the most. So yeah we'd always find a great hiking spot. We'd always pack a picnic to the top of the peak. Hang out there for a half hour, hour. I'll never forget, one time a herd of sheep- mountain sheep walked over to us, split around us, and circled through. We were literally surrounded by sheep. I felt like I was in New Zealand. I think the closest one was like 20, 30 feet away. Anyway, we'd always hike to the peak, we'd always go someplace that was really high. We were always really into the views.

And the Canyon. Like Lamar Valley and that entire area going into the Grand Canyon of the Yellowstone was amazing. Then, typically we'd camp in Gardiner if we were camping. We'd always go to the top of, what is that mountain? It's not a mountain, but you know how the roads go up to the top of that hill on the East side of town? We always drove in the dark so I don't know if any of us actually knew where we were going. That's where we would camp. We'd wake up, go see the bison on the other side of the river and then go home.”

Yellowstone Association

YA Memo 1: Sophie

Sophie is a YA supporter who visited Yellowstone once with her sisters (later in life) and several times with family as a child. Yellowstone is a special place to her because of the family connection and legacy she has with the location. Her great-grandmother and grandmother both took trips out to the park when it was still young, and she has many memories of the park when she visited as a child with various family members when younger. She sees Yellowstone as a special place beyond the family connection because of the variety of geological features, but more importantly the wide open spaces that the park provides.

Sophie has been a member of the YA for three years now, stemming from her only recent visit and only visit as an adult. Shopping in the store, her interactions with YA staff members resulted in a realization that she was taking Yellowstone as an environment for granted. She spoke further about how she felt a connection to the park, and with the vagaries of federal budgeting wanted to do what she could to keep Yellowstone open and available for everyone to enjoy, and that just maybe they’d have the same ‘moment’ she did and provide some support as well.

Sophie repeatedly touched on her family connection, and how the legacy she was continuing was a key reason for her involvement with the park. She wasn’t willing to talk about donations at large, but did note that she had given to the GRCA Foundation recently. Lake Tahoe came up as another area that was similarly very important to her, having grown up in that area.

Key Words: Family, Legacy, Open Spaces, YA, Taking for Granted, Awareness of Need.
Day in the Park

“Well, I’ll go with the last time. I went with my sisters and we stayed at Old Faithful Lodge, and so, we got up and had breakfast. We had it right there at a little place, a tiny place inside where we could get things. And then we were going hiking that day, so we bundled up because we were there in early October, before the lodge closed, and so we took a trail hike. It was pretty chilly. We got pretty winded because none of us were prepared for the altitude. Very much enjoyed it. The scenery is lovely and being there at Old Faithful, we got to watch Old Faithful go off just about every hour that day. It was just good. And so we spend a lot of time talking. We did hike and then we went back to our room and rested a little and then we wandered around and had lunch and then we hiked around the little pots that bumble and went to a little gift shop and bought some things. That’s kind of what we did that day. Next day we took the yellow bus tour.”

YA Interview 2: Emily

Emily is a supporter of both the YA and YPF. She and her husband contribute a great deal of time and money to the YA, and support the YPF through the use of the YPF credit card as well as a planned legacy gift. She has worked with and volunteered for the YA several times in the past five years, and also spent several seasons volunteering with the park itself. She’s visited the park over 15 times in her life, with three to five of those visits in the last five years. An avid wildlife watcher, most of her visits are centered on the valleys of Yellowstone and wolf, bear, other wildlife experiences.

Emily primarily supports the YA and sees it providing a great service to the park by way of its guided tours, less-commercialized bookstore opportunities, and the educational classes it offers. She particularly focused on the guided activities, as they offer the opportunity to learn so much more than a similar unguided visit. Leaving Yellowstone as intact as possible for the next generation is another reason for her support of both the YA and YPF, as she wants her grandchildren to be able to have the same experience in the park that she had growing up. Commercialization of the park is something that she sees as a major issue that Yellowstone is currently having to deal with, and she worries that the wilderness conditions that are vital to Yellowstone are at risk with the ever spreading wifi and cell coverage in the park. Emily further spoke about wilderness as being a religious experience, a renewing of body and soul that refreshes a person.

Key Terms: Wildlife, YA, YPF, Volunteer, Legacy, Wilderness, Park-Experiences

Day in the Park

“Usually we’re up really early because we’re really into watching wildlife. And we’ll go either toward Lamar or Hayden usually to see wildlife. And look for wildlife along the way. Then we’ll stop and eat, we’ll have lunch at one of the park turnoffs if we’re going to stay in the field and then we’ll stop at like a deli or one of the stores and pick up food to take with us. And we’ll watch wildlife. And we might do things like look at the canyon or go to Old Faithful or those kind of things. But, again, in the evening, after dinner, we would go out and sit somewhere, park the car and sit there and scan the horizon looking for wildlife. And that would be a day.”

YA Memo 3: Ann

Ann is a two time visitor to Yellowstone who is a member of the YA. On both her visits she had a local friend guiding her around the park for wildlife and scenery viewing primarily, but participated in a little of everything while in the park (hiking, fishing, etc). She visited on the shoulder seasons and discussed how she gained a lot from her local tour guide. Thinking about Yellowstone, she’s grateful that
someone had the mind to preserve it before commercialization hit, so that it can be treasured by those who visit.

Yellowstone is important to her as it allows her to look at life, all of ‘creation’ and put her own life in perspective. The area also lets her relive the past, and appreciate the history of the place. Ann supports the park via the YA, encourages others to visit the park, and supports the towns around Yellowstone by the tourist dollars she brings to the area. She was inspired to join the YA to help preserve the gem that is the park for years to come. She sees a lack of government support, and wants to help address that lack.

Ann also gives to a number of other causes; churches, schools, camps and firmly believes in paying forward what’s been done for her. She sees a community responsibility that in turn she’s helping pay forward. Ann and her husband, now retired, have thought about helping support Yellowstone in other ways, (like volunteering) but time and planning haven’t come together. She does talk about the park as the topic presents itself in conversation.

Key Terms: Religious, Perspective, YA, Newer Visitor, Commercialization, Wildlife, Scenery

Day in the Park

“The first day was in April 2014, and there was still significant snow. We went with a friend who had just moved up there from Big Sky who had been pretty intimately familiar with the park, been going there for years, so we sort of had the best of all worlds. Very few people. I think they had just actually opened Yellowstone maybe a few days before we got there, and so there weren’t a lot of guests there and we had somebody guiding us around that knew it well so it was a really great first time exposure to it. Saw a lot of wildlife, bald eagles, osprey, bears; we were literally a car length from very uninterested buffalo.

There was a group there on a tour that actually had big binoculars so we were able to see wolves tracking an elk, a very nervous elk, and a bear circling the hunt and try to get it too, just a tremendous amount of wildlife, obviously one of the reasons we went there. The whole park was not entirely open because of the snow but you’d get to see the geysers, Old Faithful, and then – I failed to say we probably got there about 10 in the morning, and got to see the bald eagle, the mother and their chicks on the nest and the dad observing from across the lake. And then we got to see the waterfalls in several different places and where the Nez Perce Indians were in that area, and we kind of came in the southwest, I believe it was, and we exited really at dark, it was well past dark, kind of the north entrance, sort of northeast, I think it was. So it was a totally full day there but we got to see tons of stuff.”

YA Memo 4: Katherine

Katherine is a five time visitor to Yellowstone and member of the Yellowstone Association. When visiting the park, she and her husband try to cover as much ground as possible every day, watching geysers, wildlife, and learning about the park. Katherine sees Yellowstone, and all the national parks as part of what makes America unique as a country. She has a love for the parks because of the freedom they offer, the ability of choice and the fact that they belong to the people of the US. She believes in learning and visiting her ‘back yard’ before venturing further out, and she continues to learn each time she visits Yellowstone, and defines herself as a patriot.

Katherine supports the park via the YA as well as by actions like recycling, cleaning up after oneself, and similar practices. She buys everything locally when visiting Yellowstone to support local communities and has done so her entire life. Financially, she supports the YA to keep the parks open, to prevent shut-downs and similar sorts of things. Kat frequently shares experiences in Yellowstone with others, and camps most times when visiting the park.
One of the big things that sets Yellowstone apart from the other parks she visits is the diversity. Over the years, the two have given more to Yellowstone and less to other parks because of the far greater amount of things to do and see in Yellowstone. Hiking and exploring geyser boardwalks is a favorite activity of hers. Other causes given to include the United Way, supporting two friends who were scouts.

**Key Works:** Heritage, National Pride, Diversity, YA, Open Parks, Local Support, Environmental Actions

**Day in the Park**

“We usually get up early in the morning and we drive the park every day. We look at geysers, we look for animals, that’s what we do every day. We cover the whole park every day. The Grand Loop.”

**YA Memo 5: Eric**

Eric is a hiker and wilderness enthusiast who has visited Yellowstone four times. The park is one of many that he visits as he travels in retirement, with other places like Zion being equally if not more important to him. Eric first learned about Yellowstone through books when he was in his 20s and his first visit to Mammoth entirely met his expectations. When Eric visits the park, his goal is to get, “as lost as I can” and it is these wilderness areas that truly draw him to Yellowstone.

He supports numerous non-profits in the GYE, including the YA, the GYE, and the Teton Foundation, among others. He has several reasons for supporting these organizations. Asked particularly about the YA, he noted the information the non-profit puts out via email, annual report, and in the bookstores that keep him in touch with the area and Yellowstone. He also highlighted how it makes him feel good to give back (even in small ways) to Yellowstone and other parks that allow him to get lost in the wilderness. Other non-YNP non-profits include 20+ various park foundations, and other action-oriented organizations such as the Sierra Club, Wilderness Groups, etc. Eric’s most significant donations went to these action based groups as he is a dedicated supporter of the preservation and growth of wilderness areas in the US.

Generally speaking, he’s tended to spread out his donations ($100 here, $100 dollars there) to a multitude of causes that support wilderness in some way or other, rather than consolidating his giving. Eric is very anti-crowd, noting that when in Yellowstone he comes early in the season and gets off the beaten track as quick as possible.

**Key Terms:** Wilderness, Altruism, Information, Action-Oriented, Environmental non-profits, Crowds

**Day in the Park**

“Probably most of the day is spent driving to a trailhead, hiking, and then driving back to wherever we’re staying that night.”

**YA Memo 6: Riley**

Riley is a current concessionaire employee in the park with a long history of work and vacation trips in Yellowstone. He and his wife first started coming to, and working in Yellowstone in the 1960s, and got married in the park during one of those summers. Yellowstone as a place is extremely important to Riley as it marked a pivotal few summers in his life as he grew up in college. He spoke extensively of the people he met and how they changed his life, usually for the better. In more current times, he and his wife have retired and wanting to do something outside of a normal retirement, started working in Yellowstone during the summers once again. On off days in the park he’ll fish, stroll the geysers with his wife, and explore places they haven’t yet visited. When not working, Riley comes to Yellowstone for its diversity, beauty, and the enrichment and different perspective it provides.
Riley supports the park in a few ways, primarily by ensuring his guests are happy and take positive memories home. He also is a member of the YA. He’s very aware that the parks are in the public sector and hopes there are a bunch of others like himself, who can’t give a lot, but are giving something, to help make up for budget shortfalls. Riley also supports a number of other nonprofits, recognizing that it’s not a perfect world, and that it’s up to those who are able to help out those who are less fortunate. In terms of support for local communities, he noted strictly economic dollars for shopping for groceries and similar items needed to live a summer in the park. Riley doesn’t do much with social media, but is fascinated with the history of the park and does quite a bit of historical research, learning about Yellowstone.

Key Terms: Concessionaire, Life events, History, YA, Budget shortfall, Perspective on life

Day in the Park

“Sometimes I go fishing but my wife doesn’t so that’s usually by myself. Not too much hiking because my wife’s not in great shape for any long hikes. So just usually visit. During the summer we have relatives come visit. We show them the park the best we can with the time they give us. And sometimes we just crash and don’t do much of anything. We do have a favorite spot and we don’t get there very often but we have a beach by Yellowstone Lake that doesn’t attract any people except us. So we think that’s our private beach. So we pick up our lawn chairs and go to the beach and read and maybe snack on something and spend a couple hours on the beach.”

YA Memo 7: Lauren

Lauren is a long distance visitor to Yellowstone, coming from California, who has been to the park 16 times. Primarily a wildlife watcher in the park, she spends most her time in the valleys looking for wolves and bears. A photographer, her favorite targets are the wildlife of the park, with landscapes and other park features also topics of interest. She noted that Yellowstone is an important place due to the enjoyment visitors can gain from it, and helps preserve the park so that future generations can also visit.

To help preserve the park, Lauren became a member of the YA and has renewed it for the past eight years and also participates in Yellowstone Institute classes. Additionally, just last year she made a contribution to the YPF for the first time. In both these cases, she was solicited in park stores, both the YA Bookstores and the YPF Photo Shop at Old Faithful. Outside of monetary contributions, Lauren supports the local communities around the park via tourist dollars when she purchases gas, food, and other trip supplies.

Outside of the park, Lauren is a firm supporter of other environmental causes closer to her home, primarily again to preserve the planet for future generations. She has been interested in such causes for a while, and partially due to that interest, is currently studying environmental education as well as volunteering with several groups teaching various educational programs.

Key Words: Wildlife water, Photographer, YA, YPF, Environmental Supporter, Educator, Preservation

Day in the Park

“It varies but a full day would be getting up early in the morning driving to, of course, Lamar Valley, going to different sites that we think animals will be in the valley, later going up to Mount Washburn and over to Hayden Valley and then that would be – that’s the whole day. We hang out at Hayden Valley until it gets almost dark, trying to spot wolves or Grizzly bears and then we go back to where we were staying and have dinner.”
YA Memo 8: Joseph

Joseph is a six time visitor to Yellowstone who is both a member of the YA and a YPF donor. His trips to the park break down into two types, photography with other professionals in the field and more family based trips to explore various areas of the park. He comes to Yellowstone because of the natural beauty and the conservation ethic at work in the park. Joseph is also a fisherman, and fly-fishing also plays a role in bringing Joe to the park.

Both a YA and YPF supporter, Joseph got involved with the YPF when the NPS first reintroduced the wolves to the park, and first contributed to that project specifically. He appreciated the transparency on how donations are used as well as the great things they do with that money. Additionally, he first got involved with the YA via solicitation in the bookstores, and explained supporting them because of the work they do with education and projects they put on for kids to ensure the next generation is enthusiastic about the park. Joseph also provides support to a number of other non-profits, mostly those he was involved with growing up or has ties with through work. He believes in supporting the community in areas that don’t receive large amounts of government support, such as the arts.

Beyond monetary support, Joseph is a fairly vocal sharer of Yellowstone, talking about the park on a weekly basis, bringing new folks every other trip or two, and remains engaged with the two non-profits he helps support.

Key Terms: YA, YPF, Wolves, Photography, Fishing, Education, Natural beauty

Day in the Park

“There’s kind of 2 ways. One is I go with friends and if we stay in the park we get up early and pick an area to tour. If we stay out of the park, we get up early and drive there, eat. Generally, we just plan out the day and spend the day in the areas we pick. We take a lot of photographs. Most of the people I go out there with are kind of into that so sometimes we’ll go to a particular area just for the photographs. The other way I go is I go out there on photograph shoots with Tom Murphy or some other professional photographers, and those days are also very full too, particularly if you go in the wintertime, the schedule is our early morning breakfast 7 a.m. and pretty much go until the sun sets and then get something to eat and end up staying in the park.”

YA Memo 9 Chloe

Chloe has been to Yellowstone twice, both visits occurring in the same ‘trip’ but interspaced by another destination. The trip was a ‘just-do-it’ trip with a friend to see what family members had been talking about in terms of the West. Her trip experiences highlighted the importance of wildlife in the park along with her strong religious beliefs about creation. As a first time visitor she described seeing every animal on her bucket list, and in awe of the rarer wildlife such as wolves and moose. The trip impressed her so much that she’s planning a return trip with her immediate and extended family in the near future.

Chloe spoke a lot about falling in love with the area and wanting to help every family come have the same types of experiences that she did while in the park. These reasons along with the in-park experiences led to her purchasing a membership for the YA. She also spoke about helping Yellowstone by cleaning up trash as found and similar ideas. Chloe is extremely active in the philanthropic community, and believes like several others in the study that paying ‘it’ forward is important.

Key Terms: Christian, Wildlife, Natural beauty, Creation, Family, Paying it forward, Research
Day in the Park

“Our mornings began at 5 in the morning, because we knew the sooner we get out on the road, the more apt we’d be to see – we were trying to find the baby cubs, and we did. There were 2 baby grizzlies that were with their mom that we had heard about and we were fortunate enough to see them one day. And so the next morning we wanted to get back and see them again. That day we actually got to see even another grizzly that the ranger pointed out. And so we got to see the mom and her cubs. And this other female grizzly, they said she was 5 years old. We had an absolutely wonderful time. We had bison that were on the roadway. Everything like I dreamed about was a reality for me.

And I love nature. I’m real strong believer in Christianity. So it was wonderful to see all of God’s creations in one place. And I feel that he must have been in an absolutely wonderful joyful mood the day he created Yellowstone. We got to see a baby goat that day and its mother. We got to see elk. We saw so much. We got to see a weasel. That was sort of neat. But the bison were right on the road. In fact, one of them came right up against the car and I could have touched him if I had felt that was appropriate. I wanted to but I didn’t. And all the beautiful flowers that were in bloom. I saw different waterfall areas. It was a beautiful day. Every single day was a full day. Up at 5 and usually didn’t quit until 9 or 10 at night and then looked at our pictures and made our blogs and everything. It was wonderful experience. Every day was like that.”

YA Memo 10: Matt

Matt is a frequent visitor to Yellowstone, coming six to eight times in a year to the area from Utah. A photographer, he comes to the park to capture both the scenic beauty and the wildlife he’d be unable to shoot anywhere else. Yellowstone is one of his favorite places to visit, and most of his free weekends and such are dedicated to the park. Matt will also fish near the park on occasion, but thinks the fees are a little high for in-park fishing. He has two different trip profiles, one when visiting solo for photography when he’s up early and in the park all day, the other when visiting with wife and friends which is a more relaxed trip that starts later in the day.

Matt noted his YA membership as the only way that he sees himself as supporting the park, though he does many other things such as buy locally on occasion, bring first time visitors, and more. In regards to the YA, he supports the cause due to the educational work the group does in regards to its Institute classes seeing it as worthwhile though he’s never actually attended a class. Matt shows something of a land ethic, or perhaps awareness in his donations, supporting wildlife causes such as a wild horse preservation fund. His primary giving is for wildlife, as exhibited by his comments on wild horses competing with domestic sheep for resources on BLM land.

Matt’s also very aware of the challenges the park is facing in terms of traffic in recent years. He believes the NPS needs to find a way to stop traffic jams from starting, via signage or some other way. One of his passing suggestions beyond signs was to look at limiting numbers of people in the park.

Day in the Park

“Sure. If I’m here by myself, I’m getting up at 4:00 in the morning and I’m normally driving to Lamar Valley to get there at sunrise looking for either the wolves or the bears or – those are my primary targets, if you will, to photograph. And I just pack enough food that I don’t need to stop anywhere, peanut butter and jelly sandwiches. Then I’ll spend the entire day photographing probably until after sunrise and just kind of move around as best I can based on the information I might pick up as to where the wildlife might be. And then I drive back to my cabin out of the park.”
Yellowstone Park Foundation

YPF Memo 1: Ryan

Ryan is a longstanding member of both the YPF and YA, and is an active volunteer for the YPF. He has extensive connections to the park, including friendships with a number of park staff for numerous decades and has visited the park over 50 times. Yellowstone is important to him for three main reasons, its history and what the park stands for (America’s Best Idea), the diversity of park features, and the many friends in and around the park he’s made from his visits to the area.

Ryan supports the park financially through the YA and YPF, by bringing new visitors on his occasional visits, and through institute classes. Contrasting this, the Ryan does not see himself as supporting the Gateway communities.

One of Ryan’s main reasons for supporting the YA are the association’s bookstores and the educational classes they provide. He saw the history of the park (and its non-profits) as important stories that are being lost, and commented that the YA is an important effort to ensure that these histories are told to future generations.

Reasons for supporting the YPF included both monetary and political reasons. Ryan sited the need for the park to have an advocate in the political sphere (Washington D.C. and Congress) as well as an organization to raise funds for projects that the park wasn’t able to.

Key Terms: Volunteer, History, Education, Political Influence, Financial Support

Day in the Park

“For the last like 15 years, it’s been meetings. I’m involved with the Yellowstone Association and work with the Yellowstone Foundation so it’s mainly meetings.”

YPF Memo 2: Fred and Kellie

Fred and Kellie are a couple who are both donors to the YPF and members of the YA. The two are frequent visitors to Yellowstone, having first visited when children. When they visit they do so long-term, staying several weeks to a month at a time, typically in the off-seasons to avoid the crowds. Their typical visit keeps them up in the northern areas of the park, primarily in the Lamar area to fulfill their primary interest of wildlife watching. Wolf watching comprised their most frequent activity while in the park, and was also the primary reason for their first donations to the YPF. They chose the YPF specifically because they could direct where their funds went (project based funding).

The couple started their donations to YPF back in 2002, and through wolf-watching donations and interaction with Rick McIntyre eventually got in touch with another woman who invited Kellie to volunteer with the YPF. Outside of Yellowstone, the two are extensively involved in philanthropy both in the park and elsewhere, supporting faith-based causes, several collegiate institutions (where relatives attend) and cultural and economic support groups in their local communities.

Additionally, while the two do give to the YA, they are not deeply involved with the non-profit, supporting the YA solely for the discount membership provides in YA bookstores and other park shopping opportunities.

Key Terms: Wildlife, Wolves, YPF, YA, Volunteer, Philanthropist, Long-term visitors

Day in the Park

“When you stay in Gardiner, which is where we like to stay, we get up and go out into the Lamar Valley and take our time getting there and watch for wildlife and whatever else happens to interest us. We’ll end up in Cook City for lunch, turn around and go back through the Lamar, and basically spend the whole day out in the Lamar Valley until late in the afternoon. And then go back to Gardiner.”
YPF Memo 3: Steven

Steven is a high level donor of the YPF and also a direct project donor, supporting the wolf project fund specifically. He’s been to Yellowstone numerous times and makes an almost annual trip to watch wolves in the park with his wife. He’s a former NPS seasonal, and a supporter of numerous environmental causes. He became involved with Yellowstone support incrementally, first taking classes from the YA over several years, and having a close personal encounter with wolves during a collaring operation one visit. This personal up-close experience was the catalyst for his extensive donations over the years.

He supports both the park non-profits, but contributes much less to the YA when compared to the thousands of dollars given to the YPF. In terms of community support, he noted tourist dollars spent in lodging, food as the only real way he gives to the community. Examining other non-profit causes, Steven is very active in his support of other environmental causes, having gone so far as to speak to political bodies and at events in support of projects.

Steven has a very strong conservation ethic that was instilled in him by his parents growing up through extensive outdoor travels, including numerous park visits as a child. Steven is deeply connected to the wolf project in Yellowstone, having sponsored a number of wolves throughout his lifetime, as well as being very aware of wolf activity around the country. Supporting the wolf revival is one of his major life goals, and something he finds great emotional benefit in.

Key Terms: Wildlife, Wolves, YPF, YA, Environmentalist, NPS Employee, High Level

Day in the Park

“Well, depends on what part of the park that we are in. I’ll give you an example of what we’re going to be doing this October. We’re coming back to the Yellowstone Foundation 1872 Society Retreat, and so we will be spending 2 or 3 days initially in the Gardiner area getting up very early in the morning and heading out to the Lamar Valley to view wildlife, particularly wolves, which is a great interest of ours, and we’ll spend typically an enormous amount of time out there. Maybe run up to Cooke City for lunch or just have a lunch along and eventually wind our way back to Gardiner since Mammoth Lodge will probably be closed – it will be closed – and, you know, get back to the motel about 2 or 3 in the afternoon and relax and prepare to get rolling the next morning and do the same identical thing.”

YPF Memo 4: Robert

Robert is a frequent visitor to Yellowstone, with well over a hundred visits to the park from Big Sky. A relative local, he takes shorter trips to the park to pursue his passion of fly-fishing. A fisherman first and foremost, Robert’s trips are structured around that activity, with wildlife and sightseeing two secondary activities he engages in when not on the river. Yellowstone is important to him due to the preservation of the place, particularly of habitat (aquatic as well as other) and since he grew up in the area, much of the country surrounding Yellowstone also holds similar meaning to him.

Robert supports the park by sharing experiences with others, typically fishing tales, and has brought more than a few first time visitors to Yellowstone. Financially he supports the YPF, an organization he believes that is doing a great deal of ‘good’ work for the park to help compensate for the lack of tax dollars from the government. Robert’s primary motives for giving are to help the cutthroat restoration in the park, and he directs most of his funds to that cause. He’s inspired to do this as a result of his long relationship with the park, having watched native cutthroat decline over the years, and return in more recent times.

Fishery and aquatic causes are one of his primary philanthropic drives, and beyond the YPF he also gives to several other aquatic based nonprofits. A long time visitor to the park, he noted the
importance of sustaining Yellowstone as a national resource, and that the locals who live around the park and visit just for enjoyment and pleasure rather than work could be better mobilized by the park and it’s ‘friends’.

Key Terms: YPF, Fishing, Species Restoration, Wildlife, Local Resident, Introduces Newcomers

Day in the Park

“Now it’s mostly about fishing in the park, and so the typical multiday visit – we live close enough that we can actually go to the park and back in one day – but if we’re staying in the park, then usually it’s at one of the park properties, most often Lake Hotel. That’s actually our favorite place to stay in the park – start with breakfast at the hotel and then usually either some kind of sightseeing or most often fishing, fly fishing in the park somewhere. We always make a pilgrimage at some point to the Old Faithful Inn. We love just stopping in there and having either lunch or dinner. Usually try to see Old Faithful at least once. That’s pretty much the day.”

YPF Memo 5: Eric

Eric is a new resident of Montana who’s been to Yellowstone over 20 times. Living in Bozeman, most of his trips to the park have been daytrips, starting early in the morning and ending late back at home that night. When visiting the park, Eric is primarily a fisherman and wildlife watcher, and really enjoys that all you have to do to get away from the crowds in the park is to get off the road. Eric sees Yellowstone as a home, and an incredible place to be in regards to the natural beauty and geologic features of the park. He enjoys the ability to always go new places in the park and surrounding areas and see something different.

Primarily due to these aspects of Yellowstone, Eric has put the YPF in his will, to help financially after he and his wife pass away. They’ve made that decision as the park has enriched their lives and wanted to give back to the place that means so much to them. In addition, Eric often talks, emails, and shares his experiences in the parks with friends back East frequently. He’s also brought a number of first time visitors to the park, even neighbors in Bozeman who haven’t visited before. One of his major concerns in regards to Yellowstone is that it resists any urge to become an amusement park, to protect the wildlife in the park and help out staff.

Key Terms: Fisherman, Wildlife watcher, YPF, Will, Local, Home, Daytrips, Enriching

Day in the Park

“We get up when we wake up, except if we’re really trying to see wildlife, then we’ll go – we’ll set the alarm for maybe 5:30 or 6:00 here in Bozeman. It takes us an hour and a half whether we go to the West Yellowstone entrance or the Gardiner entrance, and so we’ll drive. We have senior passes so when we get there, we just breeze through the day entryway. And we’re either going to watch wildlife, and when we do that we generally go to the Lamar Valley or the Hayden Valley. And if we’re not doing that, we’re fishing, and during the summer, fishing is our most constant activity so we will go to one or two rivers inside the park and fish until, I would say, either 3 in the afternoon. Or if we take dinner with us, maybe 6. And then it takes us an hour and a half to get back so we’re back by 7:30 or so in the evening.”

YPF Memo 6: Connor

Connor has visited Yellowstone six times in years past, but has not visited in the last five years or so. He comes to Yellowstone for the power of the place, the scenic features, geothermal areas, and the wildlife that the park has to offer. One of the things he most enjoys about visiting Yellowstone are the
experiences he was able to have with his family watching geysers and wildlife. Most of his trips were two to four day events, each day planned the morning of. Most of his activities in Yellowstone were road-based, and he and his family would stay at a lodge and daytrip to various areas of the park.

In terms of park support, Connor and his family talk about Yellowstone with family and friends, and also had contributed annually to the YPF for 10 years before discontinuing the practice due to financial concerns. Community support once again took the form of tourist dollars, eating and buying fuel locally, while staying within the park itself. Connor supported the YPF because he saw their mission a simple, nonthreatening, and ‘good’, without any hidden agendas.

He also gives to a number of other groups, the nature conservancy among them. Talking about the Nature Conservancy, he noted how such groups help restore habitat, and restore some of the natural cycle that should be in an ecosystem. In closing, Connor noted that Yellowstone is a place where he could recharge his batteries, but in a different way, than a ‘normal’ vacation. Yellowstone makes him realize how big nature can be, and that scale makes all the difference.

Key terms: Family, Wildlife, Power, YPF, Restoration, Former Supporter, Family, Environmental Supporter

Day in the Park

“Usually it involves getting food in one of the lodges and getting cleaned up and then, as a family you figure and plan where we’re going to go and what route we’re going to take and where we plan to maybe stop and get out of the vehicle and look around. Things like that. And then toward evening, or the end of the day, we make our way back to the main base. We’ve stayed in lodges, we’ve stayed in various campgrounds too.”

YPF Memo 7 Ian

Ian is a YPF supporter who has been to Yellowstone five times and lives across the country on the East Coast. He is predominantly a fly-fisherman, and much of his life revolves around that sport and its varying applications for various populations (those with mental illness, kids, and minorities). He’s used and experienced the sport in a variety of ways and is passionately devoted to supporting it, doing so through varying nonprofits, including the YPF. He enjoys coming back time after time to fish in Yellowstone to find things he hasn’t seen before in the park, and noted several wildlife experiences as examples. Ian described himself as having love for the park, seeing it as unique on the planet.

In regards to park support, he’s a regular YPF donor and targets his donations to the Lake Trout removal project and cutthroat restoration efforts. He talks about fishing in the park constantly with anyone who will listen, and has brought a few first time visitors to the park. Some of these have equally fallen in love with it while others have not. Ian also supports the park politically, writing letters on various issues to both the park service and the government. These actions were related to park regulations rather than park preservation or conservation.

Key Terms: YPF, Fisherman, Wildlife watcher, Park advocate, Philanthropist, Therapy,

Day in the Park

“Well, I try to get accommodations inside the park. I’m virtually never able to do that, no matter what time of year I start, which is pretty bizarre. So I generally end up staying out in West. I get up in the morning, I usually have a couple cups of coffee, get dressed, get in the car, and head for the park. I’m usually on the road into the park by 7:00. Get into the park – I’ve thought some about where I want to fish and I will head to wherever that might be. And then basically I fish until I’m tired, then I break for lunch, usually at one of the delis within the park. And in case you haven’t had it, let me tell you, the
smoked salmon BLT is the way to go in the park. Make sure you get the Wasabi mayonnaise. That was pretty much – I think I had like 9 days of that for lunch and never got tired of it.

I will then go back out and fish. I fish usually until 5:00 or 6:00. This year it seemed to be we started to get some storms coming in in the afternoon so I tried to be off the river when the storms are there. Come back into town, shower, and go out to dinner someplace. If I stay at a place where I have kitchen, I will cook dinner to try to cut expenses. This time I spent most of my time at the Slippery Otter because they had really good beer. I go to bed, get up and do it over again. That’s it.”

YPF Memo 8 Amy

Amy is a yearly repeat visitor to Yellowstone who’s made over 30 trips to the park. From rural Appalachia, she used to live in Wyoming, and was a frequent camper until she moved further away and got older, now preferring cabins as she can’t get her old camper van out to the park anymore. She comes to Yellowstone to relax, and explained that the park allows her to unwind and slow down both physically and mentally.

The park is furthermore an important place for her as it provides a safe and easy system to explore, she gets to meet people from all over, and has good memories about visiting the park with her kids. The relaxing atmosphere of Lake Hotel holds a special place for Amy in particular. Hiking, photography, and wildlife watching are all elements that keep bringing her back to Yellowstone.

In terms of support, Amy encourages others to visit the park, tries to minimize her impact on the land when she visits, and used to support the YPF. A three year donor to the YPF, she’s stopped giving to it because she sees the park becoming more and more inaccessible to those who aren’t rich visitors. A professor, Amy supports several other causes, KIVA being the one she’s most passionate about. A small loan donor program, she enjoys seeing the visible impact such giving has, and the educational aspects she can use to work it into her classroom. One of the defining themes Amy kept returning to was the trend of the expensive (lodging, etc) crowding out the inexpensive and how everyone who wanted to visit might not be able.

Key Terms: Old Faithful, Hiking, YPF, Rich Privilege, Impactful Donations, Family, Relaxing

Day in the Park

“Old Faithful then. We do more there. We wake up sort of slowly, and usually we’ll walk to the Inn and sit on that porch that’s above the entryway and watch birds and geysers and things for a while. Then maybe walk around the geyser basin. And if that gets done fairly early, we take hikes either to Biscuit Basin and the overlook or Mallard Lake. And then we eat at the inn dining room.”

Appendix C: Additional Social Conditions Excerpts

Nearly every park supporter addressed the subject of social conditions in Yellowstone during interviews, typically during prompts to describe a day in the park, the importance of Yellowstone, or when prompted to share anything else about Yellowstone at the end of the interview. For the purpose of this study, social conditions were defined as situations and environments that park supporters viewed as either desirable or undesirable in regards to use of the park. Social conditions that were noted by park supporters included crowding, isolation, visitor behavior, and commercialization. In the following quotes, RV means repeat visitors, YA means Yellowstone Association member, and YPF means Yellowstone Park Foundation donor.
Crowding

Madison (RV): It was so crowded we couldn’t really do all the stuff we would have liked to have done. I think we would like to take him (her grandson) back when it’s off season so we can spend more time there. We didn’t get to stop at a lot of the pools and stuff because there were so many people you couldn’t even get into the parking lot. I would like to take him back when we could take our time and see a lot more of the features of it.

Jacob (RV): When I first started going, it was in the fall and it was all about elk and bugling and having the park all to ourselves because, you know, back in the ’70s, there weren’t a lot of people there. It kind of caught on later on…I’ve been there in the middle of summer, which I’ll never do again.

Hannah (RV): Well, we like the park best early in the morning before all the crowds get there plus that’s when the animals are out. So we start about 5:30 in the morning. We like to be in the Lamar Valley so we normally are somewhere over there.

Taylor (RV): But on a typical day we are pretty early risers and we want to try to beat the crowd so we would get up quite early, hopefully what we think is earlier than more tourists to get into the park. And (we) probably go to some sites where we can do some hiking for a while, at least an hour or so, so get out on a trail a little bit away from the roads, by people.

Matt (YA): Well, yeah, if you can fix the traffic problem, if you can convince the powers to be that (this is a problem). I just had a conversation 2 hours ago with a friend who tried to get in the park the other day and it was so busy that they turned around and they hadn’t been for several years. I know the rangers try and do their best but there’s got to be more signage that says you’ve got to keep moving, you just can’t stop in the middle of the road and start one of those huge traffic jams. The reason people are there is to enjoy the wildlife and not to deal with traffic. That’s why they leave the cities to go up and find solace and peace and quiet, and instead you go up there people are honking their horns and they’re angry and they’re backed up and it’s worse traffic jams than in the cities that they live in.

Emily (YA): I’m thinking they’re not doing anything about the traffic, the park as a whole. I mean YA has nothing to do with it – they run a lot of bus tours around the park. Sometimes, when I come in the middle of August it gets to be kind of the most dangerous time in the park.

Alex (YA): Well, I think that I touched on the fact that, you know, my view of Yellowstone during the high summer when it’s open to the public and everything is open and the crowds are going in Yellowstone and how much it takes to support the crowds. I don’t know if you’ve been there often in the summertime, but it turns into a large metropolitan area, which is not what wilderness is to me.

Robert (YPF): Well, certainly in the summertime especially, the traffic and the crowds – the number of visitors to the park, there’s a very noticeable difference. That’s neither a good thing nor a bad thing. It is what it is. The people are using the park.
Eric (YPF): Generally we’ll take them to see either the Lamar Valley or the Hayden Valley or maybe the lake. We stay away from a lot of the most – the more popular sites like Old Faithful and the ones that are always crowded.

Ian (YPF): The other thing this year – whenever I go out, I’m almost always out on that same couple of weeks that I was there around the 15th of June. And the other thing I thought this year was it seemed like there was a tremendous amount more people there. I mean, you get the animal slowdowns, but I never had just mile upon mile backups (before).

Crowding solutions proposed by two Foundation donors were to implement some kind of transit system to remove vehicle traffic, restrict visitation, or to increase management presence to enable better traffic flow.

Alex (YA): So I know in places – this is probably offensive to a lot of people – in Zion National Park, it began to get like that and that’s much less visited a park than Yellowstone because of its location. They’ve taken to using shuttles. You can’t go anywhere in the park, other than entering the park, with an automobile. Shuttles drive everywhere, to every location, they’re stopping points at trailheads, etc. in the main part of the park itself. I know there’s been discussion of this but, you know, Yellowstone and driving sort of go together as part of the American way. Eventually it needs to be considered but there should be key locations where people drive their cars, huge parking lots, and then just shuttles to take people all over the park to key places. I guess that’s my major complaint and my major long-term concern about the park itself.

Matt (YA): So they either got to limit the number of people that are in the park or they’ve got to do a better job in convincing people that they just can’t stop in the middle of the road and start those traffic jams, because it takes hours for those things to clear up.

Visitor Behavior

Olivia (RV): And we were those kind of people, that my grandmother use to spread honey on our car windows, because back in that day, the bears were just kind of wandering all over, and you saw them all the time.

Chloe (YA): But the bison were right on the road. In fact, one of them came right up against the car and I could have touched him if I had felt that was appropriate. I wanted to but I didn’t.

Fred (YPF): And I think a lot of people don’t appreciate it that haven’t been and stayed long enough to really look at the park with all of its varied features and everything that’s offered there. It’s amazing.

Commercialization

Emily (YA): And some things have changed. It’s gotten a wee bit more commercialized in a way. I mean, you have to have cell phone service. There’s a lot of new building going on. Thank goodness they’re trying very hard to leave as little a footprint as possible.

Chloe (YA): And I know some people complain there wasn’t enough space along the roads or whatever, but I think if they did that, it would ruin it. I’m not quite sure what people want more of – people just don’t want to take nature as nature. I mean, to have a whole bunch of places
more than what they already have for pulling off the road I think would ruin it. I think it would be commercialized. I hope they never do that.

Eric (YPF): The only other thing I’d like to convey is that I hope the park resists any temptation to become an amusement park. There’s also a move to have all the rivers open to kayaking and paddling and stuff like that. And I think it’s going to be not only bad for the wildlife and the fish in the park but I think it’s also going to be something that they just don’t have the budget to control and it’s not something I wish they would hoist on the rangers who are already overburdened. So that’s the one comment I really have.