



# YELLOWSTONE FIELD PROGRAM



The Yellowstone program provides immersive, inquiry-based field courses for middle and high school students in the Greater Yellowstone Ecosystem (GYE). **A total of 375 participants attended 32 Yellowstone Wildlife and Winter Ecology courses.** Students and teachers used research and conservation service as lenses through which they could discuss and understand ecology and management issues important to Yellowstone National Park (YNP) and the GYE.

## FIELD RESEARCH

### Bison Populations in Yellowstone National Park

EPI Yellowstone participants contributed to two Yellowstone Bison Management Team studies designed to evaluate how bison affect the health of the ecosystem's grasslands and their relationships with other ungulates—elk, pronghorn, bighorn sheep, and mule deer. The "Home on the Range" study seeks to understand how these species share the landscape as they search for food, water, and protection from predators. EPI participants contribute by tracking animals using radio telemetry, classifying ungulate herds, collecting fecal samples, and recording habitat information.



A STUDENT SURVEYS A POND FOR AMPHIBIANS IN THE GYE

### Amphibian Surveys

Participants helped the Gardiner District of the Custer-Gallatin National Forest collect baseline data on amphibian populations. Amphibians are a sensitive group of species, which make them excellent indicators of overall ecosystem health.

## FIELD PROGRAM AT-A-GLANCE



135 LOCAL PARTICIPANTS  
240 VISITING PARTICIPANTS  
1,221 HOURS OF CONSERVATION SERVICE

## CONSERVATION SERVICE

### Invasive Plant Removal

Invasives displace native plant species (including some endemic to the GYE's geothermal habitats), and affect fire frequency and distribution, herbivore foraging activity, and abundance of wildlife. EPI students work with partners at YNP, the Custer-Gallatin National Forest, and on private land at B-Bar Ranch to remove invasive species and prevent their spread.

### Pronghorn Habitat Connectivity

Pronghorn are unable to jump cattle fencing, so students worked with the National Parks Conservation Association to remove or retrofit fencing on private lands to allow pronghorn passage to their winter range outside the Park.

### Bison Grazing Enclosures

EPI Yellowstone Winter Ecology students supported Park bison grazing studies by hauling bison enclosures in for storage during the winter months and back out after snowmelt.

## PROGRAM OUTCOMES

2,794 HOURS CONTRIBUTED TO UNGULATE RESEARCH  
467 HOURS CONTRIBUTED TO AMPHIBIAN RESEARCH  
11% AVERAGE IMPROVEMENT IN ENVIRONMENTAL LITERACY SCORES

## FUNDERS

Anonymous Donor  
M.J. Murdock Charitable Trust  
Cross Charitable Foundation  
The William H. and Margaret M. Wallace Foundation

State of Montana GEAR UP Program  
AMB West Community Fund  
The Lightfoot Foundation  
Cinnabar Foundation  
Weyerhaeuser Giving Fund

## PARTNERS

B Bar Ranch  
Custer-Gallatin National Forest (Gardiner Ranger District)  
National Parks Conservation Association

Yellowstone Bear Management Team  
Yellowstone Bison Management Team  
Yellowstone Botany Team  
Yellowstone Wolf Project

# PROGRAM IMPACTS & AWARDS

EPI Yellowstone's pre- and post-course environmental literacy surveys measure the development of our students through our programs, but the real-life impacts of EPI's Yellowstone programs are best expressed through our students' own words and stories. This year, our students overwhelmingly expressed personal growth through leadership opportunities and conservation service, care for their environment, and an increased comfort with discussing controversial issues through the lenses of bison and wolf management in Yellowstone National Park. EPI Yellowstone's meaningful impact on local students won their staff several staff scholarships and awards this year.



THE EPI YELLOWSTONE TEAM CELEBRATES THEIR PROGRAM'S POWERFUL PARTNERSHIP AWARD

## STUDENT STORIES



"I have gained a new level of confidence, and this course has allowed me to appreciate my landscape more, by noticing a plant or all the animals I see on hikes and understanding their importance and roles in our ecosystem."

- Ceara, Corvallis, MT

"I didn't realize what an impact the individual really has on conservation efforts. I think EPI has really opened my eyes to what I can do and I plan to continue to seek out conservation programs and ways to get involved so I can help Yellowstone stay a beautiful place for people to come and enjoy for generations."

- Hannah, Livingston, MT



## NOTABLE

### Powerful Partnership Award

Last fall, EPI Yellowstone arranged for four EPI students to receive scholarships to attend and present at the 14th Greater Yellowstone Biennial Scientific Conference. This was a tremendous opportunity for these youth to communicate the next generation's views on bison management by speaking directly from their experience in EPI programs to an audience of regional, national, and international conservation agencies and organizations. For our work supporting these local Gardiner students at the Yellowstone Biennial Conference, EPI Yellowstone was awarded the Montana Environmental Education Association's "Powerful Partnership Award."

### Bitterroot Wildlife Internship Program

For the sixth year, EPI partnered with MPG Ranch to deliver the Bitterroot Wildlife Internship, a transformative program that provides EPI Yellowstone program alumni with an extended, immersive research and conservation service experience. A total of 12 interns spent one month each living on a 15,000 acre ranch managed for biodiversity in Montana's Bitterroot Valley. Interns collected data for and publicly presented their independent research projects to the larger community at the 6th annual Bitterroot Wildlife Internship Symposium in downtown Missoula, Montana.

### Community Engagement: Guidelines for Excellence Staff Scholarship

EPI Yellowstone Program Manager Rachel Garwin earned an ee360 Community Engagement: Guidelines for Excellence Train-the-Trainer Workshop Scholarship, which allowed her to attend the annual North American Association for Experiential Education (NAAEE) conference in Spokane, WA in October 2018. As part of the scholarship, Rachel participated in the ee360 Community Engagement: Guidelines for Excellence Train-the-Trainer Workshop, where she learned about best practices for engaging community partners, creating inclusive communities, and aligning program needs with participant goals.

38% AVERAGE CHANGE IN KNOWLEDGE OF ENVIRONMENTAL ACTION STRATEGIES

