

Guide to Fly Fishing Yellowstone Country



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The Warriors Mark Run Fly Fishing Association

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Introduction to Yellowstone Country

Yellowstone National Park's main attraction is its thriving network of wildlife and thermal features, from its bubbling hot springs and wild trout rivers to wolf packs and elk migrations. This unique web, referred to as the Greater Yellowstone Ecosystem, sprawls far beyond the official park boundaries. Rivers are the lifeblood of the ecosystem, and they afford anglers all manner of ways to interact with trout and wildlife. Various birds and numerous small animals visit Yellowstone's waters to prey on the mayflies, stoneflies, caddisflies, grasshoppers, ants and beetles that anglers imitate with flies. And most of the Park's predators prowl its lakeshores and riverbanks. Such predators include bears, wolves, coyotes, foxes, bobcats, otters, ospreys and bald eagles. Spending time in a river valley is the best way to view wildlife in action.

The rivers of Yellowstone are fed by high mountain snow-packs, diverse networks of springs, and hundreds of lakes. These sources provide cold, nutrient-rich water, which creates the perfect habitat for trout and the aquatic insects they feed on. For this reason, "Yellowstone Country," as the area is often called, has been a trout fishing mecca for the past seventy-five years.



Fly Fishing Yellowstone Country

Thanks to prolific populations of aquatic and terrestrial insects, Yellowstone is blessed with some of the world's best fly fishing. Most anglers structure their days so that they're on the water when fish are most willing to feed on the surface, which simply means that they're fishing when the relevant insects are expected to be available to trout.

Not all anglers like to dry fly fish, and there are many times during the day that nymphing and streamer fishing are the most effective methods for catching fish, but learning about the insects provides the easiest avenue for grasping the general picture of what's happening on a trout stream. Once an angler gets to know a bit about the flies that fish feed on, the other pieces of the puzzle fall into place.

Luckily, there's little we need to learn about each fly to gain a working knowledge of all the important insects as a whole. Before heading to the river, we just need to answer these two questions: Which insects are active on this river during this time of year? At what time of the day are they most likely to be on the water?

Wherever you're fishing, the answers to these questions are easy to find. Fly shop employees are knowledgeable about insect habits and are always willing to help. Also, a "guide to hatches" handbook can tell you the essentials about insects, and where they can be found. For the rivers of Yellowstone in September, you'll find everything you need to know in this guide.



September Trout Food



Callibaetis Mayfly Spinner

Mayflies

Mayflies lead an ephemeral existence. Most species spend a year as nymphs in the river bottom until it's their time to hatch. They then swim to the water surface en masse, where they molt into the adult "dun" form. You'll recognize mayfly duns on the water because their wings make them look like little sailboats.

Mayflies typically choose to emerge during the most pleasant time of day. They prefer not to hatch under harsh sunlight, as they're highly susceptible to dehydration. If they escape the water surface without being nabbed by a trout, they land in the grass, shrubs or trees to molt yet again, this time into the "spinner" form. Once in the spinner stage, they're sexually mature, and they'll seek a calm, warm morning or evening to group up and mate over the water. After their life's mission is complete, they'll fall to the river and float on the surface, making themselves available to trout yet again. Each mayfly has its own time of year and time of day that it prefers to hatch; some have particular quirks that the angler must heed.

For example, a species of mayfly called the Drake Mackerel hatches on the Lamar River and Soda Butte Creek during September and into the first weeks of October. They prefer to hatch sometime between noon and 4p.m. Their emergences are usually more prolific during overcast days, but they're still known to hatch in good numbers in direct sunlight. Unlike most mayflies, it's only the emergence of the Drake Mackerel which the angler should be concerned with. The spinners do not collect over the water and are of no importance to fly fishermen.

Terrestrials

Grasshoppers, beetles and ants provide juicy meals for trout in August and September. In general, warm, windy days provide the best results when fishing terrestrials. On such days, the heat of the sun gets the terrestrials active, and the wind gusts knock them out of the air or off debris and onto the water.

□ **Beetles :** A beetle is a fine choice to fish in September on any river in Yellowstone country. Beetles up to size #12 readily take fish, though smaller sizes are more difficult to see.

□ **Ants:** Ants are abundant during the summer in Yellowstone country and a surprising amount of them find their way onto the water surface. Also, winged ants take flight as entire colonies to relocate during late August and early September. Often times, these colonies are knocked onto the water by sudden gusts of wind. Even when ants are not present, an ant is a solid pattern to search the water with.



□ **Hoppers :** Grasshoppers range in size from #10 to #18, but it's wise to fish a size #14 or smaller hopper during September, since fish will have become wary of big flies by this time in the season.





Adult White Miller Caddisfly

Caddisflies

Most caddisflies live in the river bottom, then swim to the water surface en masse to hatch into adults. They swim rapidly, and upon reaching the surface they use gases to fire out of the pupal shuck. As a result, fish have to chase the pupae if they want to feed on them, often grabbing the pupae just before they reach the surface. Anglers commonly imitate the swimming caddis pupae by swinging wet flies called “soft hackles” in the first few inches of the water column. One can also fish an emergence by drifting a crippled caddis pupa in the film or on the water surface, imitating caddisflies caught in their pupal shucks as they try to hatch.

Unlike mayflies, caddisflies are rarely seen on the water as they emerge, since they shoot so quickly out of their shucks. If you spot trout rising aggressively, yet see no insects on the surface, you’re likely in the middle of a caddis emergence. Caddis that hatch successfully live as adults for weeks. They can become vulnerable to trout when they return to the water to drink, school up to mate, or lay eggs, but for most species of caddisflies, the events after emergence are difficult to predict. Caddisflies typically emerge in the mornings and evenings of warm, dry days, but September emergences often occur mid-day as seasonal temperatures drop.

Only one caddisfly provides consistent fishing in Yellowstone country in September—the White Miller. It’s found only on the Firehole River and the upper reaches of the Madison River in the Park, but its emergences can be prolific, and are usually indicated by spurts of explosive rises. After emergence, the adults often return to the river in enormous numbers, where they flutter over the surface, forcing the angler to skitter or skate their fly to fool fish.



Golden Stonefly Nymph

Stoneflies

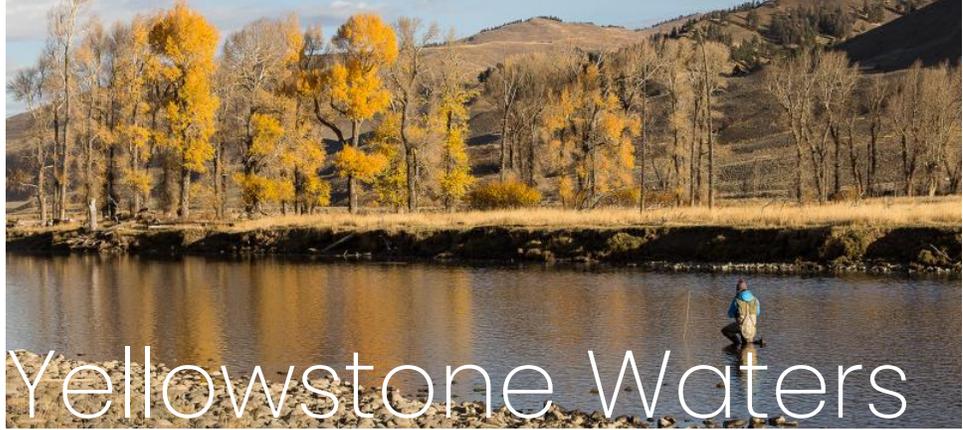
Stoneflies are burly aquatic insects that crawl out of the water along the bank, where they use rocks and other debris as platforms for hatching into the adult form. All significant stoneflies have already hatched come September, so there's no need to fish them as a dry fly, but since there are always stonefly nymphs present in the water, they're still an important subsurface food source. The most important stoneflies of the Greater Yellowstone Ecosystem are salmonflies and golden stones. They're often imitated by nymphing Pat's Rubberleg Stoneflies along the bottom of the river. Guides in Yellowstone country often use a stonefly as their anchor nymph during any month of the year.

Midges

Midges are non-biting relatives of mosquitoes. They emerge in slower parts of rivers, and they float to the surface off the buoyancy of air bubbles in their shucks. Once they've reached the surface, they climb out of their shucks, and sit atop the water until ready to fly. Fish feed on them as they float up as pupae, and they also rise to the adults on the water surface. In September, midge emergences aren't very predictable, but they do occur, and can happen on any river. It's most common for them to appear in the morning or evening. Midges can be found up to size #12 at certain times of the year, but they're more likely to be around size #18 or #20 during September.



Adult Midge



Yellowstone Waters

Lamar River, Yellowstone National Park

Lamar Valley (Lamar River, Soda Butte Creek and Slough Creek)

The Lamar Valley is a remote drainage in the northeast corner of the Park. It offers an expanse of grazing territory for bison and elk, and their presence attracts predators like grizzly bears, black bears, wolves and coyotes. All of which are easy to view as they roam the sprawling sagebrush meadows. Few locations in the Park provide such classic western views as the Lamar Valley, and few places feel so far from civilization. Days spent fishing the rivers in this area are always fulfilling.

The Lamar River runs through the heart of the valley, and it grows significantly in size when it merges with Soda Butte Creek. Both are classic, western freestone streams. They're best known for outstanding dry fly fishing thanks to numerous mayflies that emerge here. Also, the sagebrush meadows they flow through are home to hordes of terrestrials. Late July marks the beginning of a terrific season for hoppers, beetles and ants, often running all the way into October. Here you'll find cutthroat trout that typically range from 10-18 inches.

Slough Creek is an iconic meadow stream that feeds into the Lamar. It can be accessed by road, but it's also fished in its three upper meadow stretches which require hiking. Here you'll find big, finicky cutthroat trout, ornery bull bison, and sometimes even a grizzly bear. The slow moving currents of Slough Creek make spotting fish easy, but they also make getting a drag-free drift difficult. Fooling a big fish on Slough Creek takes stealth and casting command, but watching the slow cutthroat rise is a reward unto itself.



Third Meadow, Slough Creek, Yellowstone National Park

Lamar River and Soda Butte Creek:

Drake Mackerel
Drunella coloradensis
 Large Mayfly
 Size: 12
 Hatch Hours: 12 pm - 4 pm

Baetis (BWO)
Baetis tricaudatus
 Small Mayfly
 Size: 20
 Hatch Hours: 12 pm - 4 pm

Terrestrials:
 Beetles size 10-16, Ants size 16
 Grasshoppers size 14

Slough Creek:

Hecuba
Timpanoga hecuba
 Large Mayfly
 Size 12
 Hatch Hours: 12 pm - 4 pm

Baetis (BWO)
Baetis tricaudatus
 Small Mayfly
 Size: 20
 Hatch Hours: 12 pm - 4 pm

Terrestrials:
 Beetles size 10-16, Ants size 16
 Grasshoppers size 14

Journey to Slough Creek, September 2017



Trip to Soda Butte Creek, September 2017



Firehole River

One of the most well-known trout rivers on earth, the Firehole is a marvel for dry fly anglers. It rises from various springs and creeks in the Old Faithful region, then passes through numerous thermal areas and over a waterfall before meeting the Gibbon River to form the Madison River. After offering fine fishing in May and early June, the Firehole becomes too warm to fish during July and August, but it returns to life when cool September nights lower its water temperatures. Grasshoppers are plentiful in the meadow stretches of the Firehole, providing exciting dry fly fishing. Soft hackle fishing can be tremendous during emergences of White Miller Caddis. When clouds blanket the sky, Baetis hatches can bring every fish in the river to the surface. Firehole fish are quite wise come September, and it's recommended that you fish a long leader and fine tippet, which will assist in achieving drag-free drifts. The Firehole is home to brown trout and rainbow trout that are typically between 10 and 14 inches.

September Hatches:

White Miller
Nectopsyche sp.
Small Caddis
Size: 16-18

Activity: Hatching in morning and evening of warm days, adults flutter on the water during mid-day.

Midges
Diptera

Size: 18-24

Activity: Often emerging in afternoons

Baetis (BWO)

Baetis tricaudatus

Small Mayfly

Size: 20-22

Activity: Hatching between 12 pm - 4 pm, best emergences on overcast days.

Terrestrials:

Beetles size 10-16, Ants size 12-16,

Grasshoppers size 12-14

Other fishing opportunities:

Size 14-16 soft hackles will do well to imitate emerging White Millers. Size 8-10 streamers in black, olive and white work well for enticing brown trout. Fishing size 16-18 Pheasant Tails, Hare's Ears and caddis pupae will hook fish, but one has to choose a deep spot to nymph fish on the Firehole, otherwise snagging of underwater volcanic rock will be a recurring problem.

Fountain Flats Drive, Firehole River, Yellowstone National Park



Firehole River, Yellowstone National Park





Madison Junction, Madison River, Yellowstone National Park

Madison River in the Park

The Madison runs in the Park for roughly fifteen miles, from Madison Junction to where it exits the western boundary of Yellowstone. It flows like an enormous spring creek in most places, but it also runs through some long, lava rock type riffles. Its headwaters are the Firehole River and the Gibbon River, which are both primarily fed by thermal springs. This stretch of river is known for fall-run browns and rainbows which come out of Hebgen Lake. Each runner is a trophy, and many range up to twenty-two inches. They're spunky, which causes them to chase soft hackles and streamers. Anglers often swing these flies by working downstream, steelhead style. But fall runners are most receptive to nymphs dredged along the bottom, drag free. Because these fish are thinking more about spawning than feeding, any nymph is game, from small Pheasant Tails to San Juan Worms and Rubberleg Stones. But they won't accept just any old cast, the angler has to focus on proper technique, and on covering the holding water where fish lay up to rest. It takes commitment, but these fish fight like lightning; hooking just one can make your day.

Though productive hatches on the Madison are rare in September, they can occur. Madison Junction has been known to produce quality emergences of White Millers on warm days, and Baetis on overcast days. Beetles and grasshoppers are much more likely to bring fish to the surface, especially on the warmer days when terrestrials are most active. Any angler that wants to catch fish here with terrestrials should strive for long, drag-free drifts.

Two-Handed Rods: Spey fishing is an easy and enjoyable way to cover the entire river with your streamer or soft hackle. If you've never fished with a two-handed rod before, or don't own one, guides in West Yellowstone offer spey lessons.

Flies for the Madison in the Park

Soft Hackles: Shakey Beeley, Blew on Blue, Full Dressed Red, Full Dressed Pheasant Tail, Grouse and Pink

Streamers: Black Leech, Copper Zonker, Baker's Hole Bugger, Bullethead, Light Spruce, Dark Spruce

September Hatches:

White Miller
Nectopsyche sp.
Small Caddis
Size: 16-18

Activity: Hatching in morning and evening of warm days, adults flutter on the water during mid-day.

Terrestrials:
Beetles size 10-16, Grasshoppers size 12-14,
Ants size 16

Baetis (BWO)

Baetis tricaudatus

Small Mayfly

Size: 20-22

Activity: Hatching between 12 pm - 4 pm, best emergences on overcast days.



Fall-run Brown Trout, Madison River, Yellowstone National Park



Fall-run Rainbow Trout, Madison River, Yellowstone National Park

Madison River in the Park



Madison River below Quake Lake

The Madison below Quake stretch, also known as the “Fifty Mile Riffle” begins at the outlet of Quake Lake, roughly thirty miles northwest of West Yellowstone. Here you’ll find a nymph fisherman’s paradise. Nearly every pocket holds fish, and they’re usually willing to feed whenever you present your nymph properly. When you first look at this stretch, every inch of water looks swift. But once you watch it flow for a while you notice slow pools along every stretch of bank. The water in these pools moves at a perfect speed for fish to rise, and for insects to hatch. Though during other times of the year you’ll see prolific emergences here, September is mostly a month of terrestrial and nymph fishing on the Madison below Quake. Fishing a beetle or flying ant is usually a safe bet for bringing a large brown trout to the surface, while grasshoppers also work on windy days. Though emergences of midges are unpredictable during September, the Madison can provide excellent midge emergences during any month. Keep an eye out for subtle head-and-tail rises, especially if you’re on the water in late afternoon. Also, if a truly wet day rolls in during mid to late September, emergences of *Baetis* can bring plenty of fish to the surface. In the Madison below Quake you’ll find rainbows, browns and whitefish that usually range from 12 to 20 inches.

Terrestrials: Beetles size 10-16, Grasshoppers size 12-16
Ants size 14-16

Midges
Diptera
Size: 18-24
Activity: Often emerging in afternoons.

September Hatches:

Baetis (BWO)
Baetis tricaudatus
Small Mayfly
Size: 20-22
Activity: Hatching between 12 pm – 4 pm, best emergences on overcast days.

Nymph Fishing:

Since few aquatic insects are actually hatching in September, it’s necessary to use small nymphs that fish are comfortable eating. The following are a few local favorites: \$3 Serendipity size 18, Shop Vac size 18, Micro Mayfly size 18, Pheasant Tail size 18, Zebra Midge size 18.



Madison River below Quake Lake, Montana





Gear

Waders and Boots

Some days in September are warm enough to wet-wade, but early mornings are typically ice-cold. Waders are necessary. Felt boots are still legal to use in Montana and the Park, but the Park is likely to outlaw them in the very near future.

Rod and Line Weight: If you're only fishing with one trout rod in Yellowstone, it should probably be a six-weight. A six-weight line is heavy enough to turn over weighted streamers, and it can cut the wind as it carries hoppers and other large dry flies. In the case that you need to deliver small dry flies on flat water while using a six-weight, lengthen your leader so that the tip of your fly line lands far from the trout. It's a preferable compromise to the struggles of casting a streamer with a four- or five-weight line.

Reel: Any reel that spools up line and lets it out properly will suffice. Unlike saltwater fish, trout rarely fight so hard that the use of a reel's drag is required. Choosing a trout reel is mostly a matter of taste.

Leaders: The leader is the clear, tapered section of nylon that connects the fly line to the fly. The butt of the leader, which attaches to the fly line, is quite thick, and from this point it tapers down until it's thin enough to fit through the eye of a hook. Leaders can range from 7 to 15 feet, but leaders in the 9 to 12 foot range are typically best for beginners. Fly line is thick, causing it to turn over with a lot of force; the taper of the leader allows that energy to diffuse gradually, resulting in smooth and delicate turn over of the leader and fly.

Tippet: Tippet is the terminal section of the leader which the fly is tied to. Tippet, which comes on small spools, is carried in a range of different diameters, which allows the angler to make adjustments and repairs to leaders. The most important tippet sizes for Yellowstone country are 2x, 3x, 4x, and 5x. The lower the number, the thicker the tippet. 2x tippet, which is usually ten pound test, is pretty thick stuff, but it's the thinnest tippet you want to be using when fishing a streamer. 5x is usually five pound test, and it's quite supple, an essential quality when trying to present a small dry fly naturally.

Angling Tactics

Dry Fly Fishing

In September, anglers usually reserve the warmer hours of the day for dry fly fishing, when insects are most active and available to the fish. The proper way to approach a rising fish is usually decided on a case by case basis. The Lamar River, which has long quiet pools requires the angler to approach with stealth and keep distance. In contrast, the Madison below Quake features more riffles and pockets, because of this, one can sneak right up behind a riser.

Dry fly leader setups range greatly depending on the fly that the angler will be fishing, and the demands of the water. When fishing size 20 Baetis on the Firehole, a common setup is a 12 foot leader that tapers down to 5x tippet. Small flies require fine tippets to fit through the eye of the hook, but also to aid in achieving a drag-free drift. If a size 20 fly is tied onto a leader which finishes with 3x tippet, the fly will turn over too harshly and it will be impossible to get a drag-free drift.

Nymph Fishing

Nymph fishing in the West is primarily done with strike indicators, which suspend the submerged nymphs and provide clues to the angler so she knows when to strike. In September, nymphing is productive on most waters of Yellowstone from morning to evening, but it will usually be best during an emergence, since fish will be actively feeding on nymphs at that time. The waters of Yellowstone are diverse, so it's important for nymph fishermen to be prepared to go deep as well as fish shallow. Also, lead weights are not allowed within Yellowstone National Park. Tin, tungsten, or other forms of non-toxic weight must be used instead.

Streamer Fishing

Stripping and swinging streamers can be very productive, especially on days of foul weather. From the brown trout of the Firehole and Madison to the greedy cutthroat of the Lamar Valley, streamers usually bring out the biggest fish in any river. You can use a floating or sinking line. Pretty much all tactics are fair game here, as long as you're doing everything you can to make the streamer look alive. When fishing for the fall-runners of the Madison in the Park, the deeper you fish a streamer, the more success you're likely to have.

Swinging Soft Hackles

There are two common reasons for fishing soft hackles: to imitate emerging caddis, and to entice fall runners. Swinging small soft hackles that imitate caddis on the Firehole is a beloved pastime. For whatever reason, fish fight violently after being stung by the hook point of a swinging fly. Fall-run browns and rainbows react in the same way, except they're exponentially larger than Firehole fish. The etiquette for swinging on the Madison in the Park is much the same as steelhead fishing. Roughly, the angler starts at the top of a riffle and casts 45 degrees downstream, then swings their fly broadside through the riffle. After each swing, the angler takes a step downstream until finishing out the riffle. Though few anglers take advantage of the practice when on other rivers, swinging soft hackles can provide fun fishing on any river in the Greater Yellowstone Ecosystem.

Sample Fly Box

This box displays most of the flies needed for a September trip to Yellowstone country. These are not the only effective flies for September, but this bunch has proven successful over the years, and many of them were created by acclaimed tiers at Blue Ribbon Flies or nearby fly shops. These flies are carried by Blue Ribbon Flies, but other fly shops will also have similar selections. Photos courtesy of Blue Ribbon Flies.

Firehole River							
	White Miller Razor Caddis (4)	White Miller Iris Caddis (4)	White Miller Soft Hackle (4)	Baetis Sparkle Dun (4)	Pine Squirrel Leech (3)		
	Madison below Quake						
		Shop Vac Nymph (4)	\$3 Dip Nymph (3)	Half Pint Nymph (3)	Micro Mayfly Nymph (3)	Baetis Sparkle Dun (4)	
Sculpzilla Olive Streamer (2)		Scotty's Midge Dry (3)	Griffith's Gnat Dry (3)	Longhorn Beetle (3)	Ant Acid Razor Caddis (4)		
Madison in the Park							
		Shakey Beeley (3)	Blew on Blue (3)	Full Dressed Red (3)	Rubberleg Stonefly (4)	Pheasant Tail Nymph (6)	
		Prospector Streamer (2)	Copper Zonker Streamer (3)	Barr's Bouface Streamer (2)	Morrish Hopper (3)	Jake's Gulp Beetle (3)	
		Lamar, Soda Butte and Slough					
			Drake Mackerel Sparkle Dun (4)	Drake Mackerel Cripple (3)	Pheasant Tail Nymph (4)	Baetis Sparkle Dun (4)	Baetis Klinkhammer (3)
	Heptagenia Cripple (2)		Hi-Vis Black Spinner (2)	Longhorn Beetle (4)	Thunder Thighs Grasshopper (4)	Arrick's Parachute Ant (3)	



Local Towns

Teton Range from Ashton, Idaho

West Yellowstone, MT

West Yellowstone, Montana is the central location for fishing in Yellowstone country. From here you can reach anywhere within the Park in a day's drive, as well as certain waters in southwest Montana, and eastern Idaho. It's a small town with heavy tourism influence, but it's also stacked with jovial local folks, including the numerous men and women that work in the fly fishing industry. It's home to five serious fly shops, all within a short walk from one another.

Cooke City, MT

Cooke City, Montana is the gateway town to the northeast corner of the Park. It's a tiny, chilly mountain village without cell reception, but it's rich in charm that draws you back to the early days of Yellowstone. If you press on into Wyoming you reach the region where Hemingway used to spend summers hunting and fishing. Cooke City has multiple hotels, and staying here is a strategic location for fishing the Lamar, Soda Butte and Slough Creek.

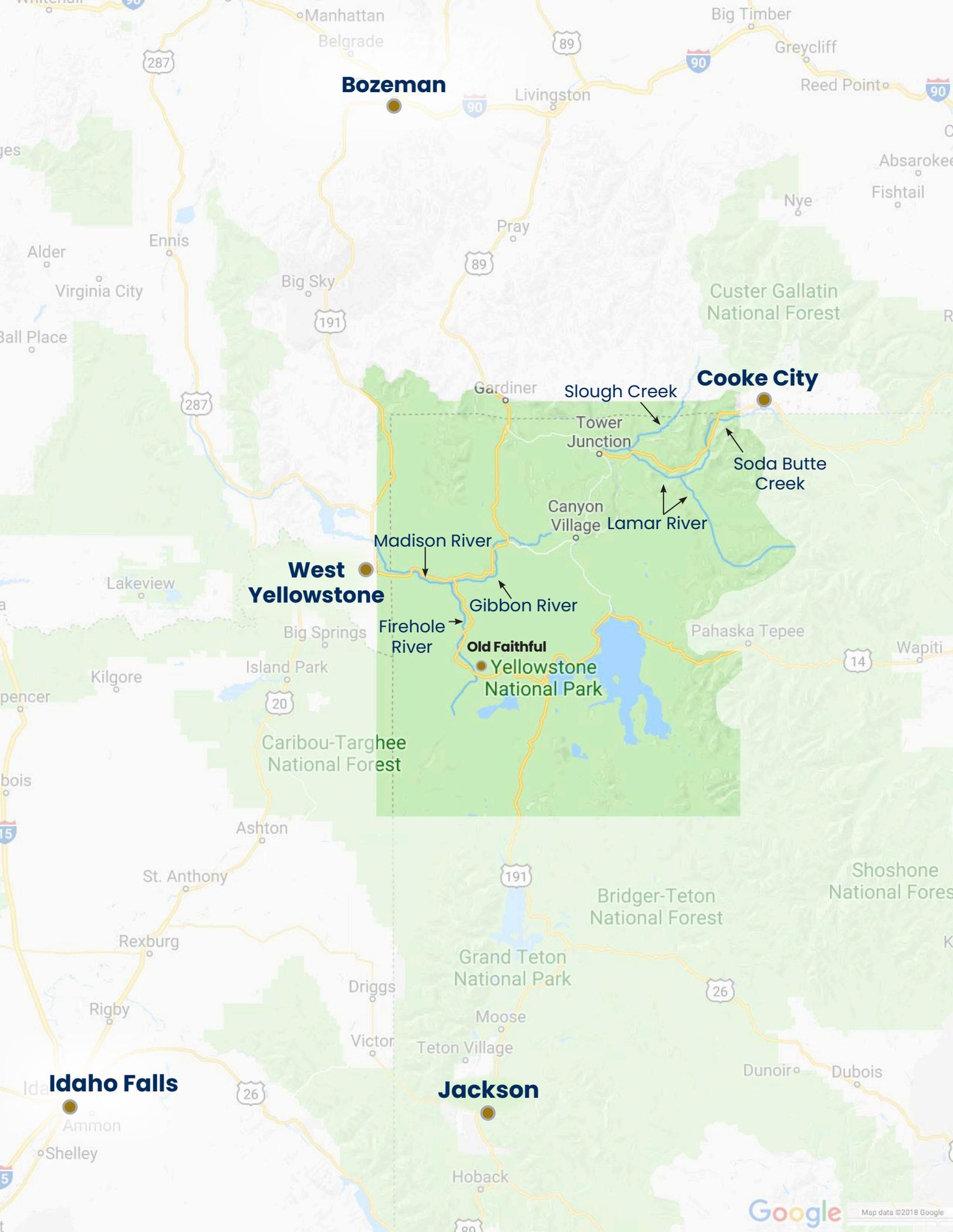
Bozeman, MT

Most visiting anglers fly into Bozeman Yellowstone International Airport, which lies ten miles northwest of Bozeman, Montana. The airport is 90 miles due north of West Yellowstone, a drive which takes roughly one hour and forty-five minutes. Bozeman is a university town that's buzzing from a business boom. Main Street still resembles the classic western drag, and the nearby Bridger Range is gorgeous.

Jackson, WY

Jackson, Wyoming is a two and a half hour drive from West Yellowstone if you take the western route, which runs down the Idaho side of the Teton Range. If you take the eastern route, through Yellowstone and down into the majestic Grand Teton National Park, the ride takes three hours or more depending on traffic.

Idaho Falls, ID is a city of 60,000 people which lies an hour and forty-five minutes southwest of West Yellowstone. The city has a sizable airport which occasionally offers flights that are advantageous to visiting anglers.



Bozeman

Cooke City

**West
Yellowstone**

**Old Faithful
Yellowstone
National Park**

Idaho Falls

Jackson

Extras

Casting Casting is the most important skill of the angler. With a little instruction, anyone can become a competent fly caster, but without instruction, bad habits can become ingrained for life. Any beginner that has access to a professional casting instructor should take lessons. If you'd like to learn about the mechanics of a sound casting stroke, you can find a useful video link in the Recommended Resources page at the end of this guide.

Knots to Know Knots can be a pain, but with some practice they're easy to master. If you're still learning a certain knot, practice it at home and you'll have it down pat in no time. The following knots are worth learning, and you can find helpful videos of people tying them on YouTube.

- Clinch Knot: The Clinch Knot is your basic knot to attach your leader to your fly. It's the only knot you'll need to know for attaching trout flies to terminal tackle.
- Surgeon's Knot: The Surgeon's Knot provides an easy way to connect tippet to your leader. It's a perfect starter knot for beginners.
- Blood Knot: Blood Knots are not easy to tie at first, but they tie a beautiful, strong knot for connecting tippet to leader. Most advanced anglers use the Blood Knot.

Guided Trips Numerous fly shops in West Yellowstone offer guided trips. You should consider what you want to get out of a trip before meeting up with your guide in the morning. Do you want to cruise through the day in the hopes of catching as many fish as possible? Or do you want to prioritize improving your technique above catching as many fish as possible? A seasoned guide possesses a bottomless pit of experience, and he or she can lead you down numerous paths to reach your idyllic day of guided fishing, but be sure to let them know what kind of experience you're after.

Many anglers visit this area to float the Madison River in a drift boat with a guide. This river moves at a good clip, which causes the angler to make rapid-fire casts to ensure no pocket is left un-fished. In certain spots, the guide can stop the boat so you can step out to wade fish. If an action-packed fishing day sounds good to you, consider taking a float.

Wade trips are also very popular, especially for fishing within Yellowstone National Park. On foot, the guide has a better opportunity to teach you techniques that you'll need when fishing on your own, rather than in a boat. Making good on the advice of the guide requires focus and patience, but you'll be able to take the valuable skills you learn to any river, anywhere. In general, a wade trip is a more intimate, methodical fishing experience.

Fishing Licenses: Yellowstone National Park operates as its own entity when it comes to fishing regulations; a park fishing permit is required to fish within its boundaries. They offer permits for 3 days, 7 days or a season, which ends in early November. Montana offers licenses in 2 day increments, as well as a 10 day license and a season license. You can buy Montana licenses online, or in a fly shop. Yellowstone National Park licenses can only be bought in-person from a store, such as a fly shop, or a park agency. It's best to have a look at the licensing options before embarking on the trip.

- Montana License Options: <http://fwp.mt.gov/fishing/license/availableLicenses.html>
- YNP License Options: <https://www.nps.gov/yell/planyourvisit/fishing.htm>



Mayflies

Drake Mackerel

Size 12 Sparkle Dun, Parachute Adams
or DOA Cripple with brown body.

Baetis

Size 20-22 Sparkle Dun, Parachute Adams
or DOA Cripple with olive body.

Caddisflies

White Miller Adult

Size 14-16 Razor Caddis

Crippled Pupa

Size 16-18 White Miller Iris Caddis

Emerging Pupa (Swinging)

Size 14-16 White Miller Soft Hackle, or similar partridge collared
soft hackle.

Midges

Adult Dry

Size 18-22 Griffith's Gnat

Emerger

Size 18-20 Scotty's Midge

Nymphs

Mayfly Nymph

Size 14-20 Pheasant Tail Nymph

Midge/Caddis Nymph

Size 16-18 \$3 Bridge Serendipity

Stonefly

Size 8-10 Black Pat's Rubberlegs

Streamers

Copper Zonker, Baker's Hole Bugger, Light Spruce, Dark Spruce,
Prospector, Soft Hackle Streamer, Yellow Bullethead

Fall Soft Hackles

Shakey Beeley, Blew on Blue, Full Dressed Red, Full Dressed
Pheasant Tail, Baker's Hole Soft Hackle



Recommended Resources

Blue Ribbon Flies - 406-646-7642

West Yellowstone, MT

The gang at Blue Ribbon is known for their depth of fishing knowledge and terrific customer service. You can ring them up to get a better grasp of what a Yellowstone fly fishing trip entails, and how to be prepared, or if you have any questions about what gear to buy. Their staff will be eager to shoot the breeze. The shop is open from Monday to Saturday, 8 AM to 4 PM during the offseason. Their summer hours are 7 AM to 9 PM.

Madison River Outfitters - 800-646-9644

West Yellowstone, MT

MRO has been outfitting visiting anglers for more than 35 years. Their staff is comprised of experienced guides and shop employees who are friendly and knowledgeable. Though they don't sell fly tying materials, they do offer a wide selection of flies and gear. In the winter, MRO is open for phone calls on Monday through Friday, 10 AM to 2 PM, during the fishing season their doors are open from early 'til late. Give them a shout to find out what you can expect from a fishing trip to Yellowstone.

"Fishing Yellowstone Hatches"

Hatch guide by John Juracek and Craig Mathews

This book of hatches teaches anglers where and when they can expect to see the most important insects in Yellowstone country. Unlike more mundane hatch books, each chapter of *Fishing Yellowstone Hatches* contains a fishing story from the lives of its two authors, who are anglers of the highest rank. For the dry fly fisherman, the value of this book cannot be understated. It can only be found on Amazon or via a book dealer.

John Juracek's Website

www.johnjuracek.com

John Juracek is one of the founders of Blue Ribbon Flies, an establishment which he and Craig Mathews elevated to prominence in the late '80s. John still works at the shop a few days a week during the fishing season, but he is no longer an owner, which affords him time to fish, and take fine art photographs and write blog posts. On his website you'll find an archive of his written work, which is comprised of numerous informative pieces. He makes a habit of investigating fly fishing issues that receive little attention, but are of paramount importance. Though he usually writes in short form, his words on fishing are of the same caliber as Schweibert, Marinaro and other greats of American angling.

Books by Nick Lyons

Nick Lyons is best known for harmless fishing stories, but his writing contains stimulating thoughts about life, and valuable fishing knowledge. He's a master of the written word and his calm fishing talk subtly educates the reader. He held down a column for *Fly Fisherman Magazine* for decades, but his work has also appeared in broader publications like the *New York Times*. His book *Spring Creek* is considered his best work by many, and it's a series of stories about fishing a fabled creek an hour's drive from West Yellowstone. Anything he's written is worth your while. *Bright Rivers*, *Full Creel* and *A Fly Fisher's World* are just a few of his well-known books.

Video: "Towards Better Fly Casting" by John Juracek

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=tlxKbfMr8M8>

This video is of poor image quality, but the information it contains is very valuable. In it, John Juracek offers a simple, visual display of a mechanically sound stroke, and provides advice on how one can achieve the stroke themselves.



Fishing Trip Checklist:

Gear:

- Fly Rod
- Fly Reel
- Waders and Boots
- Vest or Waist Pack
- Nippers
- Forceps
- Polarized Sunglasses
- Magnifiers (if needed)



Tackle:

- Fly Boxes
- Tippet Spools: 2x, 3x, 4x, 5x
- 9 Foot Leaders: 2x, 3x, 4x
- Floatant (e.g. Loon Aquef)
- Dessicant (e.g. Frog's Fanny)



Clothing:

- Hat
- Raincoat
- Warm Base Layers
- Warm Sweater or Fleece
- Warm Socks
- Gloves



Readers of the Warriors Mark Run Fly Fishing Association's *Guide to Fly Fishing Yellowstone Country* (the "Guide") need to be aware that Yellowstone Country is the wilderness, and any form of outdoor activity, in the wilderness, like fly fishing, can have a high level of risk and potentially could be dangerous to your health or safety, including causing injury or death from natural or man-made causes. Injury or harm could occur, particularly if the weather becomes adverse, unforeseen events create a hazardous condition or you come in contact with wildlife.

The Warriors Mark Run Fly Fishing Association has prepared this Guide at no cost to its readers solely for informational purposes to provide generalized education about fly fishing opportunities in Yellowstone Country. It should not be considered a complete guide or instruction manual to all things concerning fly fishing or fly fishing trips. Rather, it is intended only to provide an overview of fly fishing in Yellowstone Country. The Warriors Mark Run Fly Fishing Association, Modera Wealth Management, LLC and any and all of their affiliates disclaim any and all liability for, and shall not be held liable for, injury, loss, accident or other harm that may occur by using the materials and information in the Guide or by undertaking a fly fishing trip. By voluntarily undertaking a fly fishing trip or using information in the Guide, you do so at your own risk and assume all risks of any and all resulting injury, loss, accident or other harm.

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