



SWEETWATER FLY SHOP

— *Livingston, Montana* —

A full-page photograph of a fly fisherman standing in a river, casting a line. The fisherman is wearing a grey jacket, a cap, and waders. The river is surrounded by mountains and trees with autumn foliage. The sky is blue with some clouds.

*Fly Fishing
in
Paradise*

Fly Fishing in Paradise

Sweetwater Fly Shop is located on the outskirts of Livingston, Montana, at the northern entrance to Paradise Valley, on the western bank of the world-renowned Yellowstone River. Our home at the edge of paradise provides us easy access to some of the most celebrated and diverse blue-ribbon trout waters in America: From placid Paradise Valley spring creeks—DePuy’s, Armstrong’s, Nelson’s—to revered fisheries in Yellowstone National Park, to the mighty Yellowstone River which tumbles through our back yard.

Livingston is the ideal basecamp for exploring all of southwest Montana. It is the quintessential western town with unique shops and eateries, encircled by the stunning, snow-capped Absaroka, Gallatin and Crazy Mountain Ranges. Livingston and the Sweetwater Fly Shop are approximately 45 minutes from Yellowstone National Park--a beautiful drive south, through the majestic Paradise Valley to the Park’s North Gate will lead to the Lamar and Gibbon Rivers as well as hundreds of small streams, lakes and ponds. Bozeman, Montana is a half hour to the west along I90 and the famous Madison and Gallatin Rivers are just beyond that.

In this little booklet, we’ve created a companion for your time touring our home to help you get the most from your visit. We begin by explaining who we are and what we do. We then examine the fisheries, wildlife, and places that, just like you, brought us here. A brief overview of the trout, rivers and streams, tackle and gear suggestions, and a synopsis of fishing regulations are included. We offer tips ranging from how to play and land the trout of a lifetime to the best, and most humane, way to photograph them so you have great pictures to accompany your memories. We offer suggestions about fly fishing gear and many other often overlooked items that will make your trip a success.

By far, the quickest and easiest way to shorten your Montana fly fishing learning curve is to hire one of our guides. They’ll safely float you down one of our wild rivers in a raft or drift boat or guide you on foot into the back-country. They show you what flies to use and tell you how to use them. They’ll make you a better caster and overall fisherman in one outing than if you struggled for months on your own. We here at Sweetwater Fly Shop have some of best guides in Montana and we’re happy to introduce you to them.

We end our little booklet with a brief look at the diverse wildlife in and around our valley and the most likely local spots to see them. We also highlight other non-fishing activities to make your visit a well-rounded trip. Finally, we list an appendix of lodging and dining options, as well as contact information for other important places like grocery and liquor stores and even our local hospital. We want your stay to be all that you imagined it would be when you were just planning your adventure. We sincerely hope our little booklet helps make that happen.

Photos by: Paul Weamer, Beau Peavey, Lynn Donaldson

Sweetwater Fly Shop

We believe that Sweetwater Fly Shop’s staff is our finest attribute. If you’re just passing by our shop, looking for advice about access areas, tactics, casting, or fly patterns, we’ll be happy to point you in the right direction. If you’re out of town, still planning your trip, and have questions, give us a call or send us an email. We’re eager to help in any way we can. We live here, and we love this special place. We want you to love it too.



We have an exciting new website for you to explore and we regularly update our blog and Facebook page to keep you connected to Montana before and after your trip. Our online store prides itself at getting your orders correct and quickly shipped, so they reach you when you need them. We know that great fishing and great fishing trips won’t wait for the delivery man. That’s why we ship your order the day we receive it. If there is an issue in filling your order, we’ll contact you, that day, to make sure we get it right. And if it’s a specialty item you desire, our staff will do whatever we can to acquire that product for you. We want to earn your business with each and every sale.

Though we have an extensive online inventory, we carry even more products in our shop. Our shop is

fully stocked with hundreds of items to make your fishing trip stress-free, successful, and memorable whether in Montana or abroad. And we may just have the best fly selection in the state. Sweetwater’s flies are the culmination of a hundred years of Montana fly fishing research, patterns designed by the west’s great tiers with an additional mix of proven flies from specialists around the world.

When you visit our store, you’ll be greeted by one of our three full-time, professional staff members: Dan, Marya, and Paul. It’s always nice to know who you’re working with when you plan a big trip, so here’s a little more information about our staff:

Dan Gigone

Dr. Dan has been the owner of Sweetwater Fly Shop since 2011. He has a Ph.D. in Social Psychology and a lot of post-graduate work in dries, nymphs, and streamers. He purchased Sweetwater Fly Shop after stints in the academic world at Duke, Washington State, and Montana State Universities. Born and raised in Boulder, Colorado, Dan has made Montana his home and playground since 2004. More of a mid-life opportunity than crisis, owning a fly shop has afforded Dan a chance to live a crazy, adventurous fly fishing life. Dan’s goal is to make everyone who comes through Sweetwater Fly Shop, beginner, intermediate, or expert, feel like he or she is living the dream. Yes, the rumors are true; he once sported a wild chin-beard and we have the photos to prove it.

Dan’s Favorite Fly Fishing Gear:

Rod—Winston BIIIIX

Reel—Lamson Velocity

Waders—Simms G3 Guide

Boots—Simms Guide Boots



Fly line(s)—RIO Grand

Tippet/leader—Trouthunter Fluorocarbon

Pack, Vest, Bag—Fishpond Waterdance Guide Pack

Favorite Gadget—Abel nippers

Marya Spoja

Marya grew-up trying to catch minnows with her hands and, in general, running around causing trouble on her family’s ranch in Lewistown Montana, a short two-hour drive from Livingston. It wasn’t until graduating from college and moving to Livingston that she discovered the joys and frustrations of fly-fishing, which have now fully over-taken her life. For the last 8 years she has worked at Sweetwater Fly Shop, helping fly fishermen explore the region. She has been the shop’s manager and an accomplished guide for the last 5 years. In the summer, when not at the fly shop or guiding, you’ll find Marya somewhere out there either exploring new places to fish or returning to some of her favorite spots. If it’s winter, good luck trying to find her: she’s out dogsledding or skiing somewhere most days of the week.

Marya’s Favorite Fly Fishing Gear:

Rod—Scott G2885, Sage TXL-F 3710-4

Reel—Abel Creek 2, Tibor Everglades

Waders—Simms Women’s G3 Guides

Boots—Patagonia Ultralights

Fly line(s)—RIO Perception

Tippet/leader— Trouthunter Nylon

Pack, Vest, or Bag—Sage Waist Pack

Favorite Gadgets--MFC Thirsty Nippers

Paul Weamer

In 2014, Paul and his wife Ruthann moved from Pennsylvania to Paradise Valley, Montana. This makes Paul the newest member of the Sweetwater Fly Shop team, but he’s not new to the fly fishing industry. Paul is a Contributing Editor for Fly Fisherman magazine, the author, or co-author, of several highly acclaimed fly fishing books, and a former fishing columnist for the Hancock Herald newspaper. He is an accomplished photographer, specializing in aquatic insect macro photography, and has contributed photos to Fly Fisherman, The Mid-Atlantic Fly Fishing Guide, The Catskill Regional Guide, and The Drake, as well as his own and several other writer’s books. Paul is a former New York State licensed fishing guide, working the Upper Delaware and Beaverkill Rivers for trout and smallmouth bass, and Cattaraugus, Elk, and Walnut Creeks for steelhead. He has owned or managed three highly successful fly shops in New York and Pennsylvania and has been a production tier for numerous guides and fly shops in the Catskill Mountains, including the legendary Dette fly shop located in Roscoe, NY. Paul is a co-founder of the Friends of the Upper Delaware River (FUDR) and the 2009 co-winner of FUDR’s Upper Delaware “One Bug” tournament. He is also the 2011 winner of the Upper Delaware Council’s Recreation Award for his book, The Fly Fishing Guide to the Upper Delaware River.”

Paul is a Simms Guide Ambassador, a member of the product development staff for Simms and Orvis, and a member of the Outdoor Writers Association of America. He also belongs to the pro-staffs of Regal Engineering, and Daiichi hooks where he designed the Daiichi #1230, Weamer’s Truform Mayfly Hook. He is a contract fly designer for the Montana Fly Company and the inventor of the Weamer’s Truform, Comparachute, Alewife, and the Weamer Streamer series of flies. Paul has a couple of roles at Sweetwater Fly Shop, as an advisor and shop staff member. He continues to write books and articles and fishes his new home waters every chance he gets.

Paul’s Favorite Fly Fishing Gear:



Rod—9’ 5wt Sage One

Reel—Abel Super Series, Lamson Lightspeed

Waders—Simms G4 Pro Waders

Boots—Simms Rivertek 2 BOA, Simms Streamtread Sandal

Fly line(s)—RIO Gold, SA Sharkwave

Tippet/leader—RIO Trout Leaders, Fluoroflex Plus Tippet

Pack, Vest, or Bag—Simms Headwaters Tackle Bag, Dry Creek Packs

Favorite Gadget—Abel nippers

Paul’s Books:

Fly Fishing Guide to the Upper Delaware River (1st and 2nd editions)

Pocketguide to New York Hatches

The Bug Book (to be released in 2015)

Pocketguide to Pennsylvania Hatches (with Charles Meck)

Tying Dry Flies (Jay Nichols with Charlie Craven and Mike Heck)

In addition to our two-legged staff members, Sweetwater Fly Shop is also the proud employer of three four-legged employees: Pearl, Trader, and Spumoni. They’re cheaper to pay than their human counterparts, and yet they’re perhaps the smartest members of the team.

Pearl

Some women like diamonds and flowers, some just like biscuits. I think you can guess in which camp Pearl belongs. Pearl is a malamute and the most commonly found member of our shop-dog team. You’ll find Pearl patrolling the store most days, greeting you at the door, and hoping that you left the flowers and bling at home. But give her a treat, and she’ll remember you forever.

Trader

Much like the Yeti, Trader is not often seen. When you do have a fly shop sighting, make sure you take a picture! Our resident retired sled dog generally stays at home since he’s starting to go blind. But he has Jedi knight powers and gets around the shop just fine when he visits.

Spumoni

If you’re a follower of our blog, you might have seen Spumoni’s first full length movie, “Shop Tour.” But when he’s not starring in, or directing, full-length films, Spumoni quietly patrols the shop. Spumoni is an Italian Spinone: a breed known for their loyalty and friendliness as well as their stunning cinematography skills.



Our Fisheries

The Yellowstone River

The Yellowstone River conveys a certain wildness of spirit. You’ve most likely heard that the Yellowstone is the longest undammed river in the lower 48. But it’s more than that. It’s in the raging flows of runoff that can last into mid-July. It’s in the elk, deer, eagles, otters, bighorn sheep, antelope, bears, and bison that inhabit her shores. It’s in the spectacular mountain backdrops of the Paradise Valley. And it’s in the fish that survive and thrive in this most natural of settings. For an angler, this wildness can be intimidating. But it needn’t be. The stretch of Yellowstone River trout-water from Gardiner to Columbus can be one of the most rewarding in the world.

Access

More than 30 public access sites can be found between Gardiner and Columbus. Most have boat ramps and the sites are appropriately spaced to make half-day, and full-day, floats possible, especially in the Paradise Valley (Gardiner to Livingston). Below Livingston, the accesses are generally a full day’s float apart. Wade fishing is often good at the public accesses and—thanks to Montana’s stream access laws—solitude can usually be found a short walk away (staying below the high water line, of course). To avoid some of the boat traffic, try fishing upstream of the access in the morning and downstream later in the day.

Fish numbers tend to be higher in the upper stretches, and the scenery of the Paradise Valley is hard to beat. The lower stretches, below Livingston, have the reputation of yielding larger fish. It used to be that you could avoid some of the boat traffic by heading further downriver from Livingston, but in recent years, word has gotten out that very good fishing is to be had outside of the Paradise Valley, particularly during hopper season. Still, the river offers plenty of room for anglers to spread out, and you’re unlikely to run into a “boat hatch” the size you’ll find on some of Montana’s other waters.

Flows

Runoff is a big deal on the Yellowstone. Literally. Peak flows can reach 25,000 cfs near Livingston, usually around the beginning of June. Intrepid rowers are back on the river at around 10,000 cfs (usually toward the end of June), but it’s still a big, and potentially dangerous, river at this time. Wait a bit, let the river drop a little more, and then choose one of the river’s mellower stretches (such as the “bird float” between Grey Owl and Mallard’s Rest) if you’re not a pro on the oars. The river can fish well anytime there’s a foot or more of clarity. But the “magic moment” for all-around great (especially top-water) action is around 5,000 cfs.

When to Go

Some of the best fishing of the year can occur before runoff, if you’re ready for the ever-changing elements. Nymphing is the most popular technique, but midges, blue-winged olives (*Baetis* spp.), and March Browns can bring trout to the surface. And a slowly-stripped, or dead-drifted, streamer could hook one of the Yellowstone’s bigger denizens.

The “Mother’s Day” caddis hatch, usually around the first week of May, is legendary. Bugs can blanket the water, making for tough fishing as you struggle to get the fish to notice your fly among the myriads of naturals. Try an imitation a bit larger or smaller than the real thing, and don’t forget about emergers, especially if you’re seeing splashy rises. The hatch tends to be best right around Livingston and flirts with the beginning of runoff, so be ready to take a sick day if you hear “it’s on!”

The end of runoff, if we’re lucky, coincides with another renowned hatch, the Salmonfly. These monstrous stoneflies can bring big trout smashing to the surface. The hatch tends to progress up-

stream a few miles each day, and is often best in the upper stretches, from Livingston upstream through the Paradise Valley to Gardiner. But this fishing is the stuff of legend, and it can inspire crowds. If you’re seeking more solitary fishing, try searching upstream of the hatch, drifting big stonefly nymphs right along the willows, imitating the bugs that are restless pre-emergence. Or fish a stretch where the hatch has already passed; fish will continue to look up for the big bugs for a few days even after the naturals have ended for the year.

Good dry fly fishing continues through the summer months (golden stones, caddis, yellow sallies, and PMDs to name a few), and both attractors and more natural imitations can put fish in the net. But the next “big thing” on the Yellowstone are late summer grasshoppers. Warm breezes blow these terrestrials into the water, and the trout do not miss the big meals. Gaudy foam-sandwich type flies can pick up fish early in hopper season. But as the fish see daily parades of foam flies for weeks, more realistic, lower-riding patterns will usually be more productive. Be patient with your hook-set when a trout eats your fly. Do not overreact at the agonizingly slow take of a native cutthroat and pull the fly from the fish before it eats it. Sometimes a little “Yellowstone twitch” (gently moving the fly on the surface) will entice an otherwise wary trout to explode on your offering. And don’t forget about the smaller terrestrials; drop an ant or beetle behind your hopper and you might find that you get just as much action on the smaller fly.

Autumn is streamer time. As they prepare to spawn, big browns get aggressive and the fish are looking for hearty meals to prepare for the lean winter months. Trophy hunting may involve a shoulder-taxing day of chucking 5-inch long monstrosities with 7-weight rods and sinking lines. But nice fish can be picked up on more reasonably-sized streamers and tackle. Color seems to be critical with streamers. If you’re not picking up fish pretty quickly, switch to a fly of a different hue.

Floating vs. Wading

The Yellowstone is often seen as a float-fishing destination. Floating allows the angler to hit a large number of productive spots in a day. But wade fishing can be equally effective, allowing the angler time to concentrate on a few fruitful pools or riffles. Some of the best wade-fishing can be found in the stretch between Gardiner and the head of Yankee Jim Canyon. But wading opportunities exist throughout the Upper Yellowstone. Stop in any of the local fly shops and the staff will be happy to point you toward some good locations.

Fish

The Yellowstone is home to rainbow, brown, and native Yellowstone Cutthroat trout. Cutthroats are more prevalent in the upper stretches, toward Gardiner, and browns increase in numbers the farther downstream you go. Native whitefish are also prevalent throughout.

Yellowstone River Fishing Regulations

Regulations on the Yellowstone are relatively straightforward. Contrary to beliefs of many, the Yellowstone is neither a catch-and-release nor a fly-fishing only river. But do respect the resource. And, importantly, all cutthroats must be released; if it has a slash, you must put it back.

Yellowstone National Park Boundary to the I-90 Bridge at Billings

- Open entire year
- Combined Trout: 4 Brown trout and/or rainbow trout daily and in possession, only 1 over 18 inches. Catch-and-release for cutthroat trout.

Yellowstone River Tributary Fishing Regulations

- Buffalo Fork, Hellroaring, Slough, and Soda Butte creeks upstream from Yellowstone National Park Boundary: Cutthroat trout—3 daily and in possession. None over 12 inches.
- All tributaries between YNP boundary and Springdale: Opens at the advent of the YNP fishing season. Catch-and-release for cutthroat trout.



- All tributaries downstream of Springdale: Open entire year. Combined Trout: 4 Brown trout, rainbow trout, and or cut-throat trout daily and in possession, only 1 over 18 inches.

















Getting There

Livingston, I-90 exit 333, is the gateway to the Upper Yellowstone. Take the exit toward Gardiner and Yellowstone National Park onto Highway 89. 89 parallels the river all the way up to Gardiner. Some of the less-crowded accesses are on the scenic East River Road, which can be reached via several bridge crossings. The first you will come to, a couple miles south of Sweetwater Fly shop on the left hand side of the road, is Carter’s Bridge.

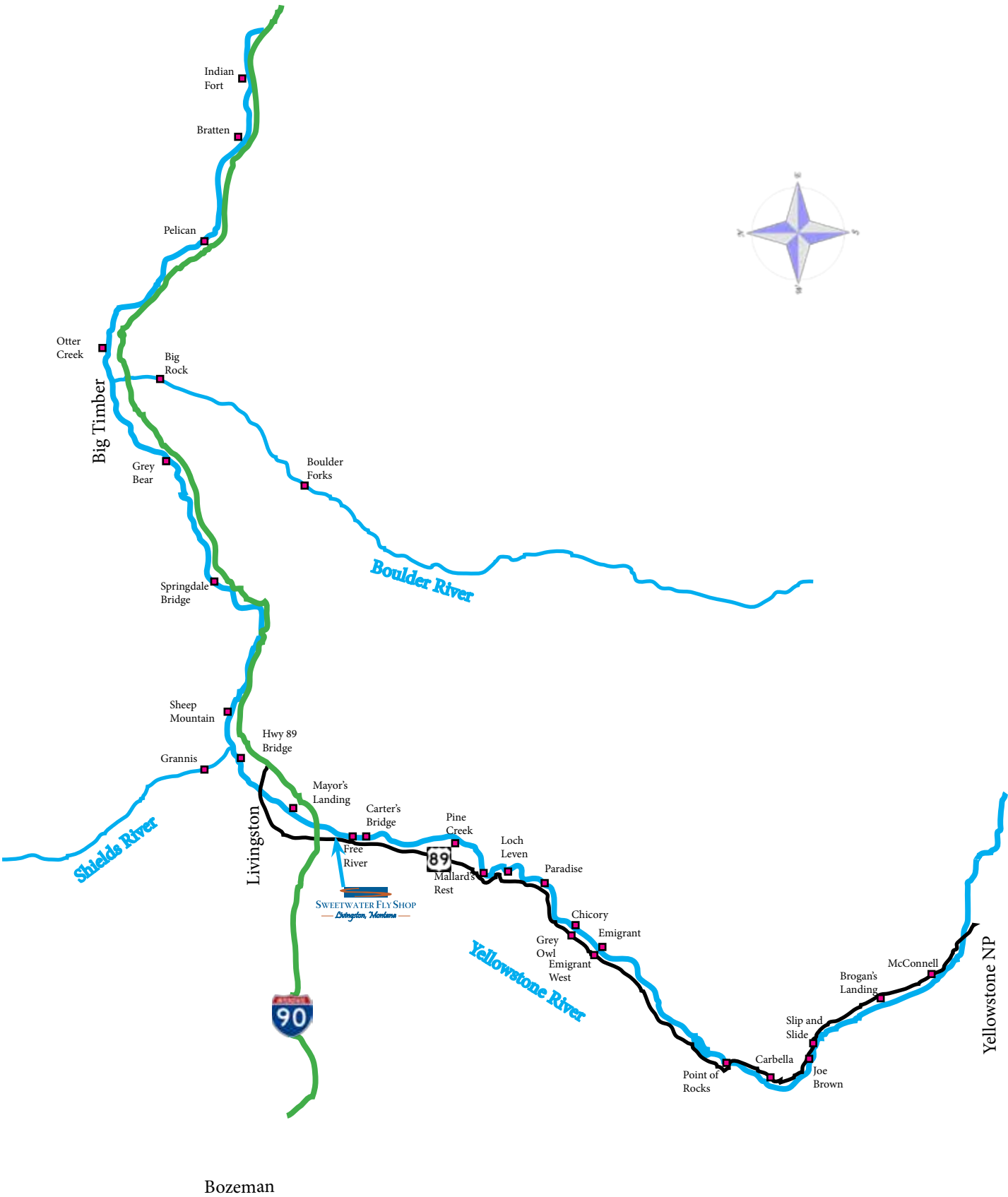
If you bypass the Livingston exits on Interstate 90 (exits 333 and 330), the highway eventually parallels the lower sections of the Yellowstone River, downstream of Livingston. Access to the river can be gained from several exits off of I-90.

Whenever, wherever, and however you choose to fish the mighty Yellowstone River, you’re bound to have an experience that you’ll remember for a lifetime. You will take home with you memories of the feisty wild trout and majestic scenery that make this, one of America’s last free-flowing rivers: the stuff of fly fishing legends.

Yellowstone River Hatch Chart

SIZES			January	February	March	April	May	June	July	August	September	October	November	December
	Midges	16-24												
	Baetis	16 to 22												
	Grannom Caddis	14 to 18												
	Western March Brown	12 to 14												
	Salmon Fly	2 to 8												
	Western Green Drake	10 to 12												
	Pale Morning Dun	16 to 20												
	Golden Stone	4 to 10												
	Yellow Sally	12 to 16												
	Brown Caddis	12 to 14												
	Hoppers	6 to 14												
	Beetles	8 to 16												
	Ant	12 to 16												
	Hecuba	12 to 16												
	Trico	18 to 24												
	Streamers	2 to 10												

Yellowstone River Map



The Paradise Valley Spring Creeks: DePuy’s, Armstrong’s, Nelson’s

By *Dan Gigone*

Before I had even moved to Montana, back in 2004, I knew about the Paradise Valley spring creeks. I knew that they were world-famous fisheries, where the best anglers paid a fee to challenge themselves against highly “educated” trout. I knew that they hosted prodigious hatches of mayflies which had to be imitated nearly perfectly. I knew that they were clear and shallow, with tricky currents. I knew all this. And frankly, I was intimidated. Intimidated enough that I never set foot on any of them the first five or so years that I lived a half hour away, despite the thousands of hours I spent waving my rod on other local waters. Then one day I screwed up my courage and booked a day at DePuy’s Spring Creek. Armed with a little advice and a few flies from a local fly shop, I made my way to the creek. And, lo-and-behold, I caught some trout. Not a lot, mind you, but enough to make my former trepidation seem a bit foolish. Since then, I’ve fished the Paradise Valley spring creeks in all seasons, with nymphs, dry flies, and even streamers. I’ve guided them a few times. I’m far from a spring creek expert, but I’ve learned that even an intermediate angler can be successful on these storied waters, if prepared with the right approach.

Notice that I said an intermediate angler, not a novice. The spring creeks are challenging, to be sure. To be successful, the angler needs to be able to cast fairly accurately, if not particularly far. A drag-free drift, at least for moderate distances, is a must. A day on one of the creeks is likely to be an exercise in frustration, and a waste of money, if the basic skills haven’t yet been mastered. All that said, the spring creeks are actually a great place for relative novices to improve their fly fishing skills with the help of a guide. In truth, a day with a guide is a good idea for anyone who’s new to the spring creeks. If you’ve already spent a bunch of money travelling to Montana for a multi-day trip to the spring creeks, one day’s guide fee is a small price for some expert instruction. Some anglers who fish the spring creeks multiple days every year still hire guides for every one of those days. Hire a guide; you’ll be glad you did.

But let’s say you’ve decided to forgo the guide and hit the creeks by yourself. You can still be successful doing it on your own. Stop at one of the Livingston-area fly shops (preferably Sweetwater Fly Shop), and tell them where you’re going. They’ll help you select some flies and provide advice about where, and how, to fish the particular creek you’re visiting. And when you’re there, remember to look up once in a while. The creeks are surrounded by some of the most beautiful scenery in the world. They don’t call it the Paradise Valley for nothing.



Anytime someone mentions the Paradise Valley spring creeks, you usually hear three names: DePuy’s, Armstrong’s and Nelson’s. But these three creeks are actually only two individual streams. The first flows into the Yellowstone River from its west side. It rises from the ground on, and flows through, the O’Hair’s Ranch, where it is known as Armstrong Spring Creek. It then flows through the DePuy’s Ranch, where it is known as DePuy’s Spring Creek: two different stretches of the same creek. The second stream flows through the Nelson’s Ranch on the east side of the Yellowstone River. This is, you guessed it, Nelson’s Spring Creek. DePuy’s is the most beginner-friendly, as its riffles, runs, and pools are the most like a classic freestone. Nelson’s is the most challenging, and probably not the best of the creeks for a first-timer.

Spring creeks have a nearly constant flow and temperature as they ooze from beneath the ground. This temperature is actually equivalent to the mean temperature of the region in which they exist. In Montana, it’s 52 degrees. But there are spring creeks in other states too. In Florida, for example, spring creeks emit much warmer water (too warm for trout survival) because the yearly mean temperature is much warmer in Florida than Montana.

Montana spring creeks’ constant cool temperatures (warmer in the winter, cooler in the summer) mean that their trout feed consistently all year round. The spring creeks also contain a high concentration of nutrients. This leads to increased aquatic insect and crustacean life. But the Paradise Valley creeks are conducive to midges and small mayflies, not to large stoneflies. Most of the food available to spring creek fish tops out at around a size 16 here, and much of it is considerably smaller. If you’re my age, some magnifying glasses can be almost a necessity, if you ever want to get your tippet through the eye of these diminutive flies.

One of the most useful tidbits of spring creek wisdom given to me was offered by master spring creek guide Brant Oswald. Spring creek trout are not actually any smarter than other trout, Oswald pointed out. They can, however, afford to be more selective in their food choices. Because of the plethora of food that is available to them, particularly during hatch periods, spring creek trout can “key in” on a single bug (or even a single stage of that bug) and still get enough to eat. They simply don’t have to be as opportunistic as freestone trout. It is possible to catch trout on the spring creeks with attractor dries and nymphs, but you’re likely to do better if you do a good job of imitating what they’re currently eating.

For this reason, the spring creeks can actually be a bit easier to fish during times when no hatches are occurring. In the winter, for example, the fish are somewhat more opportunistic in their feeding. Because the water temperature stays relatively warm even during the cold months of the year, spring creek trout continue to feed steadily, unlike their freestone brethren. And they’re not feeding as selectively as during the summer. A well-presented mayfly nymph, midge pupa, scud, or sowbug can be quite effective on a warm winter’s day. As a bonus, the rod fees are lower in the winter (\$40 per angler compared to \$140 during the summer months) and you’re less likely to be aced out of a good-looking spot by another angler.

But “matching the hatch,” particularly with dry flies, is often what makes the spring creeks a draw to anglers from around the world. Fooling a rising fish with your floating imitation will make you feel like you really have this fly fishing thing down. Especially if you’ve had to change your fly several times to find just the right one. The Paradise Valley spring creeks are most renowned for their mid-summer Pale Morning Dun (PMD) mayfly hatches. However, I find the spring and fall Baetis (blue-winged olive) mayfly hatches to be friendlier to the angler who’s still using a spring creek “learner’s permit.” The creeks aren’t as crowded (in fact, it can often be difficult to get on any of the creeks on short notice during the summer months), the rod fees aren’t as high, and the fish aren’t quite as wary.

Regardless of which hatch you are fishing, there is a predictable sequence of events that unfolds. The nymphs shed their nymphal shucks, becoming an emerger. The newly emerged duns rest on the surface for a brief time while their wings become ready for flight, and then they fly away. A few of the emerging duns get stuck in their shucks and others can emerge with crippled wings. These become easy pickings for trout. Your fishing strategy can follow this sequence.

Before the hatch begins, fish nymphs progressively closer to the surface. If you’re able to spot feeding trout, follow them up the water column as they feed higher. During the hatch proper, you’ll be tempted to switch to a dun pattern. After all, you’re seeing hundreds of duns floating down the river past you. And yes, you can catch fish, sometimes may fish, on duns. But it pays to remember that duns are “risky” food for the trout. The duns have the tendency to fly away just as the fish rises up to slurp them off of the surface. Energy wasted. An emerging nymph or cripple doesn’t present this risk. For this reason, it often pays to fish an emerger or cripple pattern, either on its own or as a dropper beneath your dun pattern. An unweighted nymph dusted with a powdered floatant, such as Frog’s Fanny, can be an effective dropper fly. It also pays to remember that more nymphs are moving subsurface, attracting trout attention, even as duns are emerging.

If you’re planning to be on the creek into the evening (or in the early morning), don’t neglect the spinner fall. Mayflies complete their life cycles by metamorphosing from duns to spinners. The spinners fly in clouds over the riffles, where they mate. The males then usually fall spent the water. After their eggs ripen, females will lay them, and then they too usually lay spent in the water. Trout will usually eagerly feed on the fallen spinners. Though spinner falls typically take place in riffles, the biggest trout will often be found feeding in slower water below the riffle, where they can expend less energy as they eat.

Presentation is probably the most important determinant of whether an actively rising fish will take your fly. A drag-free presentation, one where the fly floats naturally with the current as if it’s not tethered to a fishing rod, is critical. Mayflies rarely skate across the water’s surface, and your dragging fly will immediately alert the trout that it’s not the real thing. Always take a moment to plan out your presentation strategy before you begin casting. How can you present your fly so that it’s not dragging when it passes over the fish? Casting from a position upstream and across from the fish can often be your best bet. This also assures that your fly will reach the fish before your leader does. You can also cast from directly above



the fish, using a pile cast to provide slack line to feed down to where the fish is rising. Just remember to allow your line to float past the fish before recasting. That way, you’re not picking up your line directly over the fish which will most likely spook it and stop it from surface feeding.

A longer leader can also help prevent drag, particularly in the complex currents of a spring creeks’ flat water. If you’re getting refusals, try tying on a bit more tippet. Don’t go wild and end up with a rig so long that you can’t cast it. But a couple feet of extra length will give you a few seconds more of drag free drift, and that can make all the difference. If that doesn’t work, you may need to go to a thinner diameter of tippet. I usually start with 6X and then go down to 6.5X (yes, Trout-Hunter makes half size tippet material) or 7X if I’m getting refusals. Any tippet lighter than that, and you’re likely to break off any fish that you hook.

Entire books have been written on spring creek flies. I won’t go into specifics about particular patterns here. Your best bet is to stop in to one of the fly shops near the spring creeks and ask a friendly employee to point out a few favorite patterns. Just be sure not to head out to the creek under-gunned. Get one or two patterns in each of the types I’ve discussed: nymphs, duns, emergers, cripples, and spinners. Get them in the size suggested by the expert, and possibly also in one size smaller. Switching the size of your fly can often entice a wary trout to take. But I’ve found that it’s usually a smaller bug that the trout are looking for, not a larger one. And don’t sweat the color too much. Artificial flies vary in color from fly to fly, but so do the naturals. Get the profile and size right, and you’ve got a good chance of fooling the fish, regardless of whether you’ve got just the right shade of olive. And get at least 3 of each pattern. Yes, it’ll end up being a bit of an investment, but you don’t want to work hard to find a fly that’ll work, then lose your only one to the first fish that takes it, or to a tree on the bank.

Remember to wade slowly and stealthily at all times. Waves travel far in the relatively slow and flat water of the spring creeks. And there can be fish just about anywhere. If you’re “blind” nymphing (not fishing to a sighted fish), cover the water systematically, first with short casts, then with progressively longer casts. Then move a few feet and start the process again. And don’t worry if you spook a fish. You will. There are plenty more fish out there.

Above all, enjoy your time on these special creeks, regardless of how many fish you catch. Pause and relish each fish that you do catch. Fishing the spring creeks is not a numbers game. Think of it as a puzzle that is yours to solve. There’s little more satisfying in our sport than to put those pieces together.



Fishing Yellowstone National Park (YNP)

Many books have been written about fishing in our first National Park. There are literally hundreds of waters to fish within the Park’s confines. We can hardly do the subject justice in this short publication. But no discussion of fly fishing in the area would be complete without at least mentioning some of the angling opportunities within this natural wonderland. And no multi-day fishing trip would be complete without at least a day of fishing one or more of the Park’s storied waters.

Sweetwater Fly Shop is approximately an hour’s drive from the North Entrance of Yellowstone National Park, at Gardiner/ Mammoth Springs. We focus here on the rivers closest to that entrance, as they are the most accessible to the angler who is staying in the Livingston area or the Paradise Valley.

Favorite Waters:

Lamar River

The most famous section of this river meanders through the broad Lamar Valley. The Lamar is home to large numbers of Yellowstone Cutthroat Trout, including some of impressive size. It is also home to large herds of bison, which should be given wide berth. If a bison wants your fishing spot, the bison gets your fishing spot. Grizzlies also frequent the area (as well as Slough Creek), so always carry bear spray when fishing here. Terrestrial fishing is a big draw on the Lamar in the mid- to late-summer. Hopper, crickets, ants, and beetles can all be effective. Mayflies and caddis also hatch on the river, so be prepared to match the hatch, particularly earlier in the summer. Don’t ignore the canyon section downstream of the Lamar Valley. The deep pockets and runs can yield some excellent fishing, without the crowds of the valley section. Nymphing can be very effective in the deeper water. Another way to get away from some of the angling pressure is to hike upstream from near the confluence with Soda Butte Creek, where the road leaves the river. The Lamar has a tendency to “blow out” and get muddy after a heavy rain, so this might not be the best place to head if there were strong thunderstorms the previous afternoon.

Soda Butte Creek

This little gem fishes somewhat like a smaller Lamar River and holds some impressive cutthroats for the size of the creek. Terrestrials, nymphs, and smaller attractor dries will all get the job done. The fishing is not particularly technical. Fishing pressure (and average fish size) diminishes as you travel upstream.

Slough Creek

Perhaps the most famous of the waters in the northeastern corner of YNP, Slough Creek may also be the most challenging. It’s slow, crystal clear water fishes somewhat like a large spring creek. The resident cutthroat tend to be quite finicky, and you’re likely to see a lot more fish than you catch. Watching a good sized cutty slowly rise up to closely inspect your offering can require the patience of a monk, lest you yank your fly away at the moment of truth. Terrestrials are again effective; I tend to go with something smaller and more realistic than I might use on the Lamar. And don’t forget the small terrestrials, the ants and beetles. If you come upon fish rising to mayflies or caddis, be sure to get yourself in position to make a good, drag-free presentation before you make your first cast. Nymphing can also pick up fish in the riffles and pools (remember, no lead weight is allowed).

The lowest meadow, along the road to the campground, can get crowded in the mid-season. A bit more solitude can be had by making the short but strenuous hike to the next meadow up. Fish the canyon section between the meadows and you might find yourself alone. More adventuresome anglers can hike (or horseback ride) to the upper meadows. Remember to pack your bear spray.

Gibbon River

The Gibbon is a great river for the less experienced angler. Its pools, pockets, and riffles, as well as the brown and rainbow trout that inhabit them, are a bit more forgiving than some of the Park’s other waters. That’s particularly the case for the canyon and downstream to its confluence with the Madison River. The upper, meadow section can be tougher. Fish it with small attractor dries, fish it with nymphs. Either way, you’re likely to end up with a smile on your face and fish in the net.

Gardner River

Many anglers overlook this little beauty in their haste to reach the area’s more storied waters, even though it parallels the entrance road. The resident fish aren’t huge, but some nice brown trout run up from the Yellowstone River during the fall spawning period. Fish it as you would any smaller freestone river, with smaller attractor dries being particularly effective. That said, fishing huge dries during the Salmonfly hatch can be downright epic. And no, the name is not a typo; the river and the town are spelled differently.

YNP Fishing Regulations

The following section is just a brief synopsis of some of Yellowstone National Park’s fishing regulations. It is not intended to be all inclusive. Park regulations changes, and river closures can occur at any time. We strongly advise you to consult a current YNP Fishing Regulations booklet before you begin fishing.

- Season begins the Saturday of Memorial Day weekend (usually the last weekend in May) and extends through the first Sunday in November.
- Fishing hours are daily from sunrise to sunset.
- All anglers 16 years of age or older must have a valid YNP fishing permit to fish in the Park. A Montana (or Wyoming) fishing license is not sufficient for fishing inside the Park’s boundaries. Yellowstone National Park fishing permits may be purchased at Sweetwater Fly Shop.
- Anglers 15 years old or younger must be under the direct supervision of an adult who has a valid Park fishing permit, or they may obtain a free permit that must be signed by an adult to fish without direct adult supervision.
- No bait. This also includes inorganic bait, like Powerbait, rubber worms, plastic twister tails, and all scents and attractants.
- No chumming
- No barbs (barbs that have been crimped are acceptable). It is legal to have barbed hooks in your possession, but all hooks tied to fishing line or leader must be barbless.
- No lead. This includes lead added to fishing line like split shot and lead wire or weights incorporated into flies or lures.
- Each fly may have only 1 hook. Articulated streamers with two hook points are not allowed.
- No more than 2 flies can be used at a time.
- The Firehole, Madison, and lower Gibbon Rivers are strictly fly fishing only. Only brook trout may be harvested in these rivers, possession of up to 5 brook trout is allowed. All brown and rainbow trout and mountain whitefish must be released.
- All cutthroat trout must be released (If it has a slash, put it back). All other native fish—mountain whitefish and Arctic grayling—must also be released.
- All rainbow and brook trout caught in the Lamar River drainage, including portions of Slough and Soda Butte Creeks, must be killed.



Types of Trout:

Native vs. Wild vs. Stocked Trout

There are three types of trout in Montana: Native, Wild, and Stocked. But it’s possible for a fish to be classified in more than one of these categories, so perhaps that’s why anglers are often confused about their meaning.

For many fly fishers, the most important trout are wild, native fish. In Montana, this includes two types of Cutthroat trout, Mountain Whitefish (a salmonid related to trout), Bull Trout (a char), Redband Trout, Lake Trout, and others, though each of these fish types will not be found in every area of the state. In fact, it’s possible for a native fish in one part of the state to be considered an invasive fish in another part; if it has been stocked by humans outside its historic range.

Native fish are those that existed in a drainage before European settlement in North America. Native fish are born wild into stream and rivers that they have populated since recorded history began. But a native fish could also be stocked. For instance, there are Greenback Cutthroat trout in Colorado that are native, but to reintroduce populations that have been extirpated, stocked greenbacks, from state run hatcheries, have been placed in some streams. This is done with the goal that these stocked natives, will one day produce wild, native trout without the aid of man. The only wild, native salmonids (Trout and their relatives) in the Upper Yellowstone River and its tributaries are Cutthroat trout and Mountain Whitefish.

Wild fish are often native, but not always. And native fish could be wild, but not always. A wild fish is hatched within a river or stream without aid from man. Wild fish could be the descendants of stocked fish or the propagation of native species. They are simply distinguished as being at least one generation away from any influence of mankind. Some of Montana’s greatest fisheries—the Bighorn, the Missouri, the Big Hole—are inhabited by wild fish that are not native. They are browns, rainbows, and brook trout that originated as stocked fish many years ago. All of the brown, brook, and rainbow trout that you catch in the Yellowstone and its tributaries will be wild but not native.

Stocked fish are the least revered type. Stocked fish come from eggs raised from brood stock in a hatchery. In some states, these fish are often put in degraded waters unable to produce wild fish. Or they are stocked in good trout waters in an attempt to bolster fish numbers for a large concentration of anglers. They are intended only as recreation for anglers—to be caught, killed, and eaten. Stock fish are not allowed to be placed into running water in Montana. All of our rivers and streams that can support trout have wild trout. But stocked fish are placed in numerous lakes across the state to provide angling opportunities that wouldn’t otherwise exist. Many of these lakes had no fish at all before fish stocking occurred.

Yellowstone Native Salmonids

Cutthroat Trout

(*Oncorhynchus clarki bouvieri*), (*Oncorhynchus clarki lewisi*), and (*Oncorhynchus clarki behnke*)

There are three commonly recognized species of cutthroat trout in, and around, Yellowstone National Park, though only two are recognized by the scientific community: Yellowstone Cutthroats (*Oncorhynchus clarki bouvieri*) and Westslope Cutthroats (*Oncorhynchus clarki lewisi*). The Snake River Fine Spotted Cutthroat trout (*Oncorhynchus clarki behnke*), though appearing to have several unique physical features, is technically genetically identical to the Yellowstone Cutthroat and not currently considered a separate species by scientists. When you’re fishing the Yellowstone River and its tributaries in Paradise Valley, or near Gardiner and Livingston, you’ll have the opportunity to catch Yellowstone Cutthroats. They are particularly common in the Yellowstone River and its tributaries from the Yankee Jim Canyon upriver, though they can be caught below the canyon too. Cutthroat trout are currently listed as “Fish of Concern” within the state of Montana. They are also heavily protected within Yellowstone National Park. These fish are native and special and that’s why the slogan, “If it has a slash, put it back” should be the mantra of every western fly fisher. Not only is it good for our fishing future, in many places it’s also the law.



Mountain Whitefish

(Prosopium williamsoni)

Whitefish are also considered salmonids which means they are related to trout. But in spite of the fact that whites are considered a game fish in Montana, in spite of the fact that these fish are both wild and native, some anglers look down upon the whitefish.

Most whitefish fail to achieve large status when compared to the 4 big trout species (the world record weighs 5 pounds, 2 ounces). But these important fish will readily take flies—nymphs, dries, and even occasionally streamers. And they are also an important food source for the big trout that most anglers prefer. But I have enjoyed catching whitefish for years—some days they are all that’s biting. And the whtie remains a species to be revered and protected. They belong in the Yellowstone every bit as much as the cutthroat trout.



Other Wild Game Fish



Brown Trout

(Salmo trutta)

Brown trout are not native to North America. More than 100 years ago, brown trout were brought from their native European waterways (from Scotland and Germany) and stocked in American rivers and streams. The brown trout you catch in Montana today are descendants of those fish. Brown trout are prized by anglers because they grow large (the world record is a 42 pounder), and they are able to tolerate warmer water temperatures than other trout species. Brown trout are perhaps the most difficult species for anglers to catch, though they eat nymphs, wets, dries and streamers. Many anglers prefer to float the Yellowstone throwing large articulated (jointed) streamers, hoping to convince one of the river’s many trout over 20 inches to take the bait.

Brook Trout

(Salvelinus fontinalis)

Brook trout are indigenous to North America, just not western North America. Brook trout, which are actually members of the char family (also considered salmonids), were found only in eastern waters before the advent of Europeans to the continent. They were brought to the west, just like brown trout. Brook trout, or brookies as they are often called, may be the most beautiful of the big 4 trout species (Rainbow, Cutthroat, Brown, and Brook). Their fins are white-tipped and their bellies are often orange, sometime deep red-orange and their greenish backs are covered in worm-like markings called vermiculations. Brookies prefer very cold waters, and they can out-compete cutthroat trout which prefer the same habitat. Brookies also have the tendency to overpopulate streams and become stunted: where all the fish are approximately the same small size. Large brook trout are rare, but they can attain sizes over twenty inches.



Rainbow Trout

(Oncorhynchus mykiss)

Rainbow trout get their name from the bright red stripe that parallels their flanks. Just like brookies, rainbows are not indigenous to Montana. Rainbow trout were originally only found along the Pacific coast. Rainbows are known for having the ability to colonize waters that are sometimes warmer than ideal trout water temperatures of 55 to 65

degrees. They are also known for their amazing athleticism. Rainbows are hard-fighting fish that often jump while trying to throw the hook from their mouth. Rainbows and brown trout are the most common trout species found in the Yellowstone River below the Yankee Jim Canyon.

Rainbows are classified as true trout by scientists, but that can be a concern for cutthroat fisheries. Rainbows and cutthroat can interbreed, creating the fish anglers call a cutbow. Most of these fish look similar to rainbows but they retain the cutthroat slashes near the underside of their gills. But this interbreeding diminishes the native genes of the cutthroat. Luckily, rainbow/cutthroat hybrids are not as common in the Yellowstone River drainage as they are in other Montana river systems. Rainbows prefer to spawn in river side channels in the Yellowstone while cutthroat prefer to ascend tributary streams to spawn. They also spawn at slightly different times in the spring. This keeps the two species somewhat separated during the spawn which inhibits cross-breeding, helping keep Yellowstone cutthroats pure-bred.



Fishing and Photography Tips

Playing Fish

- Play fish aggressively, to near the breaking point of your leader and tippet. The faster you land a fish the less chance of stressing it to death or losing it.
- Try to fight a fish from a position downstream of it whenever possible.
- When a fish jumps, bow your rod. This means dropping the rod’s tip towards the water. It creates just a little slack in your line and helps stop the fish from throwing the hook or breaking your tippet.
- Don’t allow a fish to rest in the current. Constantly changing the angle of your rod will keep the fish moving, burning more energy so it can be quickly released.
- Use your reel’s drag to tire the fish. Set your drag lightly at first so that you don’t break off a fish on its initial run after being hooked. But steadily increase the drag’s tension as the fish tires. Don’t point your rod straight in the air when fighting a fish. This increases the chance of breaking your rod and actually puts less pressure on the fish. Point the rod at the fish and let your reel do its job.
- Never, never, never grab any part of your rod with your off hand. This changes a fly rod’s flex and makes it bend in way that it was not intended to bend. Ultimately, this leads to more broken rods than do careless fishing partners. Only touch your cork grip and your reel when fighting a fish.

Netting Fish

- All anglers that have a chance to catch a trout over 12 inches should carry a net. The proper net will make it easier to land and release a healthy fish.
- Good nets have rubber bags. Old style bags wide holes made from nylon or cotton threads can damage fish by removing scales and protective slime. These types of bags can also easily get entangles in the fish’s gills. Finally, it’s easier to remove hooks that get imbedded in rubber net bags than those in nylon or cotton bags.
- Long handled nest are vital when fishing from a watercraft or wading streams that are deep and muck-bottomed.
- Always try to net a fish from downstream of it.
- Put pressure on the line to lift the fish’s head to the water’s surface before attempting to net it.
- A good netter should be able to capture a big trout with one swipe. The more times you sweep a net at a fish and miss, the more likely you’ll bump the leader and lose the fish.
- Keep the fish in the net while you remove the hook, trying to handle the fish as little as possible.
- Try not to lift the net high too high above the water. Fish often jump when you least expect it. If a trout jumps out of a net while you are carrying it three feet above the water to get to a shallow spot for a photograph, there’s a good chance the fish will damage itself or perhaps even die when it hits the rocks.

Handling Fish

- Try to handle fish as little as possible before releasing them. This gives them the best chance of survival after they swim away.
- Use as heavy a tippet as possible and know the limits of lighter tippets. Using these materials near their breaking points will put enough pressure on the fish to land them quickly. When trout are played to exhaustion, lactic acid builds in their bodies. When these levels get too high, the fish dies. This can happen even after they swim away. This condition is exacerbated in warm water (anything over 65 degrees). Landing fish quickly after they are hooked will

lead to healthy fish when they are released.

- Always wet your hands before touching a fish. Fish are covered in a protective slime that helps them ward off infections and diseases. Dry hands will remove this film, leaving the fish with a greater chance of contracting disease.
- Try to keep fish in the water as much as possible when removing your hook. Using only barbless hooks will make them much easier to remove.
- Use nets with rubber bags. Cloth or string-type nets are rough on the fish’s body and can remove protective slime and even scales.
- Keep photographs to a minimum. And learn how to best handle fish for photographs (see below)

Catch and Release

It is estimated that 50,000 of YNP’s 3 million yearly visitors fish while they are in the Park. And a great many of these people will also fish the areas near, but outside, the Park like the Yellowstone River through Paradise Valley. Could you image if each of these people kept just one fish? What if they took their limit? It’s amazing that wild trout still swim in our modern world. But it’s up to us to protect them. Please consider releasing your catch so that someday you may return and catch wild fish here again.

Protecting Fish while Photographing Them

- Trout will die if they are held out of the water too long. Hold your breath while you’re holding a fish outside the water to photograph it. Whenever you need to breathe, the fish does too.
- Never place a fish on hot rocks, dry ground, snow, or ice to take its picture. All of these things can badly damage the fish or even kill it. Taking fish photos when you’re by yourself is seldom a good idea. They usually look lousy. But if you decide to try, lay the fish in your net in an area of slack water near the shore, keeping the fish wet the entire time. But don’t keep the fish out of water too long (see the previous point). Take one or two shots and then quickly release the fish.

The Angler Holding a Fish in a Photo Should:

- Move to a shallow area near shore to take the photo.
- Keep the fish submerged in a rubber-bagged net until the camera and photographer are ready.
- Do not remove the fly for the photo. If the fish should get away before you take a picture, you can bring it back to your net if the fly is still in the fish’s mouth
- Face into the sun while holding the fish
- Tilt the fish’s back towards the camera while holding it. This helps to reduce glare, allowing the fish’s true colors to shine through.
- Cradle the fish with your hands behind it, being careful not to squeeze the fish. Try to keep your fingers away from the front of the fish (facing the camera) as much as possible.
- Never, ever, under any circumstances should you put your fingers in a fish’s gills. This is a death sentence for a fish.
- Always point the fish towards the water like it’s just about to be released.
- Remove your sunglasses and use a fill flash to remove any shadows.



- It's become popular to hold the fly rod by placing the cork grip in your mouth while you hold the fish in your hands. Please don't. It looks ridiculous and has been done to death.
- When trout are stressed by water temperatures over 65 degrees, it's probably best not to give them added stress by photographing them.
- Release all fish as soon as possible.
- Email us your photos! We'd love to see, and post, them on our website and Facebook page. Send to: customerservice@sweetwaterflyshop.com

Fly Fishing Tackle and Techniques

Rods and Reels

Fly rods 9 feet and longer for line weights from 5 to 7 are ideal for fishing the Yellowstone River. I am particularly fond of rods that are 10 feet in length for 5 or 6 weights. These rods are great nymphing tools because their extra length makes them effective line menders. They also help keep your back cast from hitting the water behind you when you are wading deeply. 7 weights are only really for anglers who want extra weight to throw double-hook articulated streamers on windy days. Though they are also good for fighting large fish. But they'll feel like you're using a telephone pole if you're catching 10 inchers all day.

The Paradise Valley spring creeks will generally call for shorter lighter rods. But I've used my 10 foot five and six weights there without difficulty. You can give a heavier line weight a little more finesse for small dry fly fishing if you use longer leaders and tippets. But I find no use for 7 weight rods on the small, placid spring creeks.

Fly Lines, Leaders, Tippet

The average leader for fishing the Yellowstone River with nymphs, wets, or dry flies is 9 foot long tapered to a 4x tippet. Most of these leaders (depending upon brand) have a 6 to 7 pound breaking strength. Leader length is determined by the type of flies you are fishing and the water in which you are fishing them. Generally speaking, when fishing dry flies in larger water with slow flat pools, it requires longer leaders than smaller waters that are more turbulent. But fly size is also important. A big foam hopper might twist a long leader with fine tippets. But a small dry like a trico would be fine. Very short leaders are also common when fishing streamers.

There are two main types of tippet: those made from nylon (often called monofilament or "Mono") and those made from fluorocarbon. Nylon tippets have been around for a long time and they still catch thousands of trout a year. Nylon is cheaper than fluorocarbon. But fluorocarbon often has a higher breaking strength than its nylon counterpart. It is also much less visible in water, is difficult to abrade, and maintains much of its original breaking strength even after it has been abraded.

Waders, Boots, and Wet Wading

Many anglers picture themselves wet wading Montana's trout rivers without the use of waders. But that's not always accurate. In the summer months, from sometime after run-off ends in late June or early July till fall's first frosty chill, it's true, you can wet wade many places. But a lot of people won't want to wade any of Paradise Valley's chilly spring creeks no matter what time of year it is. And early morning wet wading, even in July and August can leave some anglers looking for a pair of waders. Late fall, winter, and early to mid-spring can also be great times to fish the Yellowstone or the spring creeks and you will always want waders at this time of year.

Whether you're wet wading or using waders, you'll probably want studs on the bottoms of your boots. Studs are tiny pieces of metal, usually made from tungsten carbide or aluminum, which screw into the bottom of a boot. The metal penetrates the slime from algae and thin layers of slippery mud that is common on submerged rocks. The studs stick to the rocks providing anglers with much better traction than boots that do not include studs. The Yellowstone River is full of misshapen rocks that are usually slippery. Studs will help keep you from taking an unplanned swim.

If you do not want to carry wet waders on to an airplane (or rods and reels for that matter) Sweetwater rents all of these

items for a small fee. But it's best to call ahead to reserve them because our supply is limited. Free rod, reel, wader, and boot rentals are included in all Sweetwater guide trip fees.

Flies

Flies may be the most important part of your fishing arsenal. After all, the world's best fly rod and reel still can't catch fish without flies. Though there are thousands of fly patterns available to today's angler, fly pattern choice doesn't have to be difficult. There are two types of flies: imitative and attractor. Imitative flies are intended to look like specific insects—mayflies, caddis flies, stone flies, grasshoppers, or other types of aquatic insects. Attractor flies are tied to illicit a fish to strike, but they may not look like anything found in nature. And there are flies that cross the line between these two categories. For instance, pheasant tail nymphs. These well-known flies are found in nearly every fly angler's box. Why is that? It's because their dark brown coloration and body shape make them look very similar to a whole host of mayfly nymphs, small stoneflies, and even some cased caddis species. This means that you can use pheasant tails on a spring day to catch fish that are eating the mature nymphs during a blue winged olive hatch. Or you can fish the flies in the middle of winter when nothing is hatching just because they look so similar to many types of aquatic insects that might be drifting in the current. I find the best course is to carry a couple imitative and attractor patterns each day. I always begin by trying to imitate what I believe the fish are eating. But if that doesn't work, or you can identify what the fish are eating, then it's time for an attractor.

Miscellaneous Items

Indicators

There are many types of indicators, fly fishing's fancy term for bobbers. Some are foam that stick-on, some are cork or yarn, held in place with a stopper or O-rings, others are made from plastic. The type of indicator you use really doesn't matter. The reason that there are so many styles is that anglers are often very individualistic, so what work well for someone, won't be as good for someone else. A good indicator should keep floating, be visible, and be able to detect even subtle strikes. If your favorite is able to do all those things, then you have a good indicator. How you use your chosen indicator is much more important. A good rule of thumb for placing the indicator on your leader is about 1 and ½ to 2 times the depth of the water. So, if the water you're fishing is a foot deep, then your indicator should be placed somewhere between 18 to 24 inches above your fly. Exactly where will depend on the water you're fishing. You want your flies to be ticking the bottom, only snagging every six or so casts. If you're getting snagged too often, you may need to decrease the distance between your indicator and your flies, or maybe even remove some added weights like split shot. If you're not catching fish, then maybe you're not presenting your flies at a depth in which the fish are holding. So perhaps you need to increase the distance between your indicator and your flies.

Floatants and sinkants

Floatants come in two main types: Liquids and gels and dry powders. For many flies you can use either type, depending upon your preference. But for dry flies that incorporate feathers known as CDC (cul de canard), or fibers from snow shoe rabbit's feet, into their construction, dry powders work best. Both CDC and Snow shoe rabbit fur help flies float because of natural oils in the materials and because the materials trap air in their fibers. When you use a liquid floatant on CDC, or snow shoe, dry flies the liquid matts down the material's fibers, actually making the fly sink rather than float. But you do need to check the fine print on your floatant. Tiemco makes a paste floatant that is specially designed for CDC flies.

Just as floatants help dry flies float, sinkants are intended to aid wet flies and nymphs as they sink. There are far fewer sinkants on the market than floatants, but the ones I've tried have been effective. Though just by squeezing your sinking fly into the water to forcefully remove air, and even rubbing a little streamside mud into the pattern will help flies sink. And this sinkant is free!

Sunscreen and Buffs

No matter how good the fishing, you won't enjoy your trip to the Yellowstone if you're sunburnt. Sunburn happens quickly, particularly in the spring after winter clothing has covered skin for months. Another factor is the elevation here in Para-



dise Valley. The air is thinner and the sun more intense, so if you don't protect your skin it's very easy to get burned. And if you're floating in a drift boat, there is no shade from the sun's burning rays. Sunblocks with high SPF are a favorite old standby. They are effective, but some can be removed by water or sweat, two common things in a drift boat. A more recent invention is the Buff. Buffs are high-tech bandanas that are designed to be light weight and breathable, yet able to cover sensitive areas around your face, ears, and nose to keep you on the water all day without looking like a lobster at dinner. And don't forget your lips! Many anglers who slather their bodies with sun block end up with severely burned or chapped lips. Make sure you have a lip balm that includes the highest SPF rating possible.

Polarized Sunglasses

A good pair of sunglasses is important for fishing. Polarized glasses cut the sun's glare on the water, allowing anglers to see fish chasing their streamers, taking nymphs, or purposefully rising out of the depths to inhale hoppers off the surface. Sunglasses protect your eyes from harmful sunlight and from harmful casting by you and your friends. But with so many options available, how do you know which type of polarized lenses you should choose?

There are 3 common colors for sunglass lenses: grey, copper, and amber. Grey lenses are best for fishing on bright sunny days. They offer the highest light reduction of all the colors. Amber is good for cloudy days. In fact, amber lenses actually make things a little brighter, helping you see those subtle rises. But what if you don't want to carry two pairs of glasses, one for cloudy and one for bright days? Then perhaps the third option—copper lenses—may be your best choice. Copper lenses aren't quite as good as grey in the bright sun or as amber when it's cloudy, but they're adequate to fulfill either of these jobs. If you're going to own just one pair of polarized sunglasses, then copper lenses are your best bet.

Some anglers choose photochromic lenses; lenses that darken when they're exposed to light and then lighten in the shade. For many anglers, these are great. But I know some who don't like waiting for their glasses to change colors, and others who don't like the usual price increase that photochromic lenses inspire.

What about glass lenses versus plastic? For many years, glass lenses have been the standard. They are more scratch resistant than plastic. And they usually provide clearer, more vivid, images. They do have some drawbacks: mainly additional price and weight when compared to plastic. And plastic lenses have come a long way in recent year. Many now rival glass lenses in their performance on the water. Try some glasses on. Take them outside if the store lets you (we will at Sweetwater). And decide for yourself which type of sunglasses best suit your needs.

Vests or Packs

Now that you have all the gear you need—nippers for cutting tippet, hemostats for removing hooks, leaders, tippets, floatants/sinkants, indictors and split shot, and fly boxes full of flies—you need something to carry all of these items. For a generation, the standard was a fly fishing vest. Vests are still worn by anglers today, though they are losing ground to packs. Vests can be purchased in standard lengths or shorty versions. The shorty versions are for anglers who wade deep into the river. These vests help keep fly boxes and other items that shouldn't be submerged dry.

Some vests incorporate mesh into their construction. Mesh is light weight and cooler for wearing in the summer. But perhaps the most important vest attribute is how it fits along your neck. Some vests are poor at distributing weight and they place added strain on your neck, especially after you pack them full of stuff. Many vests incorporate a large zip pocket in the back for stowing a rain jacket. This is a great feature (though it also makes the vest heavy with a jacket in there). Anglers without a place to stow a rain jacket often leave them back at their car. Thunderstorms appear suddenly along the Rocky Mountains and a rain jacket could keep you fishing after an unexpected rain event occurs.

If you're not a traditionalist, then perhaps you'll prefer a pack rather than a vest. Packs or pack/backpack combinations are all the rage now in fly fishing. There are an amazing array of packs on the market today. Some are waterproof. Some you wear around your waist, others hang to your side or fasten to your chest. The only way to know which pack is best for you is to try it on. Is it comfortable? Will it hold all your stuff? Does it have a place to affix a net? Spend some time at the fly shop and try out each of the different packs. Learn their features and if you don't know what something is for, ask the shop staff. There's a pack or vest out there that will be your perfect fishing companion for years to come.

Sweetwater's Guided Fly Fishing Trips

If you're looking for the ultimate Montana fly fishing experience, then you should hire one of our Sweetwater Fly Shop fishing guides. Whether you want to float a brawling western river, or hike into a small stream, we know just the place and the perfect guide to take you there. We only employ professional guides who base their lives and livelihoods here in Montana. We hire the best because we want to ensure that you have the best trip possible. We staff our shop with guides for whom guiding is a profession, not a summer job.

Sweetwater Fly Shop is also blessed to have experienced casting instructors. The instructors regularly work with anglers of all levels. Whether you are an advanced caster seeking to perfect your loop or a beginner seeking to make your day on the river more enjoyable, we highly recommend a couple of hours with one of our casting instructors.

After a day with one of our guides or instructors, your casting will have improved, and you'll be a better angler. But more importantly, you'll have had fun and spent a day at one of the most beautiful places on earth, surrounded by the Rocky Mountains, catching wild brown, brook, rainbow, and cutthroat trout that call this place home.

Sweetwater Fly Shop is the booking agent for Charlie Conn, Licensed Outfitter # 7156.

Guided Trips

Daily Float Trip

Float the longest free-flowing river left in the United States. With over 200 miles of trout water, the Yellowstone is a river which holds the trout of a lifetime. If you prefer smaller streams, float the Boulder River or the Stillwater River while stopping to fish enticing riffles and photograph Montana's expansive views.

Daily Wading Trip

Wade fish the small streams or spring creeks of the Paradise Valley. Eat lunch on the stream as you enjoy the solitude of some of Montana's finest small stream fishing.

Rates

Our guide trips include everything you need for a day of fishing: One day of guided fishing, transportation from the Sweetwater Fly Shop to the river, lunch and non-alcoholic drinks, any flies, leaders, tippet you use on the trip, as well as any required loaner rods/reels and/or waders. The price does not include lodging, breakfast, dinner, rod fees on private water (optional), or guide gratuities. Our standard fee is \$495, for one or two anglers, for a full day guide trip

Deposit/Cancellation/Refund Policy

A 50% deposit is required within 10 days of making a reservation to secure it. Final payment is due no later than the morning of your trip. Deposits are fully refundable up to 30 days prior to the trip. Within 30 days, deposits are generally non-refundable, as we must pay the guide for the lost day. We may choose to make an exception if we are able to re-book the guide. If the trip is cancelled and we are not able to rebook the guide(s), the deposit may be applied to another trip to be taken no later than the end of the following year.

How to get the most out of your guide trip

You've decided to hire a guide. A good choice for anyone exploring the region for the first time or for an angler who wants a professional to row them down the river. There are many different guides that work the Yellowstone River and surrounding fisheries, and though the service is worth every cent it costs, it is expensive. So how do you get the most out of your guide trip? The list below will get you started on a great guide trip experience.

- Flies are included in the price of a Sweetwater guide trip. But if you have your own flies, bring those too. You never know which fly might produce best on any given day.



- Bring all of your other gear too. But if you forgot something like a rain jacket, let your guide know before you embark on your trip so they can find something for you to use. If you didn't bring your gear with you, then all rods, reels, waders and boots can be provided free of charge. But you need to let your guide know that as soon as possible, preferably when you book the trip. You don't want to be at the boat launch when you realize you need something.
- Guides are people too. Don't treat them like your servant. They will offer tips and advice throughout the day, but it's up to you to follow through. You may have been fishing for 40 years, but there's a reason you hired a guide. Trust them to do their job.
- If you have plans for after your guide-day, or dinner reservations, let the guide know before you begin your trip. Your schedule may influence where you float that day.
- Perhaps there is something other than just catching fish that you'd like to do as part of your trip. Maybe you want to work on an aspect of casting. Perhaps you'd like to learn about aquatic entomology, or knots, local history, or any other facet of the sport. Let us know when you're booking your trip so we can pair you with the perfect guide for what you want your trip to be about.
- Make sure you let us know about any food allergies or any items you do not want to eat or drink when you book your trip. Lunch and non-alcoholic beverages are included.
- If you want to bring some adult beverages, let your guide know so they can make space in the boat.
- Our guides practice strict catch and release for all trout, so don't expect to bring a mess of fish home with you. Our job is to get you to catch fish. It gets much more difficult if all the anglers before you have killed their fish. A wild trout is too precious to be caught just once.
- Don't lean over the side of the boat or sit sideways. This changes how the boat tracks down the river and makes it more difficult for the guide to steer. We'd like to give you a smooth trip and that doesn't include smashing the boat on the rocks.



- If your party has two anglers in the boat, both fishing at once, it is the responsibility of the angler in the boat's stern (back of the boat) to wait to cast until the angler in the bow (front of the boat) has completed their cast. If both anglers are constantly casting at the same time, ignoring each other, it's very easy to get tangled. And every second your guide spends untangling your line is one more second you're not catching fish.
- The best days are often overcast and rainy. I've heard many clients be disappointed at this type of forecast, but if you want to catch fish, it's the best. Hot, sun-shining, blue-bird days may be the best for people, but you're here to fish. And remember, the guide can't control the weather. They are there to give you the best chance possible to catch fish no matter what the weather conditions.

- You may find this hard to believe, but your guide wants you to catch fish more than you do. Guides talk with each other, whether they're at the bar when the day is finished or at the shop getting ready for the next day's trip. No one wants to be the boat that had a lousy day or disappointed clients.
- Temper your expectations. It's most likely that you will not break the world record for the biggest fish or the most fish caught that day. Guides are not magicians and they are limited by your abilities. But if you listen to your guide and follow his or her advice then you are guaranteed to catch more and bigger fish than you would have if you were fishing without them.
- Gratuities are not included as part of your trip's price. If your guide worked hard for you and gave you a great day on the water or taught you something new, then please consider rewarding him or her with a nice tip.
- Have fun. Take some time to watch the wildlife. Look at the awe-inspiring Rocky Mountains. Breathe the fresh air. And remember, you're in Montana! You could be doing a lot worse today!

Wildlife Viewing

Most of the people who visit Sweetwater Fly Shop have traveled here for the world-class fly fishing for wild brown, rainbow, and cutthroat trout. But trout are just part of the complete ecosystem that surrounds, and includes, the Yellowstone River near our shop. There are many types of creatures that live in and along the Yellowstone River Valley between Livingston and Gardiner. Here's just a few:

Bighorn Sheep



- Every year in the fall, bighorn sheep descend into the area around Cinnabar, between Gardiner and the Yankee Jim Canyon, to mate on the banks of the Yellowstone River. You can see some big rams here at this time. But it's common to see ewes (females) and their offspring in this area throughout the year.
- Bighorn Sheep are very susceptible to pneumonia contracted when they come into contact with domesticated sheep. The pneumonia can be devastating to the bighorns, wiping out large portions, or even entire herds.
- Rams weigh between 174 and 320 pounds. Up to 40 pounds of that weight can be from their horns!
- Ewes can weigh up to 130 pounds. These females have horns too, but they are much smaller than the ram's.

- Rams live for 9 to 12 years while the ewe's lifespan is slightly longer—10 to 14 years.
- In 2012, the last time the herd was counted, there were only 379 big horn sheep living in Yellowstone National Park.

Bison

Bison are one of the most beloved symbols of the west. Many people, when they imagine bison today, think of Kevin Costner's movie, Dances with Wolves, where epic cinematography captured bison herds roiling the prairie dust as they thundered into the horizon. It's hard not to romanticize these magnificent beasts when theme music is playing in the back of your mind. And it's true, their story of survival is miraculous.

Before Columbus first sailed to America, there were an estimated 30 to 60 million wild bison roaming North America. There were even bison living on the edges of the great eastern forests. But that all changed as newly immigrated Europeans began to slaughter the herds; first for food, then for skins, and ultimately as a way to destroy the Native American tribes' capacity to survive outside reservations. With new firearm technologies developed during the civil war, rifles became more lethal at greater distances, and this led to the wholesale slaughter of these animals. The bison's destruction was so thorough that by the early 1900's, fewer than 50 wild bison remained in Yellowstone National Park. This remnant herd became vital to the species' survival.

The National Park System's web site states that Yellowstone National Park is, "The only place in the United States where bison have lived continuously since prehistoric times." So when you travel Montana's Route 89 today, past Sweetwater Fly Shop to the Yankee Jim Canyon, and then into Gardiner and the Park, the bison you see are direct descendants of the 50 remnant bison.

- The current herd of well over 4,000 Yellowstone bison is also important because it remains purebred, without any hybridization with domestic cattle.
- In the winter, heavy snows in the Park push the bison to search for greener pastures, which they find around the small town of Gardiner.



- The bison would likely travel farther from the Park, but cattle guards placed on Route 89 at the head of Yankee Jim Canyon, as well as a fence on the river’s west side, force the bison to remain outside of Paradise Valley

Pronghorn

Some people call them speed goats because they’re fast and related to goats. But their proper name is American prong-horn. A lot of people call them antelope, though they are not closely related to African antelope. In fact, their closest living relative is the giraffe.

- American pronghorn are the 2nd fastest land animal on earth, eclipsed only by the cheetah. Cheetah can reach speeds near 70 mph in short bursts. Pronghorn tend to max-out around 60 mph. But while cheetah can only top-line run for short distances, the pronghorn is able to maintain nearly half of its top speed for great distances–miles and miles

- The best place to find pronghorn in our area is the dirt road between Cinnabar and Gardiner. You access this road from Route 89 as you enter Corwin Springs (heading south towards Gardiner). Make the first right turn after the Corwin Spring Sign (Cinnabar Rd). Cross the river and then make a left onto the dirt road. This road will take you to the entrance to Yellowstone National Park or into Gardiner. There are often herds of pronghorn in the fields along the road.



- Pronghorn are not common in Paradise Valley, though they are sometimes seen as far north (from YNP) as the Mallard’s Rest fishing access on Route 89. But they are usually found in the privately owned Caladonia develop-ment at this point. With binoculars, you can sometimes see them from Trail Creek Road.

- Unlike deer, pronghorn are poor jumpers. Fences have greatly curtailed the areas that pronghorn can access. If a fence is too low to go under, the pronghorn will have to go around. They are unable to jump over most fences.

Elk (Wapiti)

Elk are one of the main attractions in and around Yellowstone National Park. But they are also commonly found in Paradise Valley, particularly in late fall and winter. Trail Creek Road, East River Road, and even fields along Route 89 are all excellent places to glimpse an elk herd. But if you want to be nearly guaranteed of seeing and elk, they are usually found along the side roads in Gardiner and the buildings just outside of Mammoth Hot Springs in the Park. These animals seem domesticated as they lay in people’s yards, but never approach an elk. People get themselves in dangerous situations each year by doing that and some get hurt.



- There are approximately 10 to 20 thousand elk that live in Yellowstone National Park in the summer. Most of these animals are part of 6 or 7 distinct herds. In the winter, the Park’s elk numbers drop to around 5 thousand as the animals look for warmer condi-tions and better feeding grounds in areas outside the Park, including Paradise Valley.

- Bull elk weigh around 700 pounds and are 5 feet high at their shoulder. Cows weigh an average of 500 pounds and are slightly shorter and less robust.

- Only bull elk have antlers.

- It’s illegal to remove any parts of animals, including shed antlers, which you find in Yellowstone National Park.

White Tail and Mule Deer

It’s not always easy for visitors to differentiate between white tail and mule deer. But there are a couple easy ways to do it:

- Mule deer have large ears that look similar to a mule.



- White tail deer have brown tails that are only white on their underside. You’ll usually only see a white tail’s white tail when it is “flagging”—flicking its tail when its nervous—or when it is holding its tail high while running. Ironi-cally, mule deer have white tails that are usually tipped with black.

- Mule deer are larger than white tails.

- Of all the wild creatures that live near Livingston and in the Paradise Val-ley, white tails and mule deer will be the easiest to find. East River Road usually has an abundance of the deer in the rancher’s fields. But any drive south along route 89, towards Gardiner is sure to showcase some deer.

Moose

It’s difficult to pick an exact place to view moose. We have seen them in the Park’s Lamar Valley, but we’ve also seen them along the backroads and fields near Bozeman, Montana. But if you want to try to find a moose on your trip, the best place would be swampy, alder and willow filled creek bottoms in Yellowstone National Park.

- It’s believed that there are fewer than 200 moose living in Yellowstone National Park.

- Bulls weigh around 1,000 pounds. Cows weigh up to 900 pounds.

- Moose average 5.5 to 7.5 feet tall at their shoulder.

- Moose can live up to 20 years



Coyotes and Wolves

Coyotes look like smaller versions of wolves. Their faces are also more pointed than a wolf’s nose. Coyotes are much more common and you have a decent chance of seeing one if you travel at sunrise and sunset. You can also howl just after sun-rise and often coyotes will howl back if they are in the area.

- Coyotes are commonly found traveling brush or tree lines through fields. Glass these areas with binoculars in the early morning or right before dark.

- Your best chance to see a wolf is in the Lamar Valley in Yellowstone National Park, preferably in winter. But there is a small chance you could see one anytime you’re in the Park. Just like coyotes, wolves will be most active early in the morning and right before dark.

Wolf Facts:

- The average male wolf weighs between 100 to 130 pounds

- Average Female wolves weigh 80 to 110 pounds

- There are somewhere between 400 to 450 wolves that live in the Greater Yellowstone Ecosystem

- Wolves average 2 to 3 feet high at their shoulders and are from 4 to 6 feet long from the tip of their nose to the end of their tail.

- The average wolf life span is 5 years. But they have been documented living as long as 12 years in the wild.

- Wolves were reintroduced into Yellowstone in 1995. Wolves had been hunted to extinction in the Park before that. Wolves were brought from Canada to build the packs that now reside in the Park.

Coyote Facts:

- Coyote adults average 30 pounds with some weighing as much as 40
- The average coyote lifespan is 6 years though they have been documented living as long as 13 years.
- Coyotes have been known to beg for food from passing motorists. Never feed a coyote, or any other wildlife for that matter. If you feed a wild animal, it greatly increases the chance that that animal will have to be destroyed.



Cougars

Cougars, also known as Mountain Lions, are rare, secretive animals. They are not commonly seen and there really isn't really a good place to look for them. But if you happen to see one, think yourself very lucky. There are people who live in Paradise Valley, Livingston, and Gardiner who have never seen a cougar.

- There are probably fewer than 30 cougars in Yellowstone National Park at any given time. It's estimated that fewer than 2 dozen live year-round in the Park's boundaries.
- Males weigh 140 to 165 pounds. Females average around 100 pounds.
- Cougars average 6.5 to 7.5 feet from the tip of their nose to the end of their tail.
- Average life span for a male cougar is 8 to 10 years. Females live considerably longer—from 12 to 14 years.
- Male cougars will kill other males who venture into their territory. And cougar kittens, and even adults, have been killed by wolves.
- No one knows for sure, but it is believed that cougars were extirpated in Yellowstone National Park by 1900. Those that now live in the Park are descended from stragglers who eventually filtered back into the Park's boundaries.

Grizzly Bears and Black Bears

Montana and areas around Yellowstone and Glacier National Parks are the only places in America's lower 48 that are home to wild, free-ranging grizzly bears. Bear attacks are uncommon, but on average, there is one attack per year in Yellowstone. It's awesome to view the bears from your car while traveling through Yellowstone. But it can be pretty scary to encounter them while hiking trail or fishing.

Black bears are much smaller than Grizzlies and western black bears are much smaller than eastern black bears. But though they're slighter in stature, they can still be dangerous. In fact, Montana black bears are thought to be more aggressive than their larger eastern brothers. It's been hypothesized that this is because Montana black bears must defend themselves and their cubs against grizzlies. All of the previously mentioned bear advice applies to both grizzlies and black bears. But there is one exception: It's been said that while playing dead may save your life during a grizzly attack, perhaps fighting back is more effective with black bears. Let's hope we're never in a situation to find out!

For more in-depth reading of how to live and play in areas with bears, read Yellowstone National Park's web page on grizzlies. You can find it here: <http://www.nps.gov/yell/planyourvisit/bearsafety.htm>.

Here are some additional suggestions to keep you safe in bear country.

- Always carry pepper spray. It can be purchased at most fly shops (including Sweetwater Fly Shop) and other retail establishments in the area.
- Be especially alert in bear country. Keep an eye open for fresh tracks and scat
- Never run from a bear.
- Don't approach dead animals. Bears may be nearby.

- Hike and fish with friends in bear country. Being alone increases your odds of a bear attack.
- Talk, sing, and make noise while you hike. Most bears want to avoid you. They become more dangerous when they are surprised, particularly sows with cubs.
- If you see a bear, retreat slowly but confidently.
- Never approach a bear.
- Hold your ground if you are charged by a bear. Spray pepper spray when the bear is about 40 feet away.
- Do not fall to the ground unless you are being touched by the bear. Once contacted, fall face-down laying on your stomach with your hands clenched over your neck. Try to remain as still and quiet as possible.
- Learn to recognize the signs and differences between a defensive and a predatory bear attack. This information could save your life.

Suggesting a place to view black and/or grizzly bears is difficult—they are much harder to pattern than other local animals. There have been black bears spotted across the street from Sweetwater Fly Shop, and they do descend into Paradise Valley from the mountains from time to time. But the most likely place to view these amazing creatures is in Yellowstone National Park. Bring binoculars and scan the meadows near the tree-line.

Additional animals you might see:

Beavers, Lynx, Pikas, Mountain Goats (in the Park, but not in our area), Marmots, Ground Squirrels (Gophers), Bats, Wolverines, and up to 300 species of birds!



Other Activities



It may be hard for the dedicated angler to believe, but fly fishing is not the only fun thing to do in the area. If you want a break or need to keep the rest of the family occupied while you fish, here are a few suggestions:

Horseback Riding

Want a taste of the Old West? Why not take the whole family on a horseback ride, for an hour or for the whole day. Several horseback outfitters operate in the area, including Bear Paw Outfitters (406-222-6642; www.bearpawoutfittersmt.com) and Rockin HK Outfitters (406-333-4505; www.rockinhk.com). Rides can also be arranged through Chico Hot Springs (406-333-4933; www.chicohotsprings.com). For a real adventure (without having to hike many miles with a heavy backpack), arrange a horseback camping trip into the back-country of Yellowstone National Park.

Whitewater Rafting

Get wet and wild! A number of outfits run raft trips on the Yellowstone River, both relatively mild and more exhilarating. Contact Flying Pig (406-848-7510; www.flyingpigrafting.com), Montana Whitewater (800-799-4465; www.montanawhitewater.com), or River Source Rafting Company (888-406-2214; www.paddleyellowstone.com) for more information.

Hiking

There are a plethora of good hikes of all lengths in the Paradise Valley and in Yellowstone National Park. A shorter family favorite takes you to Pine Creek Falls. Turn left off of Highway 89 at the Pine Creek Road (look for the KOA campground sign), take a right on to the East River Road, then a left on the dirt road leading to the Forest Service campground and the trailhead. For more information about area hikes, give our friends at Timber Trails a call (406-222-9550), or stop in (on Park Street, just as you reach downtown Livingston).

Hot Springs

Like your soaks rustic? Hike about 1/4 of a mile to the Boiling River, where hot springs tumble into the Gardner River. The parking lot is on the entrance road to Yellowstone National Park, between the Park entrance and Mammoth Hot Springs. Prefer a more developed experience? The outdoor pool at Chico Hot Springs (406-333-4933; www.chicohotsprings.com) is a local favorite. The entrance road is on the East River Road, just north of Emigrant (about a 15 minute drive from Sweetwater Fly Shop).

Galleries, Museums, & Shopping

Want a more civilized outing? Spend some time strolling in downtown Livingston. The charming little town boasts a number of art galleries, with offerings from Western to contemporary art. Railroad buffs will want to stop in at the Depot Museum, which highlights Livingston's history as a railroad town. Aficionados of our own sport's history may want to peek into the International Federation of Fly Fishers museum, just down the road from Sweetwater Fly Shop on Highway 89. Or take the 30 minute drive to downtown Bozeman for a somewhat larger collection of shops and galleries. Bozeman's Museum of the Rockies is a family favorite, with its extensive dinosaur, history, and science exhibits.

Places to Stay and Eat

Lodging

Some anglers like to spend the entire day on the river and view lodging as a place to store their gear, take the occasional shower, and grab some sleep between casts. Other anglers cherish the evening hours on the deck with a drinks and appetizers as some of the most important time of the entire fishing trip. Whatever role angling plays in your fishing trip, Livingston and the Yellowstone Valley provides a great selection of choices. There are Bed and Breakfasts as well as rental homes and cabins. The rental homes are typically do it yourself affairs, whereas the Bed and Breakfasts will offer a hearty morning breakfast and room cleaning during your stay but typically do not provide meals in the evening. And though we may be a little biased, we believe that our own, Sweetwater, lodging options are some of the best around.

Sweetwater Lodging

Sweetwater's Yellowstone River House

5080 U.S. HWY 89 South
Livingston, MT 59047
Tel: (406) 222-9393

Web site: www.vrbo.com/332718

Check out our seasonal rental house on the Yellowstone River. The Yellowstone River House is a fully furnished house located just outside of Livingston on the banks of the Yellowstone. Close to town and Sweetwater Fly Shop, YRH is a great place to relax after a day on the river. With a full furnished kitchen, spacious living area, and 4 bedrooms, YRH can comfortably accommodate up to 8 guests. If you have any questions, give us a call. We're happy to tell you all about the Yellowstone River House

Sweetwater's Paradise River's Edge

225 East River Rd
Emigrant, Mt 59027
Tel: (406) 222-9393

Web site: www.vrbo.com/324883

Want to stay closer to Yellowstone National Park? Paradise River's Edge is a fully furnished log house located in the Paradise Valley, just 25 minutes from YNP and 30 minutes from Livingston and our shop. The house is on the banks of the Yellowstone River, with 1200 feet of river access for fishing. PRE has a full furnished kitchen, high ceilings, and great views. With 2 bedrooms and a cozy sleeping loft, PRE can comfortably accommodate up to 7 guests.

Sweetwater Guest House

214 South 2nd Street
Livingston, MT 59047
Tel: (406) 222-0624

Web site: www.sweetwaterguesthouse.com

Want something more upscale? Sweetwater Guest House vacation home, situated in an 1890's historical building, has been converted into one of Livingston's most elegant places to stay. Right in downtown Livingston, the guesthouse is in easy walking distance of the city's many great dining options, art galleries, and shops. With 2 bedrooms and 2 ½ baths, SGH can comfortably sleep 4. It is fully furnished and has private parking.

Dining

There are many great places to dine or grab an adult beverage in Paradise Valley, Livingston, and Gardiner...too many to list here. But here are a couple of our favorites:

Livingston Dining:

Montana’s Rib & Chop House

305 East Park Street
Livingston, MT 59047
Tel: (406) 222-9200

Web site: www.ribandchophouse.com

The Rib & Chop House is the home of premium steaks, fresh sea-food and award-winning baby back ribs, all served in a casual atmo-sphere. It was founded in Livingston, Montana in 2001. Since that humble beginning, they’ve opened numerous Rib & Chop House restaurants across the USA. Their ability to grow has come through a commitment to “Rocky Mountain Hospitality,” a concept which incorporates a casual attitude with our high-level commitment to loyalty, safety, service, and a 100% guarantee of quality food. They take pride in bringing great restaurants to exceptional small towns. At the Rib & Chop House, you can expect perfect execution, great food and fantastic service.

Fiesta En Jalisco

119 West Park Street
Livingston, Mt 59047
Tel: (406) 222-5444

Web Site: www.fiestaenjalisco.net

Mouth-watering authentic Mexican dishes. Extensive beer and cocktail choices. Lunch specials are served Monday through Friday from 11 a.m. to 3 p.m.

2nd Street Bistro

123 North 2nd St
Livingston, MT 59047
Tel: (406) 222-9463

Web Site: www.secondstreetbistro.com

The 2nd Street Bistro opened its doors in the Historic Murray Hotel, Livingston, MT during the spring of 2004. They are rooted in the simple belief that great food and wine make life more enjoyable. Recently highlighted on Anthony Bourdain’s “No Reservations”, the Bistro is also the proud recipient of numerous regional ‘Best Of’ awards, including “Best Fine Din-ing”, “Best Service”, “Best Wine List”, “Best Martini” and “Best Chef”. Above all else, the 2nd Street Bistro is committed to supporting the local economy and sustainable products. Their number one goal is to support their unique community of independent farmers, ranchers, artists, and professionals. When you walk into the Bistro, you can be sure you are making a positive impact on our community and beyond.



Rosa’s Pizza

5237 US Highway 89 S Ste 2
Livingston, MT 59047
Tel: (406) 222-8099

Web Site: www.rosaspizzaonline.com

You’re going to love Rosa’s Pizza, cheesebread, salads & sandwiches!” All produce is fresh and prepared by hand every morning. Offering salads, wings, specialty pizzas, calzones, and “Chuckwagon” sandwiches.

Paradise Valley Dining:

Chico Hot Springs

163 Chico Road
Pray, MT 59065
Tel: (406) 333-4933

Web Site: www.chicohotsprings.com

Open for dinner nightly, breakfast Monday through Saturday, and brunch on Sunday, the Chico Dining Room has long been credited with bringing fine dining to Montana and stands out as one of the region’s best restaurants. The Dining Room specializes in a menu of fresh, exceptional cuisine, with much of the produce coming from Chico’s own garden. The steaks are generous. Seafood is flown in fresh. And all baking is done on the premises. What’s more, Chico boasts one of the region’s finest wine lists. While the Dining Room is popular with Montana’s Hollywood contingent, it’s also the locals’ choice hands down. Dinner reservations are strongly recommended! Don’t forget to save room for Sunday brunch, served from 8:30 am to 11:30 am. It’s a lavish buffet with the most scrumptious items imaginable.

Yellowstone Valley Lodge and Grill (Open Seasonally)

3840 Highway 89 South Livingston
Livingston, Montana 59047
Tel: (406) 333-4787

Web Site: www.yellowstonevalleylodge.com

Gourmet fare capitalizes on fresh, organic and locally-sourced ingredients, prepared in an open kitchen by Executive Chef, Marcos Mustain, and served with sweeping views of the Absarokas. Don’t let the sophisticated wine and beer list fool you—waders are acceptable dinner duds here. (That said, the YVLG is certainly fancy enough to warrant dressing up if you like.) In the summers, enjoy dining on the patio, where clean alpine air and river songs pair perfectly with seasonally-changing dishes. Yellowstone Valley Grill is open to the public for dinner, but they provide a complimentary continental breakfast to lodge guests daily.

Livingston Fast Food Restaurants

Mark’s In and Out

A Livingston landmark, Mark’s offers juicy burgers and a throwback dining experience. Take-out only.

801 West Park St.
Livingston, MT 59047
Tel: (406) 222-7744

Arby’s

2000 West Park St.
Livingston, MT 59047
Tel: (406) 222-0420

Dairy Queen

1017 West Park Street
Livingston, MT 59047
Tel: (406) 222-2076

McDonalds

103 Centennial Drive
Livingston, MT 59047
Tel: (406) 222-6182

Pizza Hut

1319 West Park Street
Livingston, MT 59047
Tel: (406) 222-7393

Taco John’s

1115 West Lewis Street
Livingston, MT 59047
Tel: (406) 222-1911



Other Resources

Livingston Grocery Stores
Albertsons

2120 Park Street South
Livingston, MT 59047
Tel: (406) 222-1177

Town and Country Foods

1217 West Park Street
Livingston, MT 59047
Tel: (406) 222-0559

Livingston Liquor Stores

Spirits

118 North B Street
Livingston, MT 59047
Tel: (406) 222-2820

Livingston Hospital

Livingston Health Care

504 S. 13th St.
Livingston, MT 59047
Tel: (406) 222-3541

Web Resources

Montana United States Geological Survey (USGS) River Gauges

<http://waterdata.usgs.gov/mt/nwis/current?type=flow>

Snow Precipitation Update

<http://www.wrds.uwyo.edu/wrds/nrcs/updatesur/update-mt.html>

NOAA Weather for Livingston, Montana

<http://forecast.weather.gov/MapClick.php?CityName=Livingston&state=MT&site=BYZ&textField1=45.6625&textField2=-110.56&e=0#.VRwJ5JOgyCJ>

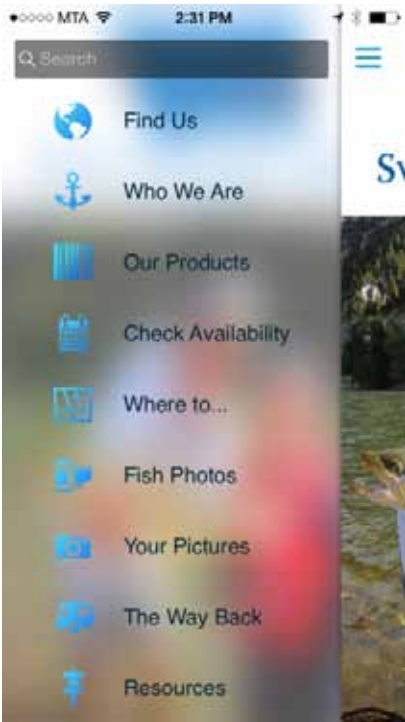
Yellowstone River Web-Cameras (Watch the Yellowstone River from your computer)

Electric Peak and Yellowstone River Web-Cam

<http://www.coolworks.com/webcams/>

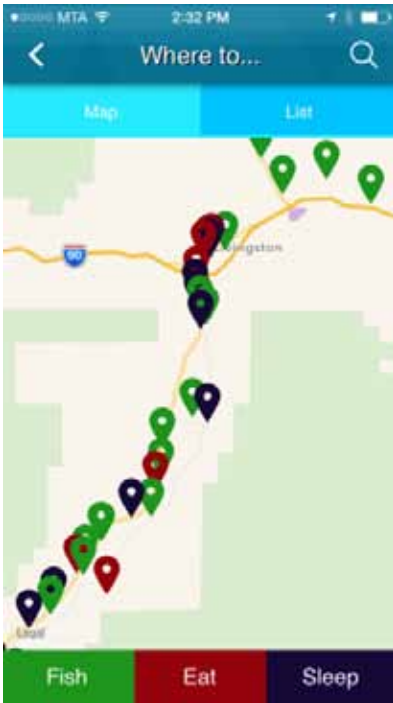
Pine Creek Web-Cam

<http://weather.weatherbug.com/MT/Livingston-weather/weather-cams/local-cams.html?zcode=z6286>



Sweetwater Fly Shop Mobile App

Available free of charge on Itunes and Google Play



SWEETWATER FLY SHOP

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