Friends of Yellowstone
CORPORATE SPONSORS MAKING A DIFFERENCE IN YELLOWSTONE NATIONAL PARK

Life on Mars May Be Proven Through Yellowstone Research

The Yellowstone Park Foundation recently received grants from the National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA) and Lockheed Martin Corporation to study Astrobiology in Yellowstone. What, you may ask, is astrobiology, and what does it have to do with Yellowstone? Astrobiology is the search for and study of extraterrestrial life. It is one dimension of the ongoing research on thermophiles—microscopic organisms that grow at high temperatures—in the boiling water of Yellowstone’s hot springs.

According to NASA astrobiologist Jack Farmer, the organisms that live in Yellowstone’s hydrothermal features are among the most primitive on our planet. In fact, many scientists believe that all life present on Earth today is descended from these heat-adapted microbes, the primeval survivors of Earth’s earliest mass extinctions.

Scientists study single-celled microbes, such as most thermophiles, to help them understand what life might have been like shortly after the creation of earth, before multi-celled organisms existed here. This, in turn, contributes to their understanding of what life may exist, or may have existed in the past, on other planets such as Mars. Mars once had active hydrothermal features similar to those found in Yellowstone.

The Division of Interpretation in Yellowstone National Park is working with a team of scientists from the NASA Ames Research Center to determine how best to use the donation funds to interpret the astrobiology story for Yellowstone’s visitors. Information gathered through the course of this project will likely take the form of new educational exhibits and possibly be integrated into several self-guided trail booklets available to visitors at major attractions in Yellowstone.

For more information on astrobiology, visit the NASA Astrobiology Institute at www.mai.arc.nasa.gov.

Explore Yellowstone and Tensleep Preserve

K. Taylor International, a travel company that specializes in African safaris and remote adventure travel, has joined with the Yellowstone Park Foundation and The Nature Conservancy (WY) to offer what may be one of the best western safaris in the Yellowstone region this year. This trip will be an exciting opportunity to explore the wonders found in the Rocky Mountains of Montana and Wyoming, and around Yellowstone National Park—“America’s Serengeti.” The trip will take place August 29 through September 4, 2003.

The cost is $2,849 per person, which includes all meals, guides, and accommodations plus a tax-deductible $200 donation to be divided between the Yellowstone Park Foundation and The Nature Conservancy. The trip will be limited to a total of fifteen participants, who will be accompanied by highly trained guides with one vehicle for every four participants.

The adventure will begin with three nights at the Nature Conservancy’s exclusive, 8,300-acre Tensleep Preserve in Wyoming at the foot of the Bighorn Mountains. Here, guests will have the chance to explore the rugged sandstone canyons and pine-forested uplands, visit archeological sites, and learn about the wildlife and natural history of the region. Accommodations will be in permanent, wall-style tents, with meals and gatherings taking place outdoors or in the beautiful, new, log lodge. Driving on to Yellowstone National Park, the group will meet with researchers and get behind-the-scenes glimpses of conservation issues in the park, visit some lesser-known thermal areas, and travel to the famous Hayden and Lamar valleys. Accommodations will be at the classic Yellowstone Lake Lodge.

For further information, a detailed itinerary, or reservations, please visit www.ktaylor.com or call 406.294.9430.

Eyes on Yellowstone

In December of 2002, Canon U.S.A., Inc. made a grant of $850,000 to the Foundation to launch Eyes on Yellowstone, Made Possible by Canon. This new program will consist of several projects with a common goal of protecting wildlife in Yellowstone, while helping Yellowstone’s visitors—including online visitors—understand and appreciate the park’s unique ecosystem. For example, Canon digital imaging products will be used in a remotely operated visual-analysis system to help gain new understanding of wildlife behavior and interactions. Other projects will use multi-media and interactive technology to provide exciting new ways to enhance public education.

We will share details with you on our website and in future newsletters as the program takes shape. Canon is currently the largest corporate supporter of wildlife conservation in Yellowstone National Park, contributing more than $1.4 million since 1995.

Night Lighting Sponsored by GE Foundation

Stargazers and Yellowstone enthusiasts have a common reason to rejoice. The Yellowstone Park Foundation recently received a generous gift from the GE Foundation, the philanthropic arm of the General Electric Company, to help preserve one of Yellowstone’s most priceless natural resources: the darkness of the night sky.

The $57,295 grant will fund the Night Lighting Project to reduce nighttime sky glow in Yellowstone. Work on the project is scheduled to begin this summer, so watch for more information in future newsletters and on www.ypf.org.