

Friends Connecting to Friends

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My Birdfeeder Story by Colin Titherington

My name is Colin Titherington. I am nine years old going on 10 and I built eight or nine bird feeders during the Covid pandemic. I sold the first two to my dad's good friend Mr. Dale who does the special bird bluebird stories on Facebook.

My next two birdfeeders were for my Nana who had the Purple Martin article in Issue 5. She fed about 60 baby Martin's meal worms and eggshells out of my feeders!

My next five feeders were for my dad's friend Gary Magnum. He is the former owner of Bell Nursery and instrumental in Urban Gardening. With help from my Dad, I had fun & gave birds some food!



Yellowstone National Park in the Winter by Natalie Woomer

We can't travel now because of COVID-19, but it's a great time to research future vacations. I highly recommend traveling to Yellowstone in the winter. Yellowstone is a magnificent park at any time of the year, but it's very crowded during the warmer months. When I'm traveling to see nature, I don't want to be stuck in traffic jams and see a lot of people. In the winter, you won't get stuck in a traffic jam, but you may get stuck behind a herd of bison who are on the road.

My husband has always wanted to visit Yellowstone in the winter but I was hesitant because I was worried about being too cold. I gave in and we visited Yellowstone at the end of this past February. It was magnificent! The scenery, geothermal features and animals that we saw were incredible! We saw bison, elk, bighorn sheep, fox, coyote, packs of wolves, otters, moose, trumpeter swans, ducks, bald eagles, and a great horned owl that was being attacked by two ravens.



Big horn sheep



Red Fox



Bison

There are far fewer visitors to the park over the winter, partially because there are only two hotels in the park that are open in the winter and because there is only one road, across the northern part of the park, that is plowed. The other park roads are snow covered, so you either need to buy a ticket to ride in a snowcoach or book a snowmobile tour to get to other parts of the park. We flew into Bozeman, Montana and drove to the only park entrance open to cars in the winter – the North/Mammoth Hot Springs entrance in Gardiner, MT. In addition to walking around the hot springs, we spent a few days driving the plowed road from the north entrance to Lamar Valley. The scenery is spectacular, and this is where we saw most of the animals. Since there aren't as many people in the park in the winter, the animals come closer to the road and they are much easier to see against the snow. We would drive until we would see an animal and then pull off the road and watch it. We don't own a spotting scope, but we could see many animals easily from the pullouts or with our binoculars. Also,

there were people with spotting scopes set up along the road and they were always willing to let us take a look. We got good views of wolf packs through spotting scopes.



View from the plowed park road

We went cross country skiing and snowshoeing for the first time. We took skiing lessons from the shop at the Mammoth Hot Springs Hotel, then rented skis and snowshoes from the shop and used them on unplowed roads in the area. The shop gave us recommendations on where to go. Snowshoeing is just like walking. You just strap the snow shoes onto your own boots and walk. No lessons are needed.

We then left our car at the park entrance and took a snowcoach to the only hotel open in the interior of the park, the Old Faithful Snow Lodge. The snowcoach ride was a tour as well as our transportation. It was about four hours long and the driver gave us a lot of information about what we



Snowcoach



Dog sledding!

were seeing and about the park. She would stop for animal viewing and there were scheduled stops along the way for sightseeing.

We spent three nights at the Snow Lodge which is next to Old Faithful and the upper geyser basin. We spent time a lot of time walking around the geyser basin and took a snowcoach tour to Yellowstone Lake. One day we took a shuttle to the Lone Star Geyser trailhead, where we skied a well-

groomed trail along a beautiful stream to the namesake geyser. We were fortunate to have the geyser give a fantastic show, just for us!

We then returned by snowcoach to the Mammoth Hot Springs area and our car. After exiting the park we spent two nights in Bozeman, which we highly recommend. It's a great small town with wonderful restaurants and microbreweries. From there, we took a day trip to Big Sky where we went dog sledding. What fun! My husband and I were on the same sled and each took a turn driving the sled for about 45 minutes.

The weather wasn't a problem. For some reason, the cold temperatures didn't seem as cold as they do here. We dressed in layers and didn't stand still much which helped. I would recommend that you take a pair of Yaktrax or some other type of cleats to slip onto your shoes to prevent slipping on icy trails. (They also work well on slippery sidewalks or trails in MD.)



Castle Geyser with rainbow

Check in from California by Ann Coren



The pandemic finds me trapped in California taking care of my mother's estate. I am usually buried in paperwork, but once a week I take a sanity hike. Here's a wildflower hike along a little used section of the Pacific Crest Trail on June 17th.

I'll leave it to others to ID the flowers. I didn't bring my field guide with me when I came west. I found plants in every color of the rainbow and every size from 1 mm to enormously tall.

