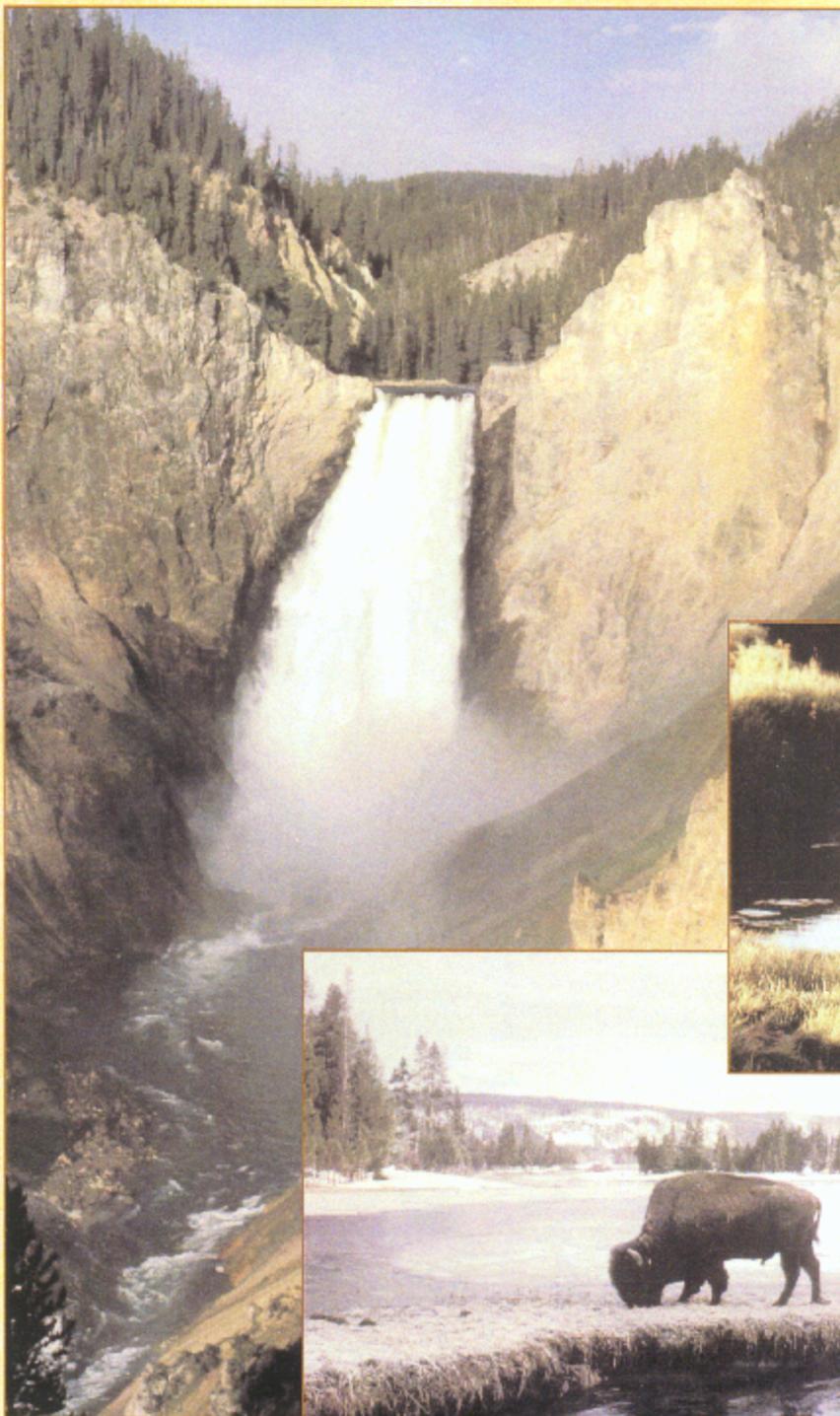
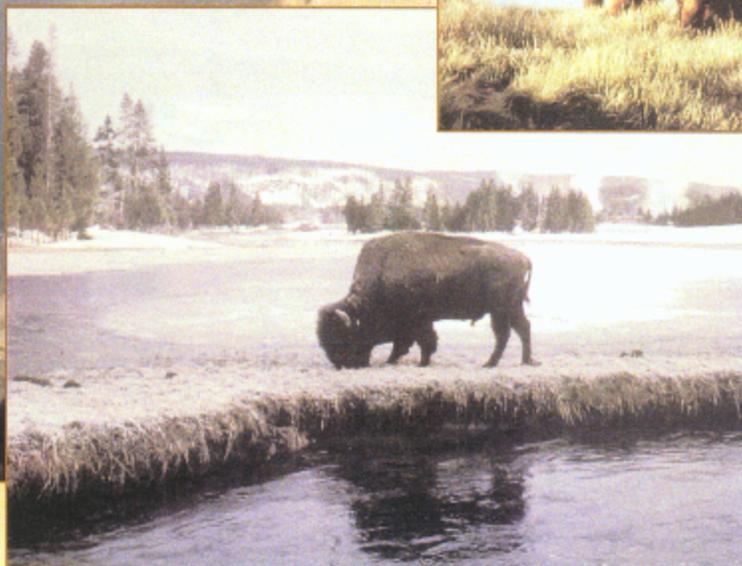


**UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR**



# **ANNUAL REPORT**

**DEPARTMENTAL  
REPORT ON  
ACCOUNTABILITY**



**FISCAL  
YEAR  
1999**

## **ABOUT THE COVER YELLOWSTONE NATIONAL PARK**

As the Nation's principal conservation agency, the U.S. Department of the Interior has responsibility for most of our nationally owned public lands and natural resources. Included in this responsibility is preserving the environmental and cultural values of our national parks and historic places.

On the occasion of the Department's 150<sup>th</sup> anniversary (1849 to 1999), it is fitting that we also celebrate one of the Nation's richest treasures, Yellowstone National Park. On the cover of this report are three photographs depicting some of the wealth of natural beauty and wildlife that are an integral part of Yellowstone.

Yellowstone National Park, established in 1872, is the world's first and oldest national park. Located in northwestern Wyoming and extending into Montana and Idaho, Yellowstone is known for its spectacular geysers, hot springs, canyons, and fossil forests. Various expeditions by artists and explorers helped publicize the beauty of the area. Depictions of the region created during an expedition in 1871 by photographer William Henry Jackson and artist Thomas Moran convinced the American public and the United States Government to preserve the area. President Ulysses S. Grant signed the bill creating the park in 1872.

The photograph on the left of the front cover is The Lower Falls, Grand Canyon of the Yellowstone. The U.S. Government purchased Thomas Moran's *"The Grand Canyon of the Yellowstone"* for \$10,000 in June of 1872 and displayed it in the Senate wing of the U.S. Capitol. The Canyon plunges 1,000 feet. Hot water acting on volcanic rocks created the canyon's colors. Although the Canyon was down cut rapidly more than once—perhaps by great glacial outburst and floods—there is little deepening taking place today.

Yellowstone National Park is one of the largest wildlife sanctuaries in the United States. Among the more than 300 animal species found there are brown bear and grizzly bears, elk, deer and more than 1,300 bison. The photograph on the top right of the front cover depicts a mother grizzly bear and her three cubs. The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service has listed the grizzly bear as a threatened species. Threatened species are those likely to become an endangered species within the foreseeable future throughout all or a significant portion of its range. The cover photograph of the bear family is unique—an adult female grizzly bear matures at age 4 to 7 and usually gives birth to two cubs; the female on the cover has three cubs.

Also on the cover is a grazing American bison (often referred to as a "buffalo"). Originating in Eurasia but migrating to North America across the Bering land bridge during prehistoric times, the American bison thrived on the Great Plains until the arrival of settlers drove them to the brink of extinction. Although they once ranged across the Great Plains from Mexico to Canada, with numbers estimated to 60 million, today they exist primarily on game reserves and ranches, with estimated numbers of 200,000.

Yellowstone, a gem of the American west, continues to awe visitors from around the world today, much as it inspired awe in the first settlers to set foot in this natural wonder.

**Cover photos courtesy of the National Park Service**