

## America's Newest Park

Amache  
National Historic Site



Located in Granada, CO, Amache was one of ten WWII incarceration sites of Japanese Americans.

*"Amache's addition to the National Park System is a reminder that a complete account of the nation's history must include our dark chapters of injustice"*

- NPS Director Chuck Sams - Feb. 15th, 2024

## FEATURED PARK



Photos and facts of  
your favorite parks,  
one issue at a time

## Saguaro National Park Arizona

**FACT 1:** Saguaro is named for the *largest* species of cactus in the US, thousands of which are protected within the park's Sonoran Desert ecosystem. Reaching up to **50 feet in height**, these iconic cacti are an invaluable source of food and habitat for many native species. Like many large cacti, some of their most important pollinators are bats, including the near-threatened lesser long-nosed bat.

**FACT 2:** The indigenous O'odham have inhabited the Sonoran Desert region for millennia. The Saguaro cactus plays an important role in O'odham culture, and the first month of the O'odham calendar is called *Hasha'ni Mashad*, meaning "Saguaro [harvest] month." Today, members of the Tohono O'odham Nation continue the annual Saguaro fruit harvest within the park.

Nominate *your* favorite local, state, or national park [here](#) so our subscribers can learn about it.

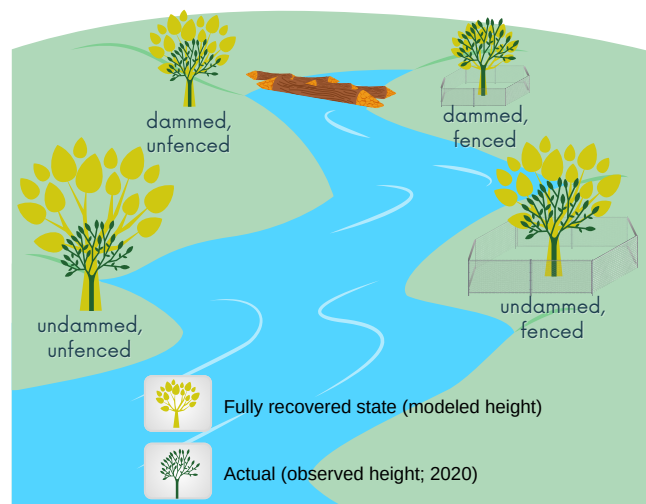


Apex predators are increasingly recognized as an essential part of healthy ecosystems, and their removal can have enormous consequences. A [study](#) published last month in the journal *Ecological Monographs* looks at one of the most prominent examples of species restoration, the reintroduction of gray wolves to Yellowstone National Park in 1995. After years of overgrazing of streamside willows, wolf predation of large grazing animals is thought to have helped restore the ecosystem to its previous state. To assess this recovery status, the authors recorded willow height and growth rate for a series of fenced and unfenced plots in the northern range of Yellowstone National Park from 2001 to 2020. To represent the effects of beaver dams, which create flooded conditions more conducive to willow growth, the authors constructed artificial beaver dams adjacent to both fenced and unfenced sites.

The study's results indicate that despite predator reintroduction, average willow height and growth rate remain below pre-degradation levels in unfenced areas. The presence of beaver dams increases willow growth, but does not fully compensate for overgrazing. Consequently, the article reinforces the notion that protection of existing apex predator populations is crucial for habitat preservation. Species reintroductions, while important, may not be a "quick fix" for degradation, as the ecological effects of predator removal are severe and self-reinforcing.

## Willow Recovery Status

Average willow tree heights in four Yellowstone site types



The authors argue that **the best approach is protecting *current* predator populations**, rather than being forced to rely on unpredictable reintroduction efforts once predators are no longer present.

## PLAY GROUND

Which Mexican salamanders are most endangered? Since when? And why?

you sure axolotl questions

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