Wyoming Student Atlas
Exploring our geography
Acknowledgments

The Wyoming Student Atlas is a project of the University of Wyoming’s Department of Geography, Wyoming Geographic Information Science Center, and Wyoming Geographic Alliance.

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Introduction

Geography is about the study of place, asking the question “What’s where, and why?” The *Wyoming Student Atlas* is one way of studying the place we call Wyoming, providing an opportunity to learn about its people and landscapes and how they interact.

An atlas means maps, and this book has a lot of them, as well as some text and photographs. The maps in the *Wyoming Student Atlas* are designed to introduce you to the spatial patterns of a wide variety of physical and human phenomena and events in the state to help you understand how they relate to one another.

To help get started in working with maps and geographic information, the Atlas first describes different types of maps and their components, and two important mapping concepts: map projections and map scale.

The maps that follow are organized around major physical and human geography themes, ranging from geology, climate, and wildlife to human settlement, economic resources, and culture. Additional population data and a glossary of geographic terms are included at the back of the book, along with information on data and image sources, books, and other references used in creating the maps and text.

One way to begin exploring the Atlas is to think about the types of questions that its maps might help answer. For example:

- Page 13: to which ocean does water flow, if it falls in the Great Divide Basin?
- Page 15: what might cause average July temperatures to be highest in the northeastern part of the state?
- Page 18: in which Wyoming county would you be least likely to experience a tornado?
- Page 20: which is the most common type of vegetation found in Wyoming?
- Page 25: why did the route of explorer George Drouillard end in the Wind River Mountains?
- Page 29: which counties experienced the greatest population increase between 2000 and 2010? What may have caused this change?
- Page 33: why does Albany County have such a high percentage of people aged 20 to 29 years?
- Page 34: how would you describe the spatial pattern of private land across the state?
- Page 37: in which two counties do sheep outnumber cattle?
- Page 40: why are most of the coal mines in the state located in Campbell County?
- Page 42: based on this map, where would you find the highest winds in Wyoming?
- Page 46: what does the series of voting maps tell you about Wyoming voting preferences?

These are just a few of the questions you can find the answers to in the Atlas. While you’re at it, be sure to look closely for the hard-to-catch mythical jackalope who’s found his way onto one of the maps.

Can you find the map where he is hidden?
It is our hope that the Wyoming Student Atlas serves as a useful resource to educators for teaching students about Wyoming’s past and present physical and human geography. The maps and supporting information in this publication have been developed with a focus on learners in upper elementary through junior high grades. One guiding set of principles in designing the Atlas was the National Geography Standards for grades K through 12 published by the National Center for Geographic Education (NCGE) on behalf of the Geography Education National Implementation Program.¹

First published in 1994 and revised in 2012, the National Geography Standards continue to serve as the foundation for geography curriculum design and instructional material development in many of the 50 states, including Wyoming. There are 18 Standards grouped according to six Essential Elements (see accompanying table). Grade-level knowledge themes and content, as well as corresponding student performance statements are specified for three grade bands (4th, 8th and 12th).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>National Geography Standards Essential Elements</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The World in Spatial Terms</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Places and Regions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Physical Systems</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Human Systems</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Environment and Society</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Uses of Geography</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Source: Heffron and Downs 2012.*

The National Geography Standards’ content encompasses a wide range of human and physical geography topics, corresponding closely to the geography element (“People, Places and Environment”) of the most recent version of the Wyoming Social Studies Content and Performance Standards.² The Standards can also be related to components of the latest (pending) update of the Wyoming Science Content and Performance Standards including content associated with “Earth’s Systems,” “Earth and Human Activity,” and “Ecosystems.”

Above all, the Standards embody the philosophy that “the goal of teaching geography is to equip students with the knowledge, skills, and perspective to do geography” [emphasis added] (Heffron and Downs 2012, p. 13). That is, combining geographic information with geographic thinking to support well-reasoned decision making and successful problem solving. We believe the Wyoming Student Atlas supports this goal by combining factual geographic knowledge with visual geographic representations to help students better understand what is happening in our state, why it happens where it does, how it has changed from the past, and how it may change in the future.

We hope you find the Atlas useful in your teaching. More information about potential classroom uses of Wyoming Student Atlas may be found at the Wyoming Geographic Alliance web site (www.uwyo.edu/wga), including digital versions of many of the Atlas maps, additional ancillary data, web resources, and sample lesson plans.

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¹ The National Geography Standards may be accessed from the NCGE at: http://ncge.org/geography-for-life

² Current Wyoming K-12 education standards may be accessed from the Wyoming Department of Education web site: http://edu.wyoming.gov/educators/standards
What’s special about maps?

Photograph of Devils Tower
A photograph gives a detailed real life perspective of an area or feature of interest, but not its location or relationship to features in the surrounding area.

Aerial photo of Devils Tower
An aerial photograph is a “bird’s eye view” that shows the location of a feature in relation to the surrounding area, but it can be difficult to interpret.

Map of Devils Tower
A map uses colors, symbols, and labels to locate and describe features within an area, including relationships between surrounding features such as roads, streams, and differences in elevation. Maps can also highlight patterns or trends in an area, or between different areas.

Elements of a map
Map elements include a title, legend (also called a map key), labels, symbols, and a scale bar or other description of scale. Unless a map is part of a larger publication, it should include an author and date.

Maps can also include other elements to aid in understanding and interpreting the features or theme of the map. These can include directional arrows, descriptive text, inset maps, location maps, images, graphs, and lines of latitude and longitude or other coordinates.

Legend
- Building
- Paved Road
- Unpaved Road
- Hiking Trail
- River
- Park Boundary

Location map
**Types of maps**

**Reference maps**
A reference map shows the location of specific features such as roads, cities, and streams. Types of reference maps include political maps (locations of countries, states, cities), physical maps (locations of streams, lakes, mountains), topographic maps (natural and human-made features), and road maps.

**Wyoming reference map**

![Wyoming reference map](image)

- ★ Capital
- ○ Major cities and towns
- Major roads
- Counties

**Thematic maps**
A thematic map focuses on one specific topic or theme. Thematic maps are either qualitative or quantitative. Cellular towers per square mile, height of cellular towers, and elevation contours are examples of quantitative maps with numeric values. The categorical map of cellular phone service is an example of a qualitative map where values are non-numeric. See the glossary for more types of thematic maps.

**Four types of thematic maps**

- **Choropleth**
  - Different shades of color represent ranges or classifications of numeric values applied to predefined areas, such as counties.
  - See data classification entry in glossary.

- **Graduated symbol**
  - Symbols change in size according to a numeric value. In this case, larger circles represent taller cellular towers.

- **Contour (Isoline)**
  - Isolines joining points of equal elevation are called contours. The interval for this elevation map is 500 meters. Isolines can also be used to map many other continuous types of data.

- **Categorical**
  - By combining cellular tower heights with ground elevation, we can derive categories where cellular service may be available and areas that are “out of range.”
From globe to map

A globe is the most common 3D representation of the Earth. Any place on the Earth's surface can be accurately located using the intersection of latitude (north and south of the equator) and longitude (east and west of the prime meridian).

A globe can be projected in three different ways: onto a cylinder, a cone, or a plane (not shown).

The Mercator projection is a cylindrical projection used for navigation, as it provides accurate angular measurement and direction. The size of land masses is accurate at the equator, but distorted in the northern and southern latitudes.

When using a Mercator projection, lines of latitude and longitude intersect at 90-degree angles to accurately portray direction. Unfortunately, this also distorts the spherical properties of the Earth, giving Wyoming the inaccurate appearance of a rectangle with squared-off corners.

A flat map is usually easier to work with than a globe. Features on a globe are transformed to a 2D surface mathematically, but we can think of this process as similar to shining a light source through a transparent globe to a surface.

The Lambert Conformal Conic projection can be adjusted to project the United States of America with an accurate shape and minimally distorted area. However, it has increasing distortion to the north and south of the U.S.

The Lambert Conformal Conic projection provides an accurate shape and reasonable area for Wyoming. All the maps in this Atlas use the Lambert Conformal Conic projection adjusted for Wyoming.
Map scale describes how large an area of the Earth a map displays and helps you to determine the actual size of features on the map and the distances between them.

Three different ways to represent map scale:

**Graphic scale:**

![Graphic scale](image)

- **Verbal scale:**
  - 1 inch = 2 miles

- **Representative fraction:**
  - 1:125,000

---

**Small map scale**

Independence Rock is a famous historical landmark used by pioneers to guide them on the California/Oregon/Mormon Trail. On a map of Wyoming, the half-mile long rock is best represented as a small point.

**Medium scale map**

On a more detailed medium scale map, the size of the rock becomes more apparent.

**Large scale map**

On a large scale map the precise shape of the rock is easy to see.

The maps of Wyoming in this Atlas are all in the small scale range, from 1:3,200,000 to 1:15,000,000 scale.
The state of Wyoming is located in the central part of the North American continent, bounded between 104 and 111 degrees west longitude and 41 and 45 degrees north latitude.

Wyoming straddles the Continental Divide and the Rocky Mountains, with the Great Plains to the east and the Intermountain Basin region to the west. Wyoming shares a border with six surrounding states.
The name “Wyoming” may be derived from the Delaware Indian word “Maughwauwama” which means “large plains.” The name first appeared on a map for the proposed Wyoming Territory in 1865.

- Nicknames: Equality State, Big Wyoming, Cowboy State
- Motto: Equal Rights
- The Wyoming Territory was organized in 1868
- The Wyoming Territory was carved out from the Dakota, Utah, and Idaho Territories
- Date admitted to the Union: July 10, 1890 as the 44th state
- Population: 563,626, the smallest total population among the states (2010)
- Population density: 5.9 people per square mile, second least dense state after Alaska
- Size: 97,814 square miles (253,348 km²), 10th largest state
- Highest point: Gannett Peak, 13,809 feet (4,209 meters)
- Lowest point: Belle Fourche River, 3,100 feet (945 meters)
- Average annual temperature: 44.8°F (7.1°C)
- Percent of days that are sunny: 66%
- Average annual rainfall (Cheyenne): 15.45 inches (39.24 cm)
- Average wind speed: 10.1 miles/hour (16.25 km/hour)
- The Wyoming Territory’s Constitution was the first to give women the right to vote in 1869
- Wyoming was the first state to elect a woman governor, Nellie Tayloe Ross, in 1924

Yellowstone National Park was the first U.S. national park (1872)
Shoshone National Forest was the first U.S. national forest (1891)
Devils Tower was the first U.S. national monument (1906)
Physiographic features

The highest point in Wyoming is Gannett Peak at 13,809 feet (4,209 meters), in the Wind River Range. There are more than 40 other named peaks taller than 13,000 feet in the Wind River Range, including many near Titcomb Basin, pictured below.

The eastern part of Wyoming is dominated by high plains. The middle and western parts of the state have several distinct ranges of the Rocky Mountains, divided by large basins. Even the basins have relatively high elevations, averaging 6,200 feet (1,890 meters). Wyoming's basins include many remarkable natural features such as the Killpecker Sand Dunes, one of the largest active dune systems in North America.

The lowest point in the state is where the Belle Fourche River flows out of Wyoming into South Dakota, at 3,099 feet (945 meters).
The arrival of the Spanish in the 1500s brought the domesticated horse into North America. By the 1700s, the horse became an integral part of some Native American cultures and allowed them to migrate deeper into the Great Plains, expand their hunting ranges, and to focus their hunting on bison. Before the arrival of Europeans the dominant Native American groups inhabiting Wyoming were the Shoshone, Crow, Cheyenne, and Arapaho. The Sioux Nation joined this list in the 1830s when they were invited to trade at Fort William (later Fort Laramie).

By the mid-1800s, established emigration routes like the Oregon and Bozeman trails brought increasing numbers of European Americans to settle in Wyoming. As a result, hostilities between the local tribes and settlers often escalated into open disputes where the Sioux, Cheyenne, and Arapaho defended their territories. These disputes led to a number of treaties between the Native Americans and the U.S. government to protect European settlers on what had been tribal lands.

Initially the Fort Laramie Treaty (1868) promised the Cheyenne, Crow, Arapaho, and Sioux all lands of the Powder River area and the Black Hills. The Shoshone were allotted the lands in the Wind River Valley by the Fort Bridger Treaty of 1868. By 1877, the U.S. government had seized the lands of northeastern Wyoming from the Sioux and the Crow, and relocated the Arapaho to the Wind River Reservation (1878) to live with the Shoshone, their traditional enemy.

Today, many Shoshone and Arapaho live on the Wind River Reservation in central Wyoming; the Crow and Northern Cheyenne are on reservations in southeastern Montana; and the Sioux Nation is split between reservations in South Dakota, North Dakota, and Nebraska.
Wyoming has a population density of fewer than six people per square mile. Conversely, New Jersey, the U.S.’s most densely populated state, has 1,205 people per square mile. At that density, the entire country’s population could be packed into an area equaling the combined size of Wyoming and Montana.

Sublette and Campbell counties have both experienced rapid growth in recent years due to the presence of oil, gas and coal extraction. From 2000 to 2010, Sublette saw a 73 percent increase, while Campbell grew by 37 percent.
Wyoming ranks fifth in the nation in the production of natural gas. Recent advancement in drilling technology may mean significant numbers of new wells in Wyoming’s Green River and Wind River basins, in addition to the large Pinedale Anticline (pictured) and Jonah fields. Coalbed natural gas production in the Powder River Basin has declined since 2009 after a decade-long boom.

The first oil well drilled in Wyoming was at Dallas Dome in 1883, followed by Salt Creek. Salt Creek is the most productive field in Wyoming’s history, producing over 696 million barrels since 1889. Wyoming’s oil boom peaked in 1970, but production has been increasing again since 2009, in part due to enhanced oil recovery. Wyoming ranks ninth in production of crude oil in the nation.

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Wyoming’s Western heritage

Cheyenne Frontier Days
Nicknamed the “Daddy of ‘em All,” Cheyenne Frontier Days has been a staple of Wyoming rodeo culture since its inception in 1897. The Frontier Days Rodeo is one of the biggest events on the professional rodeo circuit, attracting some of the world’s best competitors.

Guest ranches (2014)
Guest ranches allow tourists to experience the bygone days of the “Old West” and rural lifestyle aspects of Wyoming. Guest ranches vary in accommodations and to whom they cater, ranging from working cattle ranches to upscale resorts or spas.

Rodeos across the state are a lasting legacy of Wyoming’s ranching roots. Wyoming’s many museums—a selection of which are mapped on this page—further illustrate the diverse nature of its Western cultural landscape.

Buffalo Bill Historical Center
This complex of five museums is named after Buffalo Bill Cody (1846–1917), who gained fame with his “Wild West Show,” a theatrical embellishment of the mythic Wild West.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>County</th>
<th>Population 2000</th>
<th>Population 2010</th>
<th>Absolute Change</th>
<th>Percent Change (%)</th>
<th>Area (square miles)</th>
<th>License Plate Number*</th>
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<td>Big Horn</td>
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<td>11,668</td>
<td>207</td>
<td>1.8</td>
<td>3,159</td>
<td>9</td>
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<td>Campbell</td>
<td>33,698</td>
<td>46,133</td>
<td>12,435</td>
<td>36.9</td>
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<td>17</td>
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<td>15,885</td>
<td>246</td>
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<td>Converse</td>
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<td>8,569</td>
<td>1,494</td>
<td>21.1</td>
<td>4,175</td>
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<td>Laramie</td>
<td>81,607</td>
<td>91,738</td>
<td>10,131</td>
<td>12.4</td>
<td>2,668</td>
<td>2</td>
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<tr>
<td>Lincoln</td>
<td>14,573</td>
<td>18,106</td>
<td>3,533</td>
<td>24.2</td>
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<td>Natrona</td>
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<td>Park</td>
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<td>Weston</td>
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<td>7,208</td>
<td>564</td>
<td>8.5</td>
<td>2,400</td>
<td>21</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

*the first digit(s) on Wyoming license plates denote the county where the car is registered.

Comparison between selected Wyoming counties and similarly sized countries

- **Sweetwater County**
  - Size: 10,491 sq mi
  - Population: 37,631 (2010)

- **Burundi**
  - Region: Central Africa
  - Size: 10,747 sq mi
  - Population: 10,163,000 (2013)

- **Carbon County**
  - Size: 7,946 sq mi
  - Population: 15,693 (2010)

- **Slovenia**
  - Region: Europe
  - Size: 7,827 sq mi
  - Population: 2,061,919 (2013)

- **Lincoln County**
  - Size: 4,095 sq mi
  - Population: 14,573 (2010)

- **Lebanon**
  - Region: Middle East
  - Size: 4,036 sq mi
  - Population: 4,822,000 (2013)

*These numbers were the ranking of each county’s assessed land value during the 1920s.
Wyoming state symbols

State symbol: American bison
State flag
State gemstone: Jade
State bird: Western meadowlark
State fossil: Knightia
State coin: Sacajawea dollar
State sport: Rodeo
State tree: Plains cottonwood
State insect: Sheridan’s green hairstreak
State fish: Cutthroat trout
State reptile: Short horned lizard
State dinosaur: Triceratops
State grass: Western wheatgrass
State flower: Indian paintbrush
State seal
State flower: Indian paintbrush