

THE ARBORETUM AT PENN STATE



AMERICAN BISON

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NAME: *Bison bison*

CONSERVATION STATUS:



SIZE: 8–14 feet

WEIGHT: 930–2,200 pounds

GROUP TERM: herd; gang; obstinacy

NUMBER OF YOUNG: 1

HABITAT: open grasslands; prairies

LIFESPAN: 12–20 years

DISTRIBUTION:



AMERICAN BISON

DESCRIPTION

The American bison, commonly known as the buffalo, once roamed North America's grasslands in massive herds, shaping the ecology of the Great Plains. Despite their large size and lumbering, shaggy build, these bovines are both fast and agile. Once known to number over 30 million, American bison were nearly hunted to extinction in the early 19th century for both food and sport, but are slowly recovering thanks to modern breeding and conservation efforts. Today, many of these magnificent creatures can be seen at national parks and wildlife preserves around the country.

DIET

Although primarily grazers of grasses and sedges, bison will also eat berries and lichen, using their hooves to uncover food hidden beneath the snow.

THREATS

Bison herds have been historically decimated by hunting, both by European settlers and Native Americans. Today, these animals are federally protected and face few threats from either natural or human predation.

DID YOU KNOW?

- The American bison became the first national mammal of the United States in 2016.
- Yellowstone Park hosts the oldest and largest bison herds, dating back to prehistoric times.
- Currently, only 500,000 bison remain in North America, 30,000 of which are wild.

"Animals: American Bison." National Geographic Kids, 01 Mar. 2014. Web. 22 June 2017.

"Basic Facts About Bison." Defenders of Wildlife, n.d. Web. 22 June 2017.

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