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North American Mammals



Artiodactyla · Bovidae · *Bison bison*

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Bison bison

American Bison

Order: [Artiodactyla](#)

Family: [Bovidae](#)



[Click to play this sound.](#) (0:03, 41 kb)

Credit: Wind Cave National Park

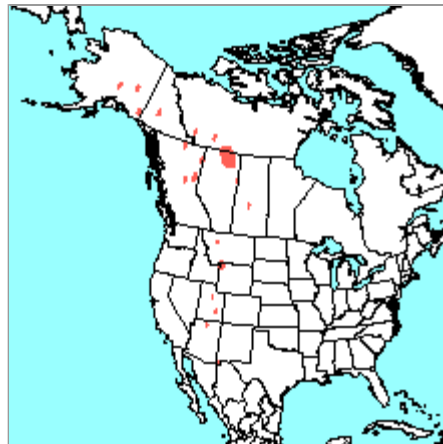
Conservation Status: [Near Threatened](#).



Plains bison - male (right) and female (left)

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The American Bison's recovery from near [extinction](#) parallels what happened to the European Bison, *Bison bonasus*. Once abundant and widespread in northern latitudes, their decline in several countries since the 6th century has been documented. The last wild populations in Poland and the Caucasus Mountains became extinct early in the 20th century. They now exist as managed, reintroduced populations in Poland, Russia, and the Caucasus. In North America, the wild population once numbered in the tens of millions. The herds were gradually being reduced by hunting pressures before the Civil War, and after the war, with westward expansion, American Bison were pushed almost to extinction. In the 1880s, when only 541 animals were counted, conservation efforts began in earnest. Now there are more than 150,000 animals, 90 percent of which live on private lands. Bison graze on prairie grasses, roaming in herds of thousands of individuals. They, Brown Bears, and Moose are the largest land mammals in



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North America.

Also known as:

American Buffalo, Búfalo Americano

Sexual Dimorphism:

Males are larger than females.

Length:

Range: 3.1-3.8 m males; 2.1-3.2 m females

Weight:

Range: 460-907 kg males; 360-544 kg females

References:

Linnaeus, C., 1758. *Systema Naturae per regna tria naturae, secundum classis, ordines, genera, species cum characteribus, differentiis, synonymis, locis*, Tenth Edition, Laurentii Salvii, Stockholm, 1:72, 824 pp.

Links:

[Mammal Species of the World](#) (opens in a new window).

[Mammalian Species, American Society of Mammalogists' species account](#) * (opens in a new window).

* [PDF reader available here](#) (opens in a new window).



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Wood bison (western Canada) - taller, darker, larger hump than plains' bison
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