



The Mini Page

Issue 30, 2020

Founded by Betty Debnam

Next Week:
Signing the
Constitution

The American Bison



photos courtesy NPS

Mini Fact:

In 2016, the American bison was named our national mammal.



Viewing bison

The biggest wild free-roaming herd of bison in the world is at Yellowstone National Park. There are almost 5,000 bison in the Yellowstone herd. About 100 years ago, in the early 1900s, the park had only about 23 of them.

People love to view these majestic animals. But they can also be very dangerous.

Like all wild animals, bison are unpredictable. Although they appear gentle, bison can get upset fast if people get too close. If the animal is moving away from you, watching you carefully or reacting in any way to your presence, you are too close.

Bison can run up to 30 mph. A 2,000-pound charging bison is very dangerous. Keep at least 25 yards away.



Have you ever seen real bison? Perhaps you call them buffalo. Most people do. Early settlers called bison "buffalo," and the name stuck.

But North America's largest land animal is not a member of the Asian or African buffalo family. The American bison is a close relative of cattle.

There are herds at some national parks and refuges. Many Indian reservations and ranches also have herds. Let's learn more about these iconic American animals.

Herds of bison

Experts say there were about 60 million bison in America when the Europeans first arrived. By the 1880s, the settlers had killed all but about 500. Bison were nearly extinct.

Today, bison live in all 50 states, on both private and public lands. With a population of around 350,000, they are no longer endangered.

Meet the bison

There are two subspecies of bison: the plains bison and the wood bison. The wood bison is generally larger.

Male bison, or bulls, weigh up to a ton (2,000 pounds) and may be 6 feet tall. Bison cows weigh around 1,100 pounds and are 4 to 5 feet tall.

Baby bison are sometimes called "red dogs" because their fur is reddish in color when they're born. When they're a few months old, their fur starts to turn dark brown and the characteristic hump begins to grow.



This painting, "Indians Hunting the Bison," was created by Karl Bodmer in 1839.

Native Americans and bison

Native Americans thought the bison to be sacred animals. They hunted the large animals for food, clothing, shelter and fuel. The Plains Indians needed the bison to survive.

For example, people built teepees and used bison skins to cover the poles. They ate the animals' meat and used the fat for fuel.

Bison meat

Today, bison meat is becoming more popular. You may see bison burgers or steaks on menus or in the grocery store.

Ranchers say they like raising bison because they require less care than cattle. Bison calves are more likely to survive than beef calves because they are born later in the year, after blizzards are no longer a threat. In addition, bison can eat tougher grasses than cattle and can forage for grass under snow.

Resources



On the Web:

- bit.ly/MPbison

At the library:

- "Bison" by Kaitlyn Duling
- "American Bison" by Steve Potts
- "The Buffalo and the Indians: A Shared Destiny" by Dorothy Hinshaw Patent

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Try 'n' Find

Words that remind us of bison are hidden in this puzzle. Some words are hidden backward or diagonally, and some letters are used twice. See if you can find:



AMERICAN, BISON,
BUFFALO, BULL, COW,
FUR, HERDS, HUMP,
MAMMAL, MEAT,
NATIONAL, NATIVE,
NORTH, PARKS, PLAINS,
RANCH, REFUGES,
RESERVATION, SACRED,
WOOD, YELLOWSTONE.

S	F	R	A	N	C	H	W	S	N	P	E	M	S	H
P	M	U	H	E	U	T	A	E	M	V	C	E	A	W
N	H	T	R	O	N	X	U	P	I	Q	S	S	C	H
A	Y	E	L	L	O	W	S	T	O	N	E	U	R	E
T	T	N	M	A	M	M	A	L	I	G	G	M	E	R
I	D	O	O	W	P	N	V	A	U	O	Z	J	D	D
O	L	A	F	F	U	B	L	F	S	K	R	A	P	S
N	N	O	S	I	B	P	E	T	L	M	R	C	O	W
A	R	B	U	L	L	R	A	M	E	R	I	C	A	N
L	R	E	S	E	R	V	A	T	I	O	N	A	Z	R

Cook's Corner

Cottage Cheese Spread

You'll need:

- 1 cup low-fat (or fat-free) cottage cheese
- 1/4 cup shredded carrot
- 1/4 cup chopped cucumber
- 1/4 cup chopped green pepper

- 1/4 cup chopped celery
- 1 teaspoon red wine vinegar
- 1/2 teaspoon garlic herb spice



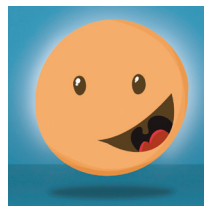
* You'll need an adult's help with this recipe.

What to do:

1. Combine all ingredients in a medium plastic container.
2. Chill for 1 hour to blend flavors.
3. Spread on crackers or sliced cucumbers. Serves 4.

7 Little Words for Kids

Use the letters in the boxes to make a word with the same meaning as the clue. The numbers in parentheses represent the number of letters in the solution. Each letter combination can be used only once, but all letter combinations will be necessary to complete the puzzle.



1. like a carton with no milk (5) _____
2. color of grass (5) _____
3. insect attracted to light (4) _____
4. temperature gauge (11) _____
5. movie ogre (5) _____
6. Toronto basketball team (7) _____
7. copy (9) _____

ETER	TION	TY	MO
GRE	THER	SHR	TORS
TH	RAP	EMP	EK
IMI	MOM	TA	EN

Answers: empty, green, moth, thermometer, Shrek, Raptors, imitation.

Mini Jokes



Bryan: What did the mama buffalo say when her youngest child went off to college?
Brendan: "Bison!"

Eco Note



Wilderness areas are terrific for hiking, wildlife observation, paddling, cross-country skiing, horseback riding and camping. But remember to Leave No Trace when you visit: Take photos but leave behind plants and rocks. Use a camp stove or existing fire ring for campfires, and make sure your fire is cold before you leave. Hike on marked trails, and carry out any trash to dispose of in garbage receptacles.

adapted from fws.gov

For later:

Look in your newspaper for travel stories about places to see wildlife.

Teachers: Follow and interact with The Mini Page on Facebook!



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