

Name: _____

American Bison

By Guy Belleranti



People often use the words “bison” and “buffalo” to mean the same animal. However, true buffalo are the Asian water buffalo and the African (Cape) buffalo. Their horns form huge sweeping curves. The American bison, and



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dominance. They bellow, shove, and butt heads. They also roll in the dirt to show strength and to leave their scent.

Usually only one calf is born to a mother bison. It has red-orange fur and weighs about 50 pounds. After a few months, the calf’s hair begins turning dark brown. Its horns and shoulder hump begin to grow too.



And speaking of the hump – it supports the bison’s huge head. In winter, these furry beasts use their heads like snow plows, swinging them from side-to-side to clear pathways and uncover vegetation to eat. Bison

are grazers, which means they prefer eating grasses. They also eat sagebrush, berries, and other plants. Like cows, they have four-chambered stomachs and bring food back up to their mouths to chew again.

At one time millions of bison roamed the plains, prairies, and river valleys. However, by the late 1800's, bison were almost extinct, killed off by settlers. Those that remained were primarily in Yellowstone National Park. Conservationists, Native American nations, ranchers, and the government began working to protect them. Yellowstone is still the best place to see them. They're also in state parks and preserves. Some ranches raise bison for their meat.

In May 2016, the American bison was named the National Mammal of the United States. It joins another one-time almost extinct animal, the bald eagle,



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hour!



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1. According to the article, what is unusual about the digestive systems of American bison?



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3. Based on the information in the article, which event in American history wiped out most of the American bison?
 - a. the arrival of the Pilgrims
 - b. the American Revolutionary War
 - c. the American Civil War
 - d. the westward movement of settlers
4. Name one place you could go today to see an American bison in the wild.

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Match each vocabulary word from the reading passage with the correct definition.



1. _____ bellow

a. female bison



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5. _____ conservationists

e. people who advocate for the protection of nature and wildlife

6. _____ agile

f. roar loudly, aggressively

7. _____ preserves

g. a shrub in North America similar to a daisy and eaten by bison

8. _____ cows

h. no longer in existence

9. _____ bulls

i. areas set aside for wild animals to live in safety

10. _____ buffalo

j. power and influence over others

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In the article, "American Bison," you learned that there used to be millions of bison roaming the plains of the American West, but the movement of settlers into their territories caused most of them to be wiped out.

Choose another animal species that was affected by human settlement. You can



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c. the American Civil War

d. the westward movement of settlers

4. Name one place you could go today to see an American bison in the wild.

Yellowstone National Park; state parks; ranches; preserves

(Answers may vary.)

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9. d. bulls

i. areas set aside for wild animals to live in safety

10. c. buffalo

j. power and influence over others