

## Buffalo Field Campaign

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Buffalo Field Campaign is the only group working 365 days a year to protect the only continuously wild, free roaming, and genetically intact population of wild buffalo in the United States. Buffalo Field Campaign volunteers defend the buffalo and their native habitat, and document every move made against them.

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Photo courtesy of Bonnie Flamer

# Buffalo Field Campaign



Masthead photo by Tamara Lee Leidig

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## The Last Wild Buffalo: The Issue in Brief

Twenty to forty million wild bison once lived in North America, but the 19<sup>th</sup> century slaughter reduced their numbers to only 23 animals surviving in Yellowstone National Park. In what has been called one of the greatest conservation success stories, this remnant population has recovered to its current size of more than 4,000 bison. Yellowstone is the only place in the U.S. where wild bison have always existed. Free of cattle genes and unconfined by fences, these bison are both genetically and behaviorally unique. Migratory bison are essential to the health of native grasslands, sagebrush steppes, and prairie ecosystems considered to be some of the most endangered habitats in the world.

Issue in Brief, *continued inside*



## Hunting and Hazing Used as Weapons Against Wild Buffalo in Montana

As we entered the 2012-2013 field season, Buffalo Field Campaign (BFC) braced for an especially difficult winter. Government agencies had announced plans to kill approximately 500 bison, including 400 females that they wanted to slaughter as a way to even a "skewed sex ratio" created by their own slaughter operations. Fortunately for the buffalo, public outcry and favorable spring weather helped to avert such a mass and calculated killing.

Hunters, however, took a heavy toll, killing more than 250 buffalo. Hundreds more were aggressively and needlessly chased, or "hazed," from their habitat later in the spring, and three bull bison deemed to be "unhazable" were senselessly shot by Montana's Department of Livestock. For this season, hunting and hazing seem to have replaced slaughter as a weapon against bison in Montana.

Buffalo Field Campaign is grateful to all of our supporters who contacted Yellowstone Superintendent Dan Wenk for the buffalo.



A helicopter hazes newborn calves and their families from Gallatin National Forest lands, public lands that never host any cattle.

We are certain that hearing from so many of you gave the Superintendent second thoughts about his killing plans. In February we learned that the Stephen's Creek buffalo trap, located inside Yellowstone, was being readied for use. With hundreds of buffalo in the area and the Park's stated intentions fresh in our minds, we feared the worst. But the buffalo had other plans. As if knowing what the work at the trap site meant, all at once more than 400 buffalo headed away from the trap and deeper into Yellowstone where they were safe. No buffalo were captured and sent to slaughter this winter.

Government agencies, pressured by Montana's livestock industry to kill buffalo, have been increasingly relying on state and tribal hunters to do their dirty work. More buffalo were killed through hunting this year than in any year since the hunt was reinstated in 2005. Many buffalo were shot right on Yellowstone's border. Some ran into the park after

Hunting and Hazing, *continued inside*

## Take Action Be a voice for wild buffalo!

### Contact Decision Makers

The government's harassment and slaughter of wild bison costs the U.S. \$3 million annually, a financial and ecological waste that abuses wild bison at taxpayer expense. Tell Congress to redirect funding away from the Interagency Bison Management Plan towards initiatives that conserve, protect, and restore wild bison and their habitat. Contact your U.S. House and Senate members by calling the Capitol Switchboard at (866) 220-0044.

Sally Jewell, the new U.S. Secretary of the Interior, holds the power to change federal policy to protect wild buffalo. Contact her at (202) 208-3100 or exsec@ios.doi.gov.

Tell Mont. Governor Steve Bullock to support initiatives that welcome, respect, and value native wild bison in Montana, and to abolish laws that empower the state's livestock agency to manage wild bison. Let him know you stand for protecting wild buffalo and our natural heritage. Call (855) 318-1330 or email governor@mt.gov.

Find these and other action alerts at [www.BuffaloFieldCampaign.org/ActNow/TakeAction.html](http://www.BuffaloFieldCampaign.org/ActNow/TakeAction.html)

### Boycott Montana Beef!

Montana's livestock industry is responsible for the harassment and slaughter of America's last wild bison. If you live in or visit Montana or Yellowstone National Park, don't eat Montana beef and let businesses know why you refuse to support the industry behind the buffalo slaughter.

### Updates from the Field!

Subscribe to BFC's weekly email newsletter. Send your email address to [bfc-media@wildrockies.org](mailto:bfc-media@wildrockies.org) or visit [www.BuffaloFieldCampaign.org](http://www.BuffaloFieldCampaign.org).

### Get Involved!

Contact BFC to learn about volunteering on the front lines, hosting video showings, distributing newsletters, and other ways you can spread the word to save the herds! Call (406) 646-0070 or email [buffalo@wildrockies.org](mailto:buffalo@wildrockies.org).

[www.facebook.com/buffalowild](https://www.facebook.com/buffalowild)

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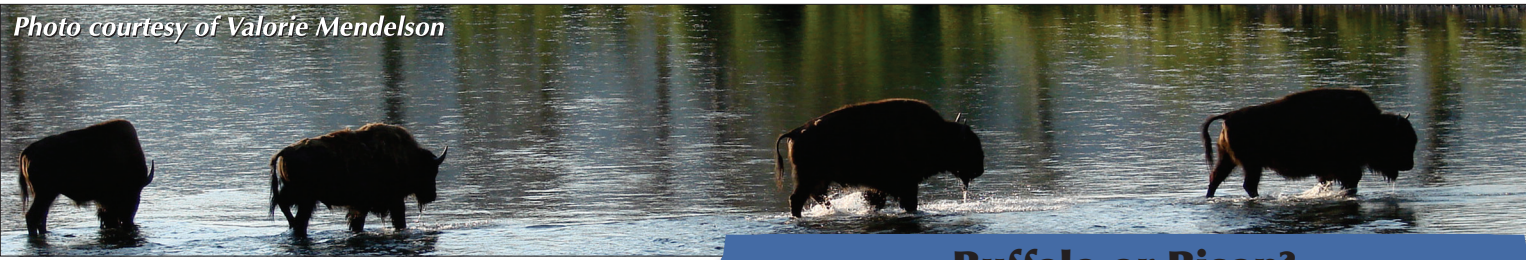


BFC's all-volunteer patrols stand with the buffalo every day documenting agency harassment.

### Contribute to BFC!

Every individual makes a difference! People like you contribute more than 65% of BFC's frugal budget. All donations – monetary and in kind – are tax deductible. Make a secure online donation at [BuffaloFieldCampaign.org](http://BuffaloFieldCampaign.org) or send a check through the mail.

Photo courtesy of Valorie Mendelson



## Defending Wild Buffalo in the Courts

Buffalo Field Campaign continues to advance our goal of securing legal protection for buffalo as a native wildlife species and for critical habitats the migratory species can freely roam. Many thanks to our supporters, pro-bono attorneys, partner groups, and law firms who make this critical work possible. Thank you!

❶ In January 2013, a favorable ruling by Montana District Court Judge E. Wayne Phillips protected additional habitat for wild buffalo to roam the Gardiner basin, critical wintering range and spring calving grounds. Park County and the Montana Farm Bureau have appealed his decision to the Montana Supreme Court where BFC will continue to represent the buffalo and their local supporters.

❷ BFC settled a Freedom of Information Act dispute with USDA Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service (APHIS) over the public's timely access to agency records on using population control, quarantine, and other controversial measures on wild public buffalo. The settlement requires APHIS – or any other federal agency – to respond within 20 days to the public's requests for records. For months, APHIS simply delayed responding to BFC's requests by giving itself extensions not permitted by the law.

❸ With BFC photos and video, the Alliance for the Wild Rockies secured a temporary court injunction in the spring of 2012 thwarting the Montana Dept. of Livestock from using a helicopter to harass buffalo in threatened grizzly bear habitat. In the spring of 2013, U.S. District Court Judge Charles C. Lovell dismissed the injunction and all Endangered Species Act claims to stop helicopter hazing of buffalo in grizzly bear habitat. His decision has been appealed to the 9<sup>th</sup> U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals.

❹ BFC is in court to try to keep the promise made and broken by Montana that all buffalo taken from Yellowstone for quarantine would be protected as public and Tribal wildlife. Instead, Montana brokered a deal with Turner Enterprises Inc. to turn the public's buffalo into private livestock. In the spring of 2013, Montana District Court Judge Holly Brown dismissed BFC's public trust litigation to stop Montana from privatizing and commodifying America's last wild buffalo.

## Buffalo or Bison?

**BOTH!** Buffalo is the popular name for North American Bison, whose scientific name is *Bison bison*. So, both names are correct and in common usage, and you'll see both throughout this newsletter.

Connect with the buffalo and support BFC! Our 2014 Calendar combines superb photos, art, fun facts, and poems to convey the spirit of wild bison. Other items include *In the Presence of Buffalo* by BFC director Dan Brister, t-shirts, stickers, and a DVD. Visit: [BuffaloFieldCampaign.org/merch.html](http://BuffaloFieldCampaign.org/merch.html)



Yellowstone Country Wild Bison 2014

## Buffalo Field Campaign Wouldn't Exist Without You

Buffalo Field Campaign works in the field and on the policy front year-round to stop the slaughter and harassment of native bison. BFC is the leading source of news, information, and activism on wild buffalo and the dangers of the current government plan. Donations keep BFC patrols in the field and the pressure on the government to abandon the failed Interagency Bison Management Plan in favor of a vision that recognizes and protects the United States' only continuously wild population of bison. BFC relies on our grassroots network of supporters to take action for the buffalo and contribute to our work. **Please use the enclosed envelope or visit BFC's website to make a tax-deductible contribution or merchandise purchase. We cannot help the buffalo without you. Thank you!** ❶



Artwork by Kevan Krasnoff

## Working with Tribal Nations for the Buffalo

Buffalo Field Campaign is supporting resolutions of the Montana-Wyoming Tribal Leaders Council and the National Congress of American Indians that call on the U.S. government to convene a Buffalo Summit and to protect wild buffalo populations as a treaty and trust responsibility. ❷

## Working for the Buffalo from Montana to Washington D.C.

Buffalo Field Campaign works hard advocating for buffalo policy and legislative changes from Helena, Montana to Washington, D.C. We are committed to working with our grassroots supporters to change laws and funding policies to protect buffalo and the habitats critical to their recovery.

BFC continues to dialogue with members of the U.S. Congress to ensure that the story of the buffalo, and the sensible, respectful, and practical solutions we advocate, are reaching the

ears of our nation's decision makers. To this end, your continued support in contacting your U.S. Senators and Representative as well as the new Secretary of the Interior, Sally Jewell, is vital to changing federal law and policy that will benefit the buffalo today and for future generations. See the Take Action section of this newsletter and our website for information on how you can help.

In Helena, the 2013 Montana Legislature introduced a slew of anti-buffalo bills backed by the cattle lobby.

These bills, which would have extended the hunt, further limited the buffalo's range, and more, would have made the already bad situation for wild buffalo in Montana much worse.

In the end, Governor Steve Bullock vetoed three bills that made it through legislature, and signed into law a bill that repeals the prohibition on state officials identifying the "actual physical location" of buffalo to hunters. The rest of the bills were defeated with the help of BFC's partners and supporters. ❸

## Issue in Brief, continued from front page

Sadly, the future of this irreplaceable population is at risk. Since the year 2000 the Montana and federal governments have killed more than 4,000 bison as they migrated near Yellowstone's borders. Thousands more have been "hazed," or aggressively chased, from their habitat, which includes public lands. These brutal actions are blamed on Montana's unfounded fears that wild buffalo may transmit the livestock disease brucellosis to cattle, something that has never happened. Many species carry brucellosis, including elk, yet only buffalo are targeted. There are far more elk than buffalo in the ecosystem and elk have been implicated in transmitting brucellosis to cattle. Yet elk are allowed to leave the park while buffalo are killed, captured, or hazed when they approach its arbitrary border.

Buffalo Field Campaign's (BFC's) field patrols monitor and document bison migrations and fight for the buffalo's freedom to roam. Patrols provide volunteers with a direct connection to the buffalo, informing and inspiring a range of efforts designed to protect buffalo and their habitat. Information and documentation gathered on patrols is shared with BFC's network of supporters, who contact decision makers, take grassroots actions, and contribute the funds that make every aspect of our work possible. ❹

Photo by Stephany Seay, BFC



The local Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks game warden aggressively chases buffalo through a public campground.

## Hunting and Hazing, continued from front page

being hit, where they died or became walking wounded, the hunter free to kill another buffalo to fill their tag. A new law, passed by the 2013 Montana legislature, will allow game wardens to tell hunters the exact location of any buffalo outside of the park. So much for Montana's much-touted "fair chase" hunt, as the state absolves itself from killing buffalo by making it easier for hunters to do so. Park Service officials this winter repeatedly encouraged tribal hunters to shoot as many buffalo as possible, threatening to ship the animals to slaughterhouses otherwise.

While capture, slaughter, and hunting receive much of the attention, the Montana Department of Livestock's annual "hazing operations," in which hundreds of wild bison are abusively chased from Montana, have had a far greater impact in recent years. The Montana Department of Livestock, with assistance from Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks; National Park Service; U.S. Forest Service; and USDA Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service; aggressively hazed hundreds of buffalo from their chosen habitat this spring using horses, ATVs, and a helicopter. Because these operations take place at the height of calving season, newborn bison calves often suffer life-threatening injuries, separation from their mothers and family groups, and collapse from sheer exhaustion.

BFC has been working in the field and at every level of the policy and legal arenas since 1997 to put a stop to these abusive actions and to protect the buffalo and their habitat. As someone who values wild bison and understands the importance of BFC's mission, you play a crucial role in the buffalo's future. Thank you! ❺



BFC file photo

**Hunt without habitat is slaughter: the premature buffalo hunt took a huge toll this year – over 250 buffalo were killed, just as they crossed the invisible border of Yellowstone National Park.**