



**BUFFALO**

FIELD CAMPAIGN

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*Protecting the Last Wild Bison*

Photo courtesy of Sandy Sistr Printed on Recycled Paper



Masthead photo by Stephany Seay, BFC

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**2015/2016**



Photo by Ric Kessler

## Yellowstone Buffalo, Last of the Wild

The wild buffalo, or bison, is the largest animal on the North American continent. Its massive stature—a bull buffalo stands more than six feet tall at the hump—doesn't prevent a buffalo from running 35 miles an hour or hopping a six foot tall fence. Buffalo once migrated freely from coast to coast and numbered in the tens of millions. Nearly hunted to extinction in the 19th century, just 23 wild buffalo survived in 1902. The descendants of this remnant population survive to this day and are the only genetically intact, migratory buffalo left.

Yellowstone buffalo are the only buffalo to have always occupied their native habitat. Untainted with livestock genes and

*Wild Buffalo, continued inside*



## Take Action

## Be a Voice for Wild Buffalo!

### Urge Montana's Governor to Champion Wild Buffalo

The future of the last wild migratory buffalo in the U.S. depends on Montana. Contact Governor Steve Bullock and insist he take action to welcome and respect America's wild bison, and to revoke the Department of Livestock's authority over them by abolishing state law MCA 81-2-120. Call (406) 444-3111 or email [governor@mt.gov](mailto:governor@mt.gov).

### Help Gain Endangered Species Protection for Wild Bison

Support the petition to list the Yellowstone bison population as threatened or endangered under the Endangered Species Act. Contact your Senators and Representative and urge them to fully fund the ESA and to designate the necessary funding to review the science of listing wild bison. Find your elected officials at [www.contactingthecongress.org](http://www.contactingthecongress.org).

### Get Involved & Volunteer!

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).



Photo by Stephany Seay, BFC

BFC volunteers keep a vigilant eye on capture operations.

### Speak Out on the Proposed New Bison Management Plan

Montana and Yellowstone are developing a replacement for the Interagency Bison Management Plan. Keep up to date on BFC's proposed alternative, and on the developments with the new plan and how you can take action at [BuffaloFieldCampaign.org/ibmp2](http://BuffaloFieldCampaign.org/ibmp2)

### Support BFC!

Individuals like you contribute the majority of BFC's frugal budget. All donations are tax deductible. Make a secure online contribution at [BuffaloFieldCampaign.org](http://BuffaloFieldCampaign.org) or use the enclosed envelope to donate by mail.

### Stay Active & Engaged!

Visit [www.BuffaloFieldCampaign.org](http://www.BuffaloFieldCampaign.org) for our complete Take Action page and to sign up for Updates from the Field.

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

[www.youtube.com/user/bfcmedia](https://www.youtube.com/user/bfcmedia)



## In the Field

## Capture and Slaughter Decimates Wild Buffalo Population

History books tell of the near eradication of wild bison at the end of the 19th century, when hunters almost drove the species extinct. Few realize, however, that similar forces threaten the survival of the species today. Buffalo Field Campaign exists to document these atrocities and permanently protect the buffalo.

Seven hundred thirty-five wild buffalo from the Yellowstone ecosystem were killed under pressure from the livestock industry between November 2014

and June 2015, making it the worst year for bison in the past seven, and the third worst year since the 19th century. Such actions, which have kept the population below 4,500 buffalo, call the buffalo's future into question once again.

Five hundred seven buffalo were captured by the Park Service inside Yellowstone and shipped to slaughter by the Salish and Kootenai and Shoshone-Bannock tribes, and the InterTribal Buffalo Council. Both the tribes and the Council, who had previously



Photo by Stephany Seay, BFC

Wildlife on Roadway no longer. Truckloads of the last wild buffalo, captured inside Yellowstone National Park, head for the slaughterhouse.



Photo by Stephany Seay, BFC

Condemned buffalo await their fate in the trap.

expressed opposition to buffalo slaughter, bought into the idea of "surplus" buffalo in Yellowstone, a concept that neither science nor common sense supports. The Nez Perce tribe, also offered bison meat in exchange for hauling the animals to slaughter, refused to participate. Seven buffalo were condemned to death as subjects of lethal government studies and 217 were shot and killed by state and tribal hunters in a firing-line style hunt that takes place along Yellowstone's borders.

*Slaughter, continued inside*

## Wild Buffalo, continued from front page

unconfined by fences, they are largely free to follow their instincts. Buffalo are a keystone species essential to the restoration of the native grasslands, sagebrush steppes, and prairie ecosystems, some of the most endangered habitats in the world.

Because of a Montana law enacted in 1995 that places the state's livestock industry in charge of bison management, more than 6,000 buffalo have been shot, slaughtered, or removed from their native ecosystem as they attempted to migrate toward or across the boundary of Yellowstone National Park. Thousands more have been aggressively chased from their habitat. These unnecessary actions are conducted under the guise that wild buffalo may transmit the livestock disease brucellosis to cattle, something that has never occurred. Brucellosis is present in many species, including elk. The elk far outnumber the buffalo in the ecosystem, and elk have transmitted brucellosis to livestock. Yet elk are allowed free access between the park and Montana while buffalo are persecuted beyond Yellowstone's borders. As a result of these policies, less than 4,500 wild bison remain.

Buffalo travel from Yellowstone every winter and spring to access feeding and calving grounds. Buffalo Field Campaign field patrols monitor and document these migrations and work to stop government actions against the buffalo. Patrols provide volunteers with a direct connection to the buffalo, informing and inspiring a variety of coordinated efforts to protect buffalo and their habitat. We share information gathered on patrols with our grassroots network of supporters whose donations fund our programs and whose actions pressure decision-makers to stop the buffalo slaughter and respect this iconic species. 📢



## Support Buffalo Field Campaign Needs You!

Buffalo Field Campaign works in the field and on the policy front year-round to stop the slaughter and harassment of native bison. Donations keep our 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!** 📢



Yellowstone Country Wild Bison 2016

Connect with the buffalo and support BFC! Our 2016 calendar combines superb photos, art, and fun facts 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)



## Politics & Courtrooms

### New Bison Management Plan Under Development

Montana and Yellowstone National Park are developing a new plan to replace the Interagency Bison Management Plan, an agreement that has facilitated the violent removal of 5,646 of America's wild buffalo since its inception in 2000. The new plan puts forth a number of preliminary alternatives for managing wild buffalo in Montana and the Park.

These alternatives offer nothing new and maintain the status quo of population caps,

hazing, capture, slaughter, quarantine, birth control, and hunting with little to no benefits for wild, migratory buffalo.

Buffalo Field Campaign has put forth our own management alternative, based on the way wild elk are managed in Montana. BFC's alternative was created using the best available science and taking all changed circumstances into consideration. Visit [BuffaloFieldCampaign.org/ibmp2](http://BuffaloFieldCampaign.org/ibmp2) to read our plan and learn how you can lend support. 📢



## Exciting BFC News!

**Logo** BFC has created a new logo! This new image captures the essence of our mission with elements representing the last wild bison and their ecosystem.

**Website** Information is a powerful force for buffalo protection and we are close to launching a new website! Along with this newsletter, our website is among our most effective methods for sharing updates, video, and photos, and keeping you informed and engaged! This huge task will be completed later this summer—so please check in at [www.BuffaloFieldCampaign.org](http://www.BuffaloFieldCampaign.org).

**BFC gear** Our website will include a new e-store where you will be able to purchase exciting products emblazoned with the new logo. As always, proceeds go directly to support our front lines work.

Keep an eye on your email for an invitation to the new site along with a special discount on BFC merchandise! 📢



## In the Field

### Safe Zones Mean Safe Habitat for Buffalo

After heartbreaking months of capture, slaughter, hunting, and hazing, wild buffalo and their defenders were given a boost thanks to an order issued last year by Montana Governor Steve Bullock. This order, coupled with BFC's revamped "Buffalo Safe Zone" program, prevented the Montana Department of Livestock from trespassing on private property to harass buffalo, something the Department has always done.

With our focus aimed at the buffalo's preferred habitat on the Horse Butte Peninsula, we worked to identify buffalo-friendly landowners and offer them free "Buffalo Safe Zone" signs to post along their properties. The hand-painted black and orange signs remind the government agents that, "by order of the Governor of Montana: 'The Department (of Livestock) may not enter private property without landowner permission unless there is an imminent threat of disease transmission from bison to livestock or people.'"

Where buffalo were once hounded by horsemen and helicopter, they now have nearly a thousand acres where they're left alone. On the largely pro-buffalo Horse Butte, our effort has given some buffalo the opportunity to raise their calves in peace, allowing them to decide for themselves when the time is right to return to their summer habitat inside Yellowstone. 📢



Photo by Cindy Rosin, BFC

BFC provides Buffalo Safe Zone signs to residents who want to mark their land as closed to hazers and open to wild buffalo.

## Slaughter, continued from front

Hundreds more bison, including newborn calves, were aggressively chased from their calving grounds near West Yellowstone in a series of springtime operations led by Montana's Department of Livestock to clear the state of free-roaming buffalo.

Buffalo Field Campaign maintained a strong presence with the buffalo, documenting every action against them and working to protect them through legal and legislative efforts. Our greatest strength lies in our grassroots network of supporters, and we encourage your involvement. 📢



Rosalie LittleThunder, who helped start Buffalo Field Campaign in 1997, passed away in 2014. Protecting wild buffalo was her life's work. We, and the buffalo, miss her greatly.



## Politics & Courtrooms

### Endangered Species Act Protection Sought for Yellowstone Bison

In November 2014 Buffalo Field Campaign and Western Watersheds Project petitioned the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (FWS) to list the Yellowstone population under the Endangered Species Act (ESA). Wild bison are currently forcibly removed or destroyed when they migrate from Yellowstone to surrounding states.

Yellowstone bison are the only remaining genetically intact and freely migrating wild plains bison in the United States. Nearly all surviving bison are private livestock or descendants of bison that were interbred with cattle. These hybridized cattle-bison in privately owned herds are not wildlife. Most public bison exist in isolated populations on restricted ranges with no predators, subject to human selection.

The best available science shows that the Yellowstone population is unique, significant, genetically and behaviorally distinct, and essential to the survival and recovery of the species.

Our petition catalogs the many threats to wild bison, including:

removal from their habitat to facilitate livestock grazing, heavy government management, livestock diseases, trapping for slaughter, hunting, and climate change. State actions in Montana, Idaho, and Wyoming all result in forced removal or destruction of migratory bison.

The FWS failed to issue an initial finding on our petition within 90 days, as required by the ESA. Understanding that most successful efforts to protect species under the Act require lengthy court battles, we have assembled a legal team and will do what it takes to earn wild bison the protection they so desperately need. 📢

## 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.