

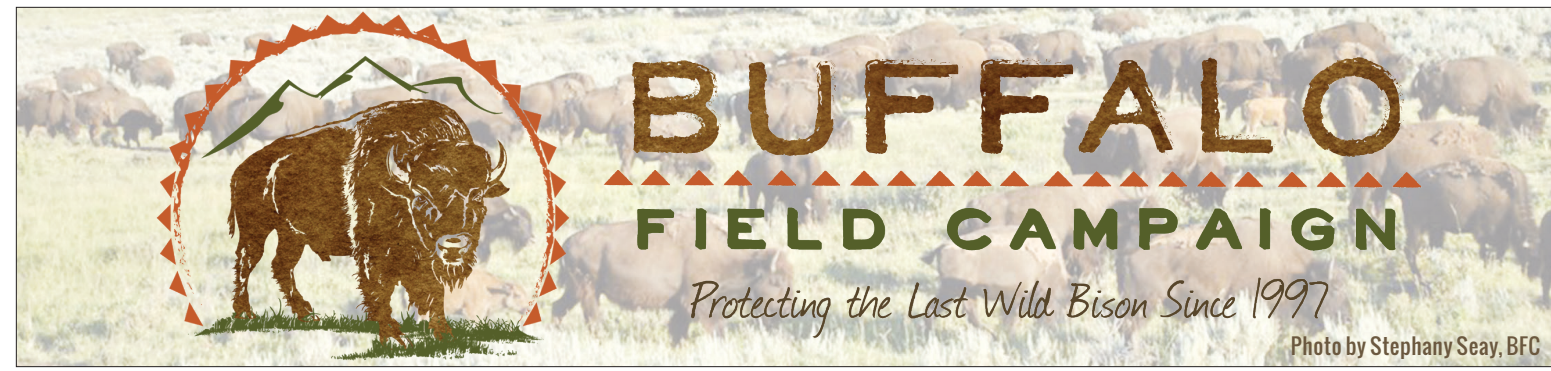


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Protecting the Last Wild Bison

Photo courtesy of Theresa Bielawski Printed on Recycled Paper



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2017-2018

Yellowstone Buffalo, Last of the Wild



The wild buffalo, or bison, is the largest North American animal. A mature bull buffalo can weigh more than a ton, stand taller than six feet at the hump, and run up to thirty-five miles an hour. Tens of millions of wild buffalo once occupied much of the continent. Nearly hunted to extinction in the 19th century, by 1902 just twenty-three wild buffalo survived by taking refuge in Yellowstone. Their descendants remain the only genetically intact, migratory buffalo found in the wild today.

Yellowstone buffalo are unconfined by fences and untainted with cattle genes. They 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.

Last of the Wild, continued inside



Take Action

Be a Voice for Wild Buffalo!

Urge Montana's Governor to Endorse a Plan that Respects Wild Buffalo Like Wild Elk in Montana

The vicious slaughter and excessive hunting of wild buffalo, and their exclusion from their native habitat in Montana are things that could easily end if Montana endorsed a new plan. The highly controversial and wasteful Interagency Bison Management Plan expired in 2015, though it still dictates bison management. Yellowstone and the state of Montana have developed a new plan, but it mirrors the IBMP and presently isn't going anywhere.

In response, BFC developed a plan to respect wild buffalo like wild elk in Montana and presented it to Yellowstone Superintendent Dan Wenk and Governor Steve Bullock in 2015, but no action has been taken. Meanwhile hundreds of the last wild buffalo continue to be killed every

year. Governor Bullock has done more for wild buffalo than any governor in the history of Montana, but much more needs to be done. He must continue to feel the pressure from people around the country who care about wild, migratory buffalo and want our national mammal to live wild and free. Phone calls are best because they can't be ignored, but you can back your call up with an email.

Call Gov. Bullock at (406) 444-3111 and then email governor@mt.gov and urge him to endorse a plan that respects wild buffalo like wild elk in Montana. Wild is the Way – Roam Free!

Support BFC!

Individuals like you contribute the majority of BFC's frugal budget. Donations are tax deductible. Make a secure online contribution at BuffaloFieldCampaign.org or use the enclosed envelope to donate by mail.



Photo by Stephany Seay, BFC

Come volunteer and stand with wild buffalo!

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 info@buffalofieldcampaign.org.

Stay Active & Engaged!

Visit www.BuffaloFieldCampaign.org for our complete Take Action page and to sign up for Updates from the Field.
Facebook: www.facebook.com/buffalowild
YouTube: www.youtube.com/bfcmedia



In the Field

A Bad Year for Buffalo: Slaughter and Hunting Decimate the Herds

Buffalo Field Campaign's twentieth season in the field was one of deep contrasts. This spring, the buffalo enjoyed a second year of peace on their calving grounds at Hebgen Basin's Horse Butte without hazing or harassment. New calves born on the Butte were able to grow strong on their own before returning with their families to Yellowstone. Our spring



Photo by Stephany Seay, BFC

patrols celebrated with these buffalo, enjoying and honoring the company of buffalo left in peace to be buffalo.

While we revel in this new ground for buffalo, more is needed. Livestock agents still harassed buffalo migrating into the Basin south of the Madison River, and in Red Canyon. These spring hazing operations chased family groups, heavily-pregnant females, and new calves off their chosen ground, through public lands that never see cattle, and across rivers to Horse Butte. The tireless work of our patrols and supporters has ended the days of fourteen mile hazes far into the park, but even these shorter hazes are harmful, and have no place in the management of wild buffalo. We will continue to fight for new ground for buffalo until hazing is a thing of the past.

Bad Year, continued inside



Photo by Chuck Irestone

BFC Celebrates Twenty Years



Buffalo Field Campaign (BFC) was formed twenty years ago, arising from the shared vision of the late Lakota elder Rosalie Little Thunder and environmental activist and videographer Mike Mease. Since 1997, BFC has hosted more than six thousand volunteers from every state in the U.S. and countries around the world. Bonded by a common passion to protect the United States' only continuously wild native bison, people from

Twenty Years, continued inside

Last of the Wild, continued from front page

Thousands of buffalo have been shot, slaughtered, or otherwise removed from their native ecosystem as they migrated toward or across the boundaries 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. Elk outnumber buffalo and have transmitted brucellosis to livestock, yet elk are allowed free access between the park and Montana while buffalo are persecuted. Currently, less than 4,500 wild bison remain.

Every winter and spring buffalo migrate from Yellowstone to calving grounds and habitat in Montana. Buffalo Field Campaign patrols monitor and document these migrations and work to stop the government's slaughter and harassment of buffalo. Patrols inform and inspire a variety of coordinated efforts to protect buffalo and their habitat. BFC shares 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. 📢



Politics & Courtrooms

ESA Legal Case Update

In June 2017 Buffalo Field Campaign, Western Watersheds Project, and Friends of Animals filed a motion for summary judgment to overturn U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service's finding that our petition did not present substantial information to list Yellowstone buffalo as a Distinct Population Segment.

The U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service wrongfully required proof that extinction would be certain, a standard the Endangered Species Act does not require at the 90-day stage. At this stage the evidence need only show that buffalo "may warrant listing." The agency failed to consider the best available science that shows government slaughter and hunting threaten the buffalo, and the extinction of the migratory species in 85% of their original range warrants listing. A decision is likely in 2018.

Listing the Yellowstone buffalo as an endangered species is a long-term BFC commitment. Your generous donations support our legal action and give us hope that the Yellowstone buffalo will win the protection they are entitled to under the Endangered Species Act. 📢



Support Buffalo Field Campaign Needs You!

Connect with the buffalo and support BFC! Our 2018 calendar combines beautiful photos, artwork, and fun facts to convey the spirit of wild buffalo. Other items include t-shirts, books, stickers, and more. Visit BuffaloFieldCampaign.org/merch

Buffalo Field Campaign works in the field and on the policy front 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 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 2018

Twenty Years, continued from front page

all backgrounds comprise BFC's field patrols, braving some of North America's most extreme conditions to stand with the buffalo and protect this keystone species from the government.

In May of 2017 volunteers and supporters joined BFC in West Yellowstone to celebrate our two decades in the field and the many victories we've achieved. On the Horse Butte Peninsula, on Yellowstone's western border, buffalo are now left in peace during calving season and are no longer harassed here by livestock agents on snowmobiles, ATVs, horses, and helicopters. Livestock agents no longer trespass at will against landowner wishes to chase buffalo off of and away from buffalo-friendly properties, and the agents no longer shoot buffalo by the dozens in Yellowstone's gateway communities. But twenty years in, BFC's work remains as important as ever.

BFC's goal remains the same: to permanently protect the United States' last wild bison through a sustained grassroots campaign that forces the government agencies to protect this last wild population. Our constant presence in the field and at every level of the policy arena, the videos and stories we gather to share with the public, and the truth of the best available science will ultimately prevail. With your help, BFC will continue to fight for and celebrate the wild bison of Yellowstone country for as long as it takes to gain the protection they 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 our newsletter.



Photo by Cindy Rosin, BFC

Waste and disrespect. Body parts litter the landscape just steps from the Park border.

Bad Year, continued from front

Because of the habitat gained on Horse Butte, and the decrease in spring hazing, we have quieter times to pay closer attention to details in the herds, and what we are discovering is alarming. For the second spring in a row, our patrols saw just half the number of buffalo we normally see. Buffalo who migrate into the Hebgen Basin are part of the Central herd, which also migrates north into the Gardiner Basin. As a result they are doubly impacted by hunting, slaughter, and other management actions. This Central herd is in deep trouble. We need to step up action on behalf of the buffalo today as they face the same fate their ancestors did in the 19th century – near extinction.

The buffalo are in such trouble because of the continued dominance of Montana's livestock industry and the Interagency Bison Management Plan (IBMP). The IBMP was created as a result of state law MCA 81-2-120, which gives the Montana Department of Livestock authority over wild buffalo in Montana. The death toll from hunting



Photo by Stephany Seay, BFC

Hunting without habitat is just more slaughter.

and slaughter combined to make this past winter the worst year for the buffalo since 2008, and the second-worst year since the 19th century.

At the beginning of the winter of 2016, Yellowstone National Park declared they made a mistake in their previous population counts, somehow underestimating the size of the herds by a thousand buffalo. With their revised claim of a population of 5,500, they argued that they "needed" to kill over a thousand animals to reduce the population down to the politically motivated, un-scientific, and dangerously low IBMP agreed-upon number of three thousand buffalo.

And kill they did. The hunt season started in October, with treaty hunters killing the first buffalo to migrate into Montana. State hunters joined the fray in November, adding to the firing line that awaited any buffalo that dared to cross the park boundary, especially Yellowstone's northern boundary at Beattie Gulch. In a bloody hunt season lasting six long months, 464 buffalo were gunned down by hunters. This doesn't include the countless unborn calves destroyed with their mothers in the months before birth.

Our patrols witnessed all sorts of abuses tied to the hunt, inevitable consequences of opening a hunt on an animal that has no access to habitat and of telling innumerable hunters that any buffalo surviving the hunt will be trapped for slaughter. Patrols saw orphaned yearlings, hunt-wounded buffalo left to slowly suffer and die, and killings so botched they became national news.

The hunt, however, did not even take the largest toll on the lives of the buffalo. Buffalo that escaped the firing line were subject to capture in Yellowstone's Stephens Creek Capture Facility near Gardiner, which started operations earlier than usual this year.

Some of the trapped animals had never even left the park. The Park captured eight hundred buffalo this year. All but thirty-five were transferred to the Salish-Kootenai, the Shoshone-Bannock, and the InterTribal Buffalo Council for shipment to slaughter. The thirty-five bulls that were not killed join

twenty-four from last year, held in the trap for a controversial quarantine plan that has not yet been approved.

Our media team again went into the capture facility for the Park's two media tours – offered by the Park in response to the pending lawsuit of BFC's media coordinator Stephany Seay and others to demand access to the trap. These tours offer us and our supporters a glimpse into the hell the buffalo face there.



Photo by Stephany Seay, BFC

Park Service staff poke and prod at terrified buffalo heading to the slaughterhouse.

BFC is working with our Native American allies to shut down the trap for good. Despite our differences surrounding the current hunt, we all want to see more buffalo across a wider landscape. The Park frequently responds to public criticism by shifting blame away from themselves and falsely claiming that they are bound by law to kill buffalo. This is untrue – the park could drop out of the IBMP and refuse to do the bidding of the livestock industry. Both Yellowstone and Montana are to blame.

Between the trap and the hunters, buffalo held for research, those hit on highways, and those killed for their injuries, more than 1,300 buffalo were killed or otherwise removed from the wild this year. Combined with a harsh winter kill, between a quarter and a third of Yellowstone's buffalo population was destroyed.

The herds cannot sustain such a loss, and they need our help, our voice, and our action. We will continue to defend the buffalo in the field, in the courts, and in the halls of government, but we need to do more, to raise our voices louder, to take actions they cannot ignore. We cannot achieve the critical mass we need without you. Tell everyone you know to support the work of BFC to protect the last wild buffalo. Endless pressure, endlessly applied, for the last wild ones, until the buffalo roam far and roam free. 📢