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FIELD CAMPAIGN

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*Protecting the Last Wild Bison*

Photo by Stephany Seay, BFC Printed on Recycled Paper



Masthead photo by Darrell Geist, BFC

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**2016/2017**

## Legacy of the New National Mammal

Congress named the bison America's National Mammal in 2016. There is no species more deserving of the honor. Bison once migrated freely from coast to coast and numbered in the tens of millions. Nineteenth century hunters nearly wiped the species out by 1902, when only twenty-three wild bison remained. Their descendants survive to this day and comprise the only genetically intact, migratory population in America to have continuously occupied their native habitat. Unfenced and uncontaminated with cattle genes, Yellowstone bison are essential to their habitat, restoring the lands on which they roam.

Unfortunately, National Mammal status did not bring protection to the iconic species. In fact, the designation made clear that it not "be construed or used as reason to alter...any plan, policy, management decision,

**National Mammal, continued inside**



Photo by Stephany Seay, BFC



## Take Action

## Be a Voice for Wild Buffalo!

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

Contact Montana Governor Steve Bullock to thank him for granting year-round habitat to buffalo in the Hebgen Basin, and to urge him to continue his support of wild buffalo by revoking the Department of Livestock's authority over them and abolishing state law MCA 81-2-120. Call (406) 444-3111 or email [governor@mt.gov](mailto:governor@mt.gov).

### Tell Montana to Implement Safe Passage Infrastructure

The stretch of highway west of Yellowstone is a dangerous stretch, claiming the lives of more than one hundred buffalo since 2005. These highway mortalities not only threaten the viability of America's last wild bison population but also the lives of motorists. Urge Montana Department of Transportation Director Mike Tooley and Governor Steve Bullock to earmark highway funding to implement



Photo by Michelle McCarron

**Safe passage infrastructure - bridges or underpasses constructed in key migration areas - allow wildlife to move through the landscape without having to step foot on the highway.**

wildlife safe passage infrastructure on US Highway 191/287 in the Hebgen Basin, west of Yellowstone. Contact Mike Tooley at (406) 444-6201 or [mitooley@mt.gov](mailto:mitooley@mt.gov), and Gov. Bullock at (406) 444-3111 or [governor@mt.gov](mailto:governor@mt.gov).

### 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).

### 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](http://www.facebook.com/buffalowild)  
 [www.youtube.com/user/bfcmedia](http://www.youtube.com/user/bfcmedia)



## In the Field

## Gaining Ground for Wild Buffalo

As Buffalo Field Campaign enters our twentieth year, we are gaining important ground for the buffalo. Our presence in the field and at every level of the policy arena, bolstered by the actions of our grassroots network of supporters, is changing the minds of decision makers. We have given Montana Governor Steve Bullock, and everyone who cares about wild buffalo, a direct view into the senselessness and cruelty of current buffalo management.

Since Buffalo Field Campaign (BFC) was founded in April 1997, we have documented thousands of buffalo, including pregnant mothers and newborns, being hazed, or forcibly chased, from their calving grounds on Horse Butte Peninsula. Hounded with helicopters, ATVs, horses, and trucks for up to fifteen miles, this abuse became routine government practice. But thanks to the tireless work of BFC on the ground and a recent decision

by Governor Steve Bullock permitting some year-round habitat for buffalo in the Hebgen Basin, these horrors may be a thing of the past!

The spring of 2016 is the first time buffalo have been left in peace on Horse Butte, a favored habitat comprised largely of National Forest and



Photo by Stephany Seay, BFC

**Buffalo raise their calves in peace on the National Forest lands of Horse Butte.**

private villages where locals welcome the migratory giants. The Montana Department of Livestock (DOL), the agency in charge of harassing buffalo in Montana, is having a difficult time accepting the Governor's order to leave the buffalo alone. DOL agents continue to scour the landscape, wasting taxpayer money looking for buffalo to harass. One of BFC's primary goals is to get the DOL out of all buffalo management and back to managing livestock—a common sense idea Montana's legislators have yet to grasp, but one day will.

Our community outreach with area residents has empowered locals to be involved and create change. With the support of area residents, in 2014 Governor Bullock ordered the DOL to stop entering private property without landowner permission to haze the buffalo. Our free "Buffalo Safe Zone" signs create more habitat in

**Gaining Ground, continued inside**



## Gaining Ground, continued from front

people's yards and our fence removal services take down nuisances that hinder the migration of buffalo and other native species. Day and night, BFC volunteers stand on the side of highways 191 and 287 when migration is underway, alerting traffic that buffalo are crossing and preventing deadly accidents. Many community members, including those who don't usually support our work, have stopped to thank BFC for this roadside service.

Although important ears are starting to listen, our work is far from over. We continue to be humbled by all that you give, but we still have a long and difficult fight ahead. We will never stop until the buffalo have the same freedom to roam as all native wildlife and together we will preserve the gift of wild buffalo. 🗣️



## Politics & Courtrooms

### BFC Works to Protect Yellowstone Bison Under Endangered Species Act

In early 2016, the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service (USFWS) rejected Buffalo Field Campaign's and Western Watersheds Project's petition to list the Yellowstone buffalo as threatened or endangered. The agency's rubber-stamped rejection of our petition failed to address the best available science that shows the wild species should be listed. Of particular concern is the decimation of the Central Interior herd of wild buffalo, whose numbers have dramatically declined to levels not seen since the 1970s.

The primary threat to buffalo is the Interagency Bison Management Plan. Under the cover of this livestock lobby written plan, Yellowstone National Park has destroyed over four thousand wild buffalo in on-going capture for slaughter operations and plans to remove wild buffalo for quarantine including for commercial purposes over the next fifty years. Every year, Tribal and state hunts take hundreds more buffalo from the public's National Forests. To make matters worse, state laws in Montana, Idaho, and Wyoming put agriculture and livestock boards in charge of buffalo migrating beyond Yellowstone National Park.



Photo by Stephany Seay, BFC  
The current hunt, taking place just steps from the park boundary, is an extermination plan set up by politicians to ensure that buffalo never reclaim the lands that are their birthright. In 2016, over four hundred wild buffalo were killed, the most in a decade.

The next step is to challenge and overturn the USFWS's decision in court. Thanks to the non-profit Friends of Animals Wildlife Law Program who are lending a helping legal hand as we move forward in this long-term fight to secure a future for this unique and distinct wild buffalo herd.

If wild buffalo are to recover, science—backed by law—must prevail over the livestock-controlled politics responsible for the regulatory schemes that jeopardize the buffalo's future. 🗣️



## In the Field

### Yellowstone's Buffalo Trap



Photo by Stephany Seay, BFC

Wild buffalo face many threats, including Yellowstone's Stephens Creek buffalo trap, located within the park. Thousands of buffalo have been torn from their families, injured, slaughtered, or quarantined from this brutal trap.

The National Park Service (NPS) has been increasingly secretive, hiding these actions from the public. With our pleas for transparency being ignored, we were forced to take legal action. BFC's media coordinator Stephany Seay and journalist Christopher Ketcham teamed up with the Animal Legal Defense Fund to file a lawsuit pushing Yellowstone to provide access to the trap with the aim of exposing—and stopping—what takes place. In response to the lawsuit, Yellowstone agreed to a two-day media tour, providing a brief glimpse into the buffalo's hell. The images and video we shot illustrate the many harmful things befalling the buffalo in the trap. The lawsuit is pending.

Stephens Creek leads only to slaughter or quarantine, both adamantly opposed by BFC, and is used by the NPS and other agencies to decimate our last wild herds. Yellowstone is currently seeking approval for a fifty-year quarantine plan to remove buffalo from their native lands and ship them to places where they will become livestock. Of the one hundred fifty buffalo captured in 2016, ninety-seven were slaughtered, while fifty-three continue to be confined in the trap as Yellowstone awaits approval of its quarantine plan. Slaughter and quarantine are the direct result of the livestock industry's powerful influence; both are inappropriate, unethical, and unnecessary for wild buffalo. 🗣️



Photo by Stephany Seay, BFC  
The "Silencer", one of many horrors of Yellowstone's buffalo trap.

## Buffalo or Bison?

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



## Politics & Courtrooms

### IBMP 2.0: Manage Wild Buffalo Like Wild Elk

Buffalo Field Campaign is requesting that Montana and Yellowstone National Park evaluate managing wild buffalo like wild elk on public lands in the state as an alternative in the next iteration of the Interagency Bison Management Plan. The current, but outdated and unscientific plan, in place since 2000, is designed to benefit cattle, not wild buffalo.

BFC's alternative would ensure wild buffalo are allowed to inhabit public lands and establish a population in Montana. It is long past time for the state of Montana and Yellowstone to transition away from their destructive, heavy handed plan subsidized by American taxpayers to a sustainable and respectful plan for wild buffalo that is aligned with local sentiment and nationally-held public values.

BFC's alternative, to manage wild buffalo based on sustainable populations in available habitat in Montana, is a sound wildlife management plan. But it requires that Montana and Yellowstone reject continued government

slaughter of wild buffalo, a bygone policy relic from the 1870s, in favor of science and wildlife management of the migratory species.

BFC's *Manage Wild Buffalo Like Wild Elk in Montana* alternative will save millions of taxpayer dollars because it limits unnecessary government action by ending capture of buffalo for slaughter, quarantine, hazing, population control experiments, and vaccination.

The next step in the process is the release of a draft environmental impact statement for public comment. Stay tuned to BFC's website and facebook for your next opportunity to support BFC's plan to manage wild buffalo like wild elk in Montana and to get rid of the disastrous Interagency Bison Management Plan. 🗣️



## Support

## Buffalo Field Campaign Needs You!

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 2017

## National Mammal, continued from front

regulation, or other action by the Federal Government." This is a reference to the Interagency Bison Management Plan, an agreement that has killed more than six thousand migrating bison since 2000. This slaughter, which has reduced the wild population to less than five thousand bison, takes place under the false pretense that wild bison threaten cattle with the European livestock disease brucellosis. In truth, cattle have never been infected by wild bison, although they have by elk. Yet elk are allowed free access between Yellowstone and Montana, just as bison should be.

Bison walk from Yellowstone to their feeding and calving grounds in Montana every winter and spring. Buffalo Field Campaign monitors these migrations and engages in a variety of coordinated efforts to protect the bison. We share information and advocacy opportunities with our network of grassroots supporters whose donations fuel our programs and whose actions pressure decision-makers. Naming the American bison our National Mammal was right. Now we need to take the next step and respect and protect this iconic species before it's too late. 🗣️

An exciting new BFC billboard campaign brings attention to the plight of the new National Mammal: the North American Bison. How can Yellowstone continue to slaughter this new national icon?



Connect with the buffalo and support BFC! Our 2017 calendar combines superb photos, art, and fun facts to convey the spirit of wild bison. Other items include books, t-shirts, stickers, and more. Visit [BuffaloFieldCampaign.org/merch.html](http://BuffaloFieldCampaign.org/merch.html)