



MISSION: Working as a team representing all interests bison-related, the IBMP/CWG Bison Education Group strives to reach diverse audiences with the fundamental goal of getting the facts out about bison.

VISION: The IBMP/CWG Bison Education Group will responsibly impart information to the general public through a variety of means and in various locations. The Group will call on respected advisors and quality research in guiding the public to separate fact from fiction and thereby achieve a better understanding of bison, the issues surrounding the animal, and the interests involved.



GOALS

- ❖ **Get the facts out about bison**
- ❖ Gain tolerance for bison on public lands
- ❖ Build public trust, and empathy about and among interest groups
- ❖ Relieve fear and promote respect for bison
- ❖ Clarify free-ranging bison vs. managed
- ❖ Help people understand what it means to live with buffalo
- ❖ Help people understand the behavior of bison
- ❖ How to safely deal with bison on private property
- ❖ Helping the public see the bison as a bison (aside from the controversy)
- ❖ Improve public understanding of treaty rights
- ❖ Explain the significance of moving bison to tribal lands
- ❖ Communicate all interests related to bison (including the livestock industry)



First Page of
Brochure

Part 1 of the Bison Education Series

**SHARING THE
LANDSCAPE
with BISON**



**Understanding
Bison Behavior
&
Staying Safe
in Bison Country**

Your Responsibility in Bison Habitat

Give bison their space. Stay at least 25 yards away.

Be aware of your surroundings in bison habitat so as not to startle a bison.

In your car, do not honk your horn. If bison are on the road, be patient, drive slowly, and stay in your vehicle. Wait for bison to move along.

When bison are present, make sure there is protective cover nearby (e.g., trees, a vehicle).

If you find yourself too close to a bison, do not run. Instead, back away slowly.

If riding your bike near bison, move to the opposite side of the road and use a car as an escort if possible.

If bison are on your private property, try to give them as much room as possible until they leave.

If you have questions or concerns about bison, call your local wildlife manager.



Remember ...

Bison don't like fast moving things near them (i.e. people running or bicycling). Move slowly when bison are present and leave plenty of space.

Bison don't like dogs. Keep dogs on a leash when bison are present and keep your distance.

Bison are especially quick and agile. Closely monitor changing behavior.

Keep your children with you and under control.

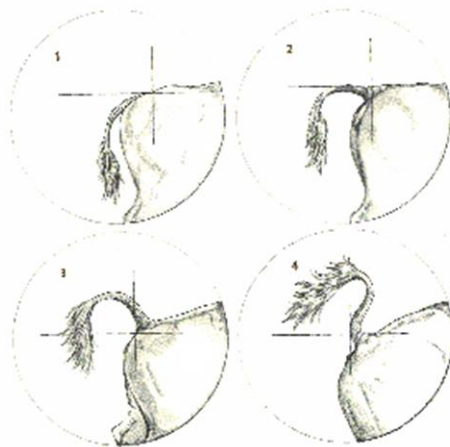
Use a telephoto lens when photographing bison.

Throwing objects at bison make provoke an attack.

A Bison Will Give You Clues of Possible Danger

- It may stop what it's doing and look at you or turn to face you
- It may swing its head back and forth while staring at you
- It may paw at the ground or hook the ground with its horns
- It may make short bluff charges at you and/or snort loudly
- It may move straight towards you

Note a bison's tail position (below):



Position 1: Bison is at rest.

Position 2: Bison is interested or curious.

Position 3: Bison is agitated; this tail position is commonly used to warn other bison or you to move.

Position 4: Bison is signaling that something is about to happen; this tail position might be used by two bison about to fight or a cow defending her calf. If you see this, you are too close.

(This raised position is also similar to what is displayed prior to defecation.)

A Brief History

Bison (also called buffalo) once roamed freely on the plains of North America with numbers in the tens of millions.

The western movement of settlers in the 1800's brought large-scale commercial hunting of bison (mostly for hides). Nearly 375,000 bison were harvested each year.

Bison were driven to the edge of extinction (a census in Yellowstone National Park revealed less than 50 bison remained in 1902).

Conservation efforts to restore bison in Yellowstone National Park began in the early 1900's.

The U.S. Army safeguarded the small bison herd in Yellowstone National Park against poaching.

Early management of bison involved feeding, culling, and herding the animals (much like cattle ranching).

The concept of natural regulation, or letting nature take its course, was introduced in Yellowstone National Park in 1967.

Today, the Greater Yellowstone Area is home to around 3,000 to 5,000 bison dependent on weather and management activities.

Did you know?

Bison are the largest terrestrial mammal in North America. As a native species, they play a unique role in the health and diversity of the ecosystem.

Males, or bulls, average between 1,000 and 2,000 pounds and stand up between 5 feet, 5 inches and 6 feet, 5 inches at the shoulder.

Females, or cows, average between 800 and 1,000 pounds, and stand between 4 feet, 5 inches and 5 feet 5, inches at the shoulder.

Bison have a large, low hanging head supported by a prominent hump above the shoulder.

A bull's horns can reach 20 inches in length, while the horns of the cow are shorter.

Their low heads with a straight row of teeth on their lower jaw allow them to gather large amounts of low-growing vegetation.

Bison hair is thinner than that of cattle, but denser. It is crucial for insulating the bison against extreme conditions. They don't begin to feel cold until temperatures dive below -20 degrees Fahrenheit.

Bison are extremely agile. They can jump upward of 6 feet high and reach speeds of 35 mph. They are also very capable of climbing steep hills.

Bison have a highly developed sense of smell.



Bison Social Behavior

Older bulls tend to isolate themselves or form small groups.

Cows, calves and immature bulls can form groups of up to 70 or more.

Bison tend to move almost two miles a day, rarely staying in the same place for more than three days.

While not normally aggressive, bison can become dangerous when they feel threatened especially during the peak of the rut or when they feel a calf may be threatened.



Internet Links

Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks'
Bison Background Document

<http://fwp.mt.gov/fishAndWildlife/management/bison/>

Yellowstone National Park's
Bison Q&A

<http://www.nps.gov/yell/naturescience/bisonqa.htm>



This series created by

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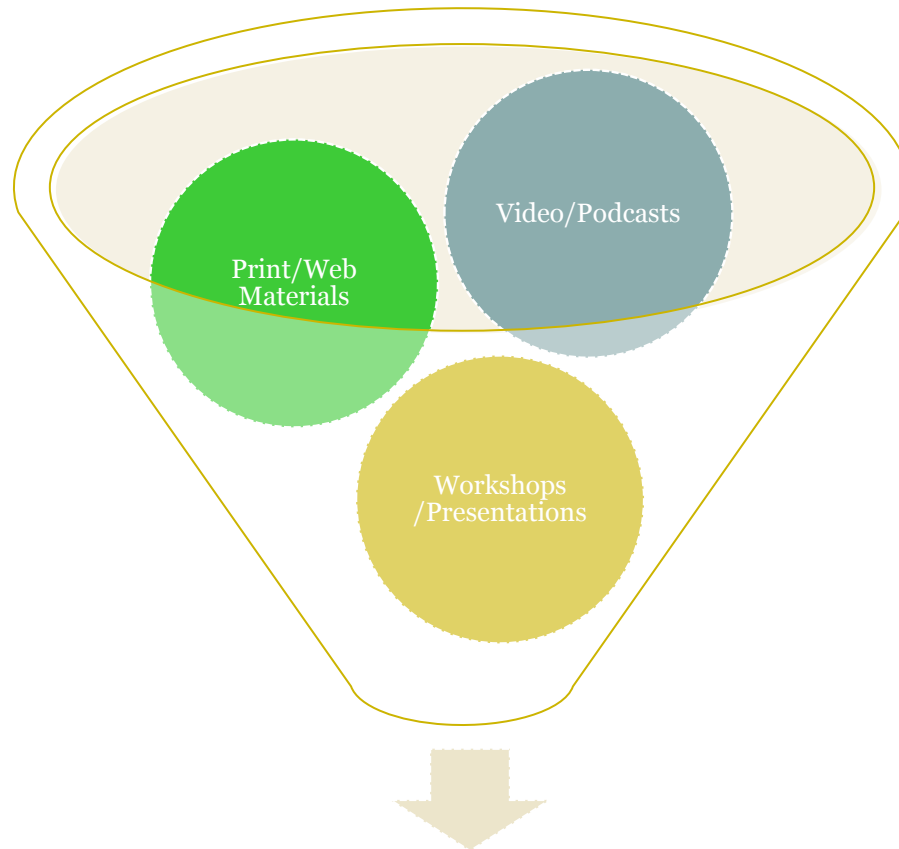
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APPROACH



Establishing A Common
Knowledge Set about Bison