

The American Bison: Decimation to Official National Mammal

The American Bison was named the National Mammal of the United States on May 9, 2016.

ATLANTA, GEORGIA, UNITED STATES, May 9, 2024 /EINPresswire.com/ -- The American bison, referred to as the buffalo, is an iconic symbol of the United States. However, the species was driven to near extinction in the 19th century due to mass slaughter.



American Bison

A study, conducted by the National Wildlife Federation, found that prior to the 19th century, 30-60 million bison

lived in the United States. This historic number of bison roamed the country. The study also found that bison were once the most abundant large mammal in North America. Herds ranged from the Great Plains to the Rocky Mountains. Their presence had a significant impact on the landscape.

According to the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, "there are around 20,500 Plains bison in conservation herds and an additional 420,000 in commercial herds. While bison are no longer threatened with extinction, the species faces other challenges. Their loss of genetic diversity combined with the loss of natural selection threatens the ecological restoration of bison as wildlife."

Mass killing of the American bison began in the early 1800s. The species was abundant and roamed across the Great Plains. Hunting by humans caused the demise of the herds. Bison were hunted for their hides which were used to make clothing and other items. Other body parts such as their tongues and meat were also sought. Large scale slaughter was further worsened by the expansion of the railroad. This allowed hunters to travel further and hunt more bison. It also opened the western country to rapidly expanding populations.

Bison was also an important source of food, clothing, and shelter for Native American tribes.

Their decimation had a devastating effect on the Native populations. The animals were a key part of their culture and spiritual beliefs. General Sherman's [scorched-earth policy](#) had brought an end to the thriving herds. It wiped out the Native Americans' food supply.

By the late 1800s, the bison herds were annihilated. Although there were once over 30 million bison in North America, by the early 1900s, there were only a few hundred left. The American Bison remains an iconic symbol of the United States. They were part of the nation's history before the country was founded and an integral part of the culture, economy, and ecology of the United States for centuries.

The National Bison Legacy Act was introduced in the House of Representatives by Rep. William Lacy Clay (D-MO) on June 25, 2015. It was introduced in the Senate by Senator John Hoeven, (R-N.D.) on September 15, 2015. The bill was co-sponsored by a bipartisan group of lawmakers from across the country.

Eight years ago today, President Obama signed the National Bison Legacy Act into law. On Monday, May 9th, 2016, the American Bison was officially named the National Mammal of the United States of America.

American Equine Awareness provided this news piece.

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