

Culture & History

The Salish and Pend d'Oreille name for bison is *Óʷeyqʷay* and the Kootenai name is *Kamquǫkʷ* 'iyamu.

The word *Óʷeyqʷay* can be translated as 'many blacks', referring to the large population of bison that roamed North America prior to European colonization.

Like many Native American tribes, the Salish, Pend d'Oreille, and Kootenai have a sacred relationship with bison. Bison provided the tribes with important resources and helped them survive during harsh winters.

To return the support given by the bison, Salish, Pend d'Oreille, and Kootenai would help maintain the land so that the bison could thrive.

Traditionally, every part of the bison was used from its meat and hides to its bones and horns. From this, the tribes would make clothing, housing, and tools.

Respectful Distance

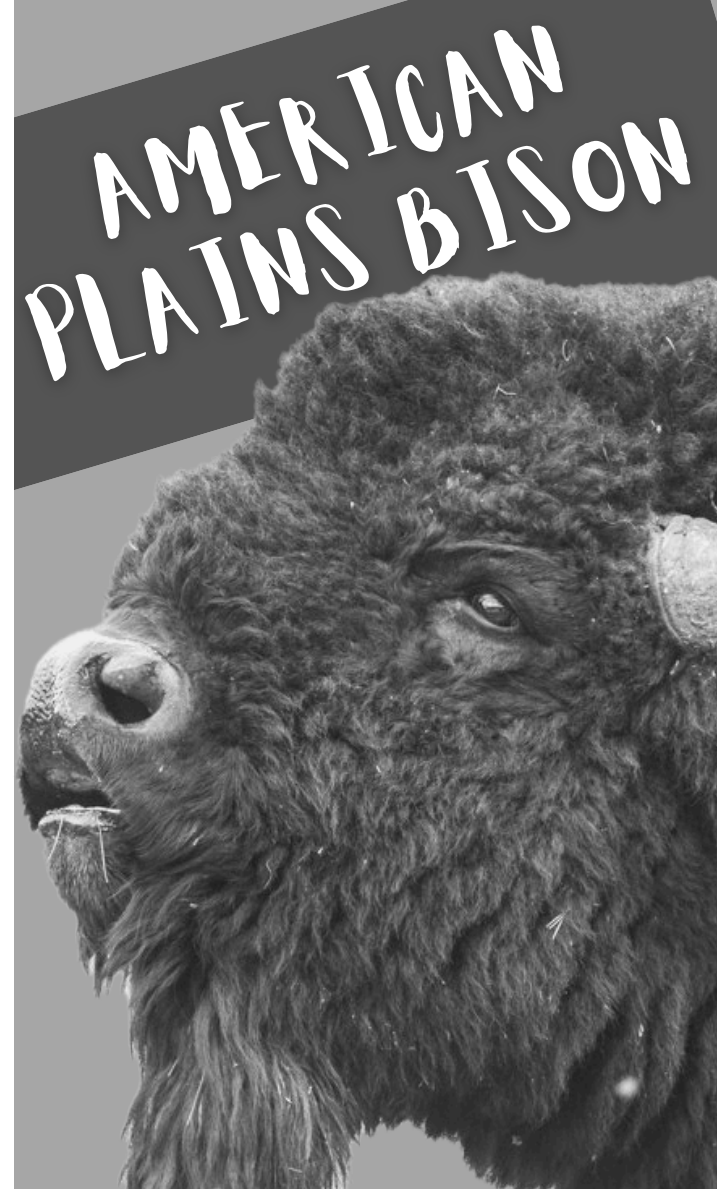
All large animals, even domesticated cattle, can be dangerous to approach. Though they look calm and peaceful, bison are wild animals and don't like it when humans get too close to them.

You should *never* attempt to pet a bison or stand too close. Please maintain a respectful distance at all times and remain in your vehicle when on the roads.

In the event that you have become too close to a bison, please back away slowly and do not make any loud noises.

All bison should be avoided but if you noticed that their tail is in an upright position, they may be aggravated. If a bison is showing signs of aggression, get away immediately.

1. Tail down: *animal is calm*
2. Tail is slightly raised but tail end is down: *animal is alarmed*
3. Tail and tail end are raised: *animal is aggravated*



AMERICAN PLAINS BISON

Óʷeyqʷay - *Kamquǫkʷ* 'iyamu

If you are interested in learning more about our wildlife, contact us at :

Phone: (406) 644-2211
BISONRANGE@CSKT.ORG

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Interesting Facts

There are two subspecies of American bison, plains bison (*Bison bison bison*) and woods bison (*Bison bison athabasca*). Plains bison are most commonly found in the USA, while woods bison are only found in Canada and some parts of Alaska.

Plains bison can be identified by their shorter stature, shaggier, more defined coat on the shoulders, and smaller nose.

The American bison is the largest mammal in North America.

A plains bison's hump is made of muscle, which allows the bison to use its massive head to push through snow.

Of the 30,000 plains bison managed for conservation on public lands, only 11,000 of them are considered 'genetically pure', meaning they have not been cross bred with cattle. The Bison Range herd and the Yellowstone National Park herds are both genetically pure.

Many Native American tribes still refer to plains bison as buffalo, the colloquial term for bison.



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American Plains Bison: A Visitor Guide