BRINGING THE BISON BACK

There are two species of bison: the European bison and the American bison. Read on to find out more about them!

**EUROPEAN BISON VS AMERICAN BISON**

- **Increasing** population
- Over 2,500 mature individuals
- Found in Eastern Europe and recently reintroduced in the UK
- Can weigh between **880 to 2,200** pounds (400-1,000kg)

- **Stable** population
- Over 11,000 mature individuals
- Found in Canada and in the USA
- **Two sub-species**: plains bison and wood bison
- Can weigh up **2,400** pounds (1,100 kg), making it the largest land mammal in the entire Western hemisphere!

American conservationists have been working on reintroducing **wood bison** in Alaska. Individuals have been moved from **Elk Island National Park** in Canada (pink cross) to **Fairbanks, Alaska** in the USA (purple cross). The **first bison were released** in 2015.
Scientists flew out in a helicopter to assess the vegetation communities in the area where they were planning on reintroducing bison to make sure that it was suitable for the bison's diet.

Conservationists tested all the bison that were to be moved from Canada to ensure they wouldn’t bring any bad diseases to Alaska. The bison were then quarantined for a few months in both Canada and Alaska.

Then they brought all the locals into a room to check that people were happy with the idea of bison coming back to Alaska. Luckily, in this case, people were quite excited to bring bison back after over 100 years of absence.

The yearlings* (see next page) were moved from Elk Island National Park on the road using big trailers, via air using military planes, and via shipping containers down the Yukon River.

GPS collars are put on the bison once they are released so that scientists can keep track of where they go.
BISON LIFE CYCLE

Bison go through different stages and have different names depending on their age and reproductive status.

- Calf (0-1 yo)
- Adult bull (5+yo)
- Adult cow (5+yo)
- Sub-adult (3-5 yo)
- Juveniles (1-3 yo)

**Gestation stage for the cow - 285 days**

**Breeding starts**

**Nursing stage**

The reintroduced yearlings are placed in a pen when they arrive in Alaska. This way they get to interact with Alaskan bulls through the fence for a few weeks before being fully released in the wild.

Photos Credit: Alaska Department of Fish and Game
Fun Fact

There were tens of millions of bison walking across the American plains in the 1800s. Explorers Lewis and Clark once said that it took them a week to walk through the entire sea of bison they had encountered!
QUIZ

Which sub-species of bison was reintroduced in Alaska?

What kind of GPS do scientists use to keep track of bison?

Bison are the ---- land mammal in the Western hemisphere.

Where are reintroduced yearlings placed when they arrive in Alaska?

Who did scientists need to talk with before reintroducing bison?

What is an adult female bison called?

What did scientists use to check on the vegetation communities?

What is the population of European bison currently doing?

How many species of bison are there?

Once you have answered these questions try and find the answers in the wordsearch on the next page...
WORDSEARCH

Look for the answers to the quiz questions horizontally, vertically and diagonally in this word search below!

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