MEET THEM AT PLUMPTON PARK ZOO

AMERICAN BISON

Bison bison

Teacher & Student Fact Sheet · © **2026 Plumpton Park Zoological Gardens Inc.**
Teachers may copy and share this sheet freely as long as they credit Plumpton Park Zoo.

Fast facts

ANIMAL GROUP	Mammal — Bovidae
NATIVE RANGE	North America
HABITAT	Grasslands and prairies
DIET	Herbivore: grasses and sedges
SHOULDER HEIGHT	Males about 5½–6½ ft at the hump
WEIGHT	700–2,200 lb
LIFESPAN	12–20 years in the wild
STATUS	Near Threatened
OUR HERD	Little Bear, Kyra, Tupac, Snow White, Nicholas, Mackenzie



Photo: Plumpton Park Zoo

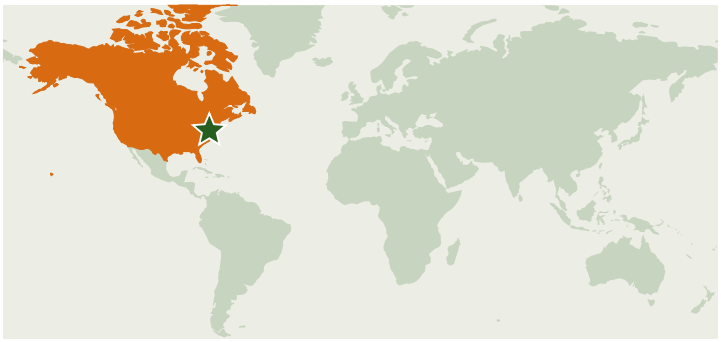
Did you know?

- The bison is the largest land mammal in North America.
- It became the national mammal of the United States in 2016.
- Tens of millions of bison once roamed; only a few hundred were left by the 1880s.
- Both male and female bison grow horns.
- Our calves Nicholas and Mackenzie were born at the zoo in spring 2026.

Words to know

Herd: a group of animals that live together.
Wallow: to roll in dust or mud.
Grazer: an animal that eats grass.
Calf: a baby bison.

Where it lives in the wild



Lives in the wild ★ Plumpton Park Zoo, Rising Sun, MD

Think about it

1. What is the largest land mammal in North America?
2. Why do bison roll in dust or mud?
3. What do bison eat?
4. What happened to bison in the 1800s?
5. When did the bison become the national mammal?

Draw it

Draw a bison. Label its shoulder hump, beard, horns and shaggy coat.

STANDARDS · GRADES 3–4 **WRITTEN FOR GRADES 3–5**

Maryland and Delaware (NGSS): **4-LS1-1 · 3-LS4-4**
Pennsylvania (STEELS): **3.1.4.A · 3.1.3.H**

Draw here

Learn more: https://plumptonparkzoo.org/mammals/american-bison/ · **Sources:** Smithsonian's National Zoo; National Park Service; IUCN Red List
Supports Maryland and Delaware (NGSS) and Pennsylvania (STEELS) standards: 4-LS1-1 (3.1.4.A) · 3-LS4-4 (3.1.3.H)
Plumpton Park Zoo · 1416 Telegraph Rd, Rising Sun, MD 21911 · (410) 658-6850 · plumptonparkzoo.org · a 501(c)(3) nonprofit zoo

AMERICAN BISON

Before and after your visit

Page 2 of the American bison fact sheet · © 2026 Plumpton Park Zoological Gardens Inc.
Teachers may copy and share this sheet freely as long as they credit Plumpton Park Zoo.

Before you visit · 5 minutes

Name: _____ Date: _____

1. Predict: where in the wild does the American bison live?
Circle one (or more if it lives on more than one):

Africa | Asia | Australia | Europe | North America | South America

2. Predict: what does it eat?
☐ plants ☐ other animals ☐ both

3. Word hunt: find these words on page 1. Put a check by each one you already know.
☐ Herd ☐ Wallow ☐ Grazer ☐ Calf

Pick one word and write what it means in your own words:

4. My question: one thing I want to find out when I see the American bison.

At the zoo · look closely

Watch for one minute. What is it doing?
☐ resting ☐ eating ☐ moving ☐ watching
☐ with others

Draw or describe one body part that helps it survive, and say how it helps.

Draw here

After your visit · talk it over

1. Check your prediction. Native region: North America. Was your guess right?
☐ yes ☐ no ☐ partly

2. Diet check. The fact sheet says: Herbivore: grasses and sedges. What did you learn about how it finds or eats food?

3. Discuss with a partner, then write your best answer.

- Why do bison roll in dust or mud?
- What happened to bison in the 1800s?

4. Exit ticket.

One thing I learned: _____

One thing I still wonder: _____

ADJUST IT
Grades K–2: talk and draw instead of writing; read the questions aloud. **Grades 6–8:** add evidence from the fact sheet and the animal page to every answer.