

# Have You Herd?

## More wood bison have arrived in Alaska!

The Bureau of Land Management is working with the Alaska Department of Fish and Game to restore wild wood bison in a truly Alaskan way: with wide open spaces, ingenious logistics, and the dedication of dozens of partners.

After being absent in the state for about a century, a wild wood bison herd was reestablished in Western Alaska in 2015, a milestone in species recovery. Now international, federal, state, Alaska Native, and volunteer partners are bringing more wood bison to Alaska.



## Great land, great habitat, GREAT BIG HISTORY

Scientific data tells us that bison lived in Alaska for more than **400,000** years and, within the last **10,000** years, the wood bison roamed freely in Alaska and parts of Canada.

Over time, the population dramatically decreased and by the early **1900s**, they disappeared from Alaska's landscape. After a small herd was discovered in remote Canada in the **1950s**, international and local partnerships like this one have worked to build up the wood bison population and return them to their former homes.

The new additions could increase the population of wild wood bison in the state by as much as **30%** while adding to their genetic diversity.



## WOOD BISON ROAD TRIP



**1 Alberta, Canada**  
Elk Island National Park is home to thousands of healthy wood bison. Alaska's wood bison have all come from those herds.

**2 Fairbanks, Alaska**  
They are temporarily settled into holding pens at the University of Alaska Fairbanks Large Animal Research Station.

**3 Innoko River, Alaska**  
Release point for the wood bison to head into the wild and join the existing herd.

## HARMONIOUS HERBIVORES

**Did you know wood bison and moose share the same habitat?** Although they're both plant eaters, they don't compete directly for food. This allows them to live in the same area and not diminish the habitat for the other.

### Wood Bison

*Bison bison athabasca*

- Alaska population: 140
- Social structure: herd
- Individual range: up to 200 miles
- Offspring: 1 calf, April-May
- Diet: grasses, sedges, horsetails

Endangered Species Act status: **Threatened**

### Moose

*Alces alces gigas*

- Alaska population: about 200,000
- Social structure: primarily solitary
- Individual range: up to 100 miles
- Offspring: 1 or 2 calves, May-June
- Diet: leaves, twigs, and aquatic plants

Endangered Species Act status: **None**

**Headgear:**  
Permanent bone horns covered by an exterior sheath grown by specialized hair follicles.

**Shoulder Height:**  
6 ft

**Weight:**  
2000 lbs or more

**Length:**  
10 ft

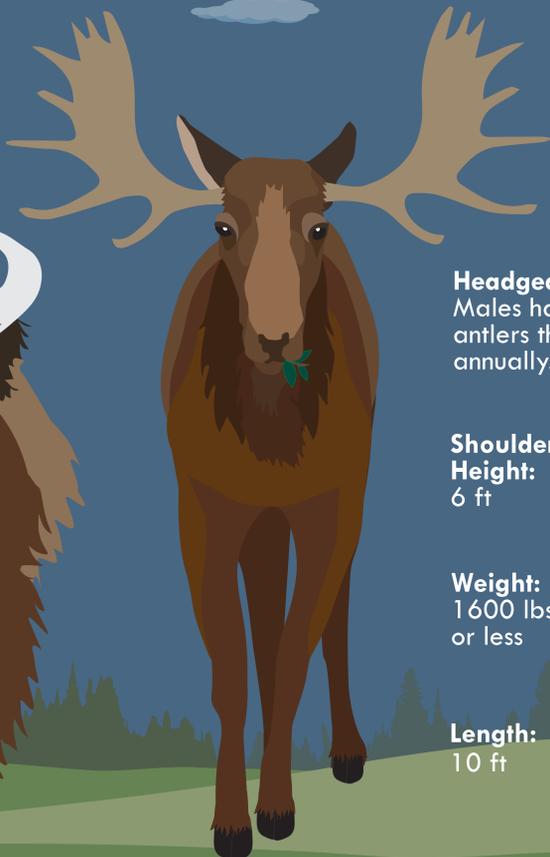


**Headgear:**  
Males have bone antlers that shed annually.

**Shoulder Height:**  
6 ft

**Weight:**  
1600 lbs or less

**Length:**  
10 ft



## YOU HERD IT HERE FIRST



### Can I see them?

Yes. You can see captive wood bison who are related to the wild herds by visiting the Alaska Wildlife Conservation Center in Portage, Alaska.



### Can I hunt them?

Not yet. In the future when herd numbers can support it, the State of Alaska plans to create hunting opportunities.



### Are they endangered?

Under the Endangered Species Act, they are "threatened," but the Alaskan herd has a special exemption as a non-essential experimental population.



Learn more about wood bison:

<https://www.adfg.alaska.gov/index.cfm?adfg=woodbison.main>

Learn more about Alaska wildlife:

<https://www.blm.gov/programs/fish-and-wildlife/wildlife/about/alaska>

References:  
<https://www.adfg.alaska.gov/index.cfm?adfg=woodbison.main>  
<https://www.adfg.alaska.gov/index.cfm?adfg=moose.main>  
<https://ecos.fws.gov/ecp/species/8362>