

Bison (American Buffalo)

Bison Facts

Bulls and cows have horns.

Bison can run up to 35 miles per hour.

The bison is featured on the Buffalo Nickel.

Taxonomy

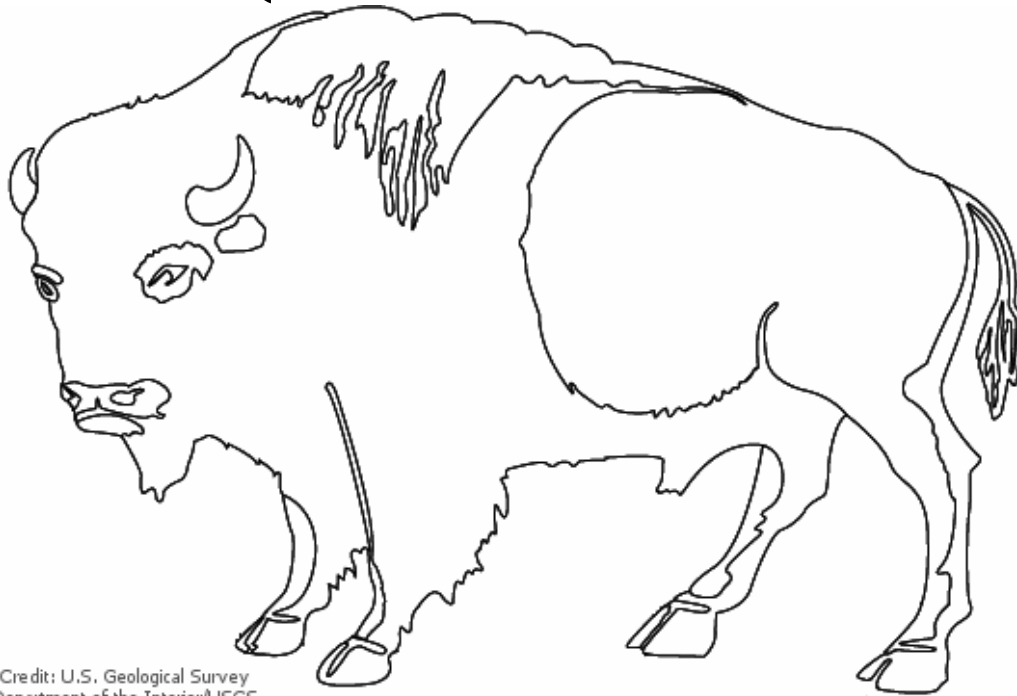
Class: Mammalia

Order: Artiodactyla

Family: Bovidae

Genus: Bison

Species: Bison bison



Credit: U.S. Geological Survey
Department of the Interior/USGS

The Bison is the largest native land mammal in North America. A Bison bull (male) stands five to six feet at the shoulder, is up to 10 feet long, and weighs about 2,000 pounds. They have horns that curve upward and a large hump of muscle which supports their head and thick skull. A Bison has a heavy coat of thick brown fur to help keep it warm in the winter. Full-grown cows (females) are smaller than bulls but have been known to weigh over 1,000 pounds.

Bison are strong, hearty animals that live an average of 15 years in the wild. They are grazing, migratory animals, and

can be found living in the plains, river valleys, prairies, and forests. The Bison have very few predators and are mainly threatened by coyotes, wolves, and grizzly bears. Although Bison appear to be gentle and slow, they are quite agile and can run about 35 miles per hour.

In the past, the Bison was a very important animal to American Indians. It provided shelter, food, clothing, glue, thread, trail-ropes, strings for their bows, coverings for their saddles, vessels to hold water, and a form of currency that could be used with traders. At one time the Bison was almost extinct but conservation efforts have been successful in increasing the Bison population.