

IUCN SSC Bison Specialist Group

2018 Report



Glenn Plumb



Dennis Jorgensen



Kajetan Perzanowski

Chair

Glenn Plumb ⁽¹⁾

Vice Chairs

Dennis Jorgensen ⁽²⁾ (American Bison Section)

Kajetan Perzanowski ⁽³⁾ (European Bison Section)

Red List Authority Coordinators

Greg Wilson ⁽⁴⁾ (American Bison Section)

Wanda Olech ⁽⁵⁾ (European Bison Section)

Location/Affiliation

⁽¹⁾ National Park Service, US (retired)

⁽²⁾ World Wildlife Fund - US, Northern Great Plains Program, Bozeman, Montana, US

⁽³⁾ Catholic University of Lublin, Poland

⁽⁴⁾ Canadian Wildlife Service, Canada

⁽⁵⁾ Warsaw University of Life Sciences, Warsaw, Poland

Number of members

75 (American Bison Section)

34 (European Bison Section)

Social networks

European Bison Section

Facebook:

Stowarzyszenie Miłośników Żubrów

Website:

www.bison-ebcc.eu; www.smz.waw.pl; <http://ebac.sggw.pl>



IUCN SSC BISON SPECIALIST GROUP

Mission statement

The Bison Specialist Group (BSG) is committed to the development of comprehensive and viable strategies and management actions to enhance conservation and ecological restoration of European Bison (*Bison bonasus*) and American Bison (*Bison bison*), including Plains Bison (*Bison bison bison*) and Wood Bison (*Bison bison athabasca*), as wildlife where feasible across their original range. The BSG operates under the authority of the Species Survival Commission of the International Union for Conservation of Nature to conduct comprehensive assessments, provide evidence-based advice and support, and communication and outreach activities in support of this mission.

Projected impact for the 2017-2020 quadrennium

By the end of 2020, the American Bison Section of the BSG anticipates a substantial advance in the knowledge of the location and size of bison herds through a global bison census. The census will be critical to the understanding of the bison metapopulation across North America, as it will include all jurisdictions in all nations and management designs. This will be a crucial tool for recovering bison at local, national, and international levels.

The world population of European Bison is steadily growing with one-third of the species kept in captivity, and the rest in reintroduced populations. This captive population, very large in comparison to other species, is very important for conservation, especially for proper management of genetic diversity. In many European countries, animals in captivity do not have the status of protected species. Building upon decades of hard-won growth in the abundance of captive and reintroduced bison, there is now enhanced need for critical

assessment of legal and management improvements that could serve as the foundation for long-term conservation strategies and implementation throughout the full historic range across Europe. The European Bison Section is undertaking an updated Conservation Action Plan to articulate such a unified approach across Europe. The other problem European Bison face are health threats to the species. In Russia, foot-and-mouth disease outbreaks have been reported after not existing for years in central Europe, while in Western Europe cases of bluetongue disease have been detected. European Bison are very sensitive to both with mortality close to 50%. The future for the species likely lies in an extensive metapopulation; with close involvement of multiple jurisdictions and land owners.

Targets for the 2017-2020 quadrennium

Assess

Green List: produce a new Green List assessment.

Red List: produce an updated Red List assessment report.

Research activities: (1) produce a new global census of the *Bison* genus; (2) prepare guidelines for veterinarians about bison health protection.

Plan

Planning: produce new long-term conservation action plans for the American Bison and the European Bison.

Policy: advise decision makers regionally.

Communicate

Communication: (1) hold a BSG meeting;

(2) create a library.

Scientific meetings: hold a yearly conference.



Bison bonasus
Photo: Janusz Sochacki



Northern Buffalo (Iinnii) Treaty Tribes signing
Photo: Stephen Legault

Bison bison at Yellowstone National Park
Photo: Thomas Szajner

Activities and results 2018

Assess

Green List

i. Designed initial test of draft Green List assessment protocol for the North American Northern Great Plains ecoregion. (KSR #11)

Red List

i. The last Red List assessment was published in 2017, and an updated assessment is on track to be published in 2022, utilising updated information from the Global Bison Census and Green List assessment. (KSR #2)

Research activities

i. Initial draft project description and fundraising for the new global census of the *Bison* genus completed. (KSR #32)

ii. Preparation of first workshop about bison health protection for veterinarians. (KSR #23)

Plan

Planning

i. Developed partnerships with new collaborators to produce a new long-term conservation action plan for the American Bison. (KSR #15)

ii. The conservation action plan for the European Bison has been outlined, authors have been selected for all sections, and the first chapters are completed. (KSR #15)

Policy

i. Some changes have been made to the position of the species in Spanish law; in Poland the national programme for the species is being updated; in Romania the BSG provided help in the reintroduction process. (KSR #27)

Communicate

Communication

i. Started planning for a joint meeting with the American Bison Society in Santa Fe, New Mexico, in October 2019. (KSR #28)

ii. Papers collected in pdf version for a virtual library. (KSR #43)

Scientific meetings

i. A conference to discuss European Bison conservation was held in Muczne, Poland, in September 2018, involving 200 participants. Olech, W., Klich, D. and Perzanowski, K. (2018). Development of a new Action Plan for the European Bison. *Oryx* 53(2):214. [DOI: 10.1017/S0030605318001369] (KSR #28)

Acknowledgements

The American Bison Section thanks the following partners and supporters: World Wildlife Fund-US Northern Great Plains Program, The University of Nebraska-Kearney, Wildlife Conservation Society, Parks Canada, National Bison Association, Inter-Tribal Buffalo Council, National Wildlife Federation, Defenders of Wildlife, and Canadian Wildlife Service. The European Bison Section thanks the following partners and supporters: Polish National Forests, University of Life Sciences in Warsaw, Białowieża National Park, Bank Pekao S.A., Warsaw; European Bison Friends Society.

Summary of activities 2018

Species Conservation Cycle ratio: 3/5

Assess	4	
Plan	3	
Communicate	3	

Main KSRs addressed: 2, 11, 15, 23, 27, 28, 32, 43

KSR: Key Species Result