

IUCN SSC Bison Specialist Group



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NUMBER OF MEMBERS
79

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*) 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 2021–2025

The Bison Specialist Group will undertake collaborative analyses and produce collaborative publications intended to improve conservation planning and action for the American and European Bison species. Of special emphasis will be a new range-wide conservation action plan for the European Bison and continental meta population management for the American Bison.

Targets 2021–2025

ASSESS

- T-001 Complete a Green Status assessment for the American Bison (*Bison bison*).
- T-002 Complete a Red List assessment for the American Bison (*Bison bison*).
- T-005 Reassess the historic range of the American Bison (*Bison bison*).
- T-006 Complete a global census of the genus *Bison* across all stewardship sectors.

PLAN

- T-003 Complete a new conservation action plan for the European Bison (*Bison bonasus*).

ACT

- T-007 Advise regionally for the American Bison (*Bison bison*).
- T-008 Advise regionally for the European Bison (*Bison bonasus*).
- T-009 Provide knowledge support for new restoration actions for the American Bison (*Bison bison*).
- T-010 Provide knowledge support for new restoration actions for the European Bison (*Bison bonasus*).

NETWORK

- T-004 Convene a new BSG Indigenous/Tribal Knowledge Working Group for the American Bison (*Bison bison*).

Activities and results 2021

ASSESS

Green Status

T-001 (KSR 6)

Number of new Green Status of Species assessments completed: 1

Result description: Luke Rogers completed a species Green Status report that was submitted to IUCN for review and publication in 2022.

Red List

T-002 (KSR 6)

Number of national Red List reassessments published: 0

Result description: In fall 2021, Dr Greg Wilson, American Bison Red List Authority Coordinator, convened a trilateral team comprised of national, provincial/state and First Nation/Tribe representatives from Canada, United States and Mexico to prepare an updated Red List assessment. The team is undertaking to review all previous Red List assessment criteria and information and compile updated species status information.



American Bison (*Bison bison*) at the Henry Mountains, Utah, US
Photo: Dustin Ranglack

Research activities

T-005 (KSR 5)

Number of scientific publications about species research that acknowledge SSC affiliation: 1

Result description: A manuscript has been completed and submitted as a Data Paper to the journal *Ecology*. The project combined all validated bison location data across palaeontology, archaeology and historical ecology records for North America back to 200,000 years before present and created a new convex polygon extent of occurrence (EEO) map at the benchmark date of 1500 CE, which will be used in a new Red List assessment.

T-006 (KSR 5)

Number of research projects completed or supported by SSC members per taxonomic group and region: 1

Result description: Luke Rogers completed the first global census for the genus *Bison* across all stewardship sectors, which was published as his master's thesis by the University of Nebraska at Kearney under Dr Dustin Ranglack, BSG Vice Chair for the American Bison section.

PLAN

Planning

T-003 (KSR 8)

Number of conservation plans/strategies developed: 0

Result description: By 2021, there were ca. 6,800 European Bison (*Bison bonasus*) in 47 free-ranging subpopulations across 10 countries. The 2020 IUCN Red List assessment (Plumb, G., Kowalczyk, R. and Hernandez-Blanco, J.A. 2020. *Bison bonasus*. *The IUCN Red List of Threatened Species* 2020: e.T2814A45156279. <https://dx.doi.org/10.2305/IUCN.UK.2020-3.RLTS.T2814A45156279.en>. Accessed on 16 June 2022.) re-categorised the species from Vulnerable to Near Threatened, with ongoing threats highlighted (low genetic diversity, small population size and habitat fragmentation). Progress has been made in improving knowledge about the species and in implementing actions that have increased its abundance and distribution, yet there is a diversity of viewpoints on what future success for the species might look like. Consequently, the Bison Specialist Group, European Association of Zoos and Aquaria, European Bison Conservation Center, Rewilding Europe, WWF, Tierpark Berlin,



American Bison (*Bison bison*) calf
at Yellowstone National Park
Photo: Dustin Ranglack

European Bison (*Bison bonasus*)
Photo: Rafal Kowalczyk



European Bison at dawn
Photo: Rafal Kowalczyk



Humboldt University–Berlin, and Polish Academy of Sciences–Mammal Research Institute have agreed to collaborate on a European Bison Conservation Action Plan, to be published within the next 2–3 years.

ACT

Conservation actions

T-007 (KSR 10)

Number of technical documents provided to support conservation actions: 1

Result description: During 2021, the BSG informally consulted on bison restoration activities on Tribal lands in the United States.

T-008 (KSR 10)

Number of technical documents provided to support conservation actions: 1

Result description: During 2021, the BSG provided input to the Lithuanian Interior Ministry regarding European Bison Red List conservation status, and informally commented on pending restoration activities in Ukraine.

T-009 (KSR 10)

Number of species with increased or prevented decrease in population or range size, as a result of conservation actions: 1

Result description: During 2021, the BSG informally advised Mexican government agencies regarding the Red List status of the American Bison and consulted with the private sectors in Canada and United States.

T-010 (KSR 10)

Number of species with increased or prevented decrease in population or range size, as a result of conservation actions: 1

Result description: During 2021, the BSG informally consulted on pending restoration activities in Ukraine.

NETWORK

Capacity building

T-004 (KSR 2)

Number of people trained in conservation action: 0

Result description: BSG American Bison section member Dennis Jorgensen has convened a working group and is developing potential action items for 2022–2023.

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Summary of achievements

Total number of targets 2021–2025: 10

Geographic regions: 7 America, 3 Europe

Actions during 2021:

Assess: 4 (KSR 5, 6)

Plan: 1 (KSR 8)

Act: 4 (KSR 10)

Network: 1 (KSR 2)

Overall achievement 2021–2025:

