

OUR Wildlife Heritage

Do you know what the official Wyoming state mammal is? (Hint: It's also on our state flag.)

At one time, there were millions of buffalo, or bison, in our country. Vast herds grazed from Nevada to Pennsylvania. Settlers began moving west in the 1800s and railroads were built across the country. People slaughtered buffalo and left the bodies to rot. By 1900, the millions of buffalo had been reduced to only a few hundred.

Buffalo played a big role in the early history of Wyoming, especially for our earliest residents. The Indian tribes of the plains depended on buffalo—and not just for food. Indians used almost every part of the buffalo's body, even the horns, hooves, bones and internal organs.



Buffalo played a big role in the early history of Wyoming.

Most important was the hide. From this they made the clothes they wore and the tepees they lived in. They also made drums, war shields and lots of other things from the skin. When the buffalo disappeared, the Indians' way of life was changed.

The buffalo, a grass-eater, is the biggest mammal in Wyoming. A large one can weigh a ton. Although the huge buffalo herds of early America are gone, you can still see some of their descendants. Four good places to see buffalo in Wyoming are Yellowstone National Park, Grand Teton National Park, the National Elk Refuge (in Jackson), and Hot Springs State Park (in Thermopolis). Take a trip and see a famous part of our living wildlife heritage.



Wyoming's state flag.

