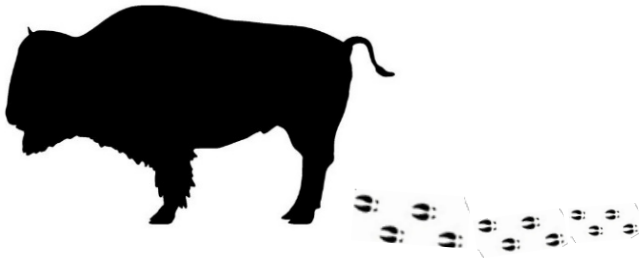




Midewin National Tallgrass Prairie

Bison Reintroduction Experiment Q&A



What is the experiment?

The bison reintroduction experiment will help determine if bison grazing patterns benefit the restoration of the tallgrass prairie. This is done by Floristic Quality Monitoring, grassland bird diversity and abundance, and non-native plant abundance. The experiment is expected to take 15 to 20 years.

What are the measures of success?

Success is measured through data collection and analysis, and the monitoring of:

- grassland bird populations
- native grass and forb (flowering plant) populations
- visitor-bison interactions

The U.S. Forest Service will adapt the management plan during the experiment, amending as needed.

Why are the bison being introduced onto pasture with non-native grasses?

The experiment is intended to measure how bison can help restore a portion of our land to tallgrass prairie. A pasture with non-native plant species is the starting point. We will learn how reintroducing a missing link, bison, back into the ecological chain will affect tallgrass prairie restoration.

Why are we using bison instead of cattle for the experiment?

In the early stages of restoration, grasses dominate the ecosystem to such a degree that they out-compete the forbs for resources. Bison prefer grasses, whereas cattle prefer forbs. By introducing bison as the primary grazers, the U.S. Forest Service hopes the dominant grasses will decrease in number so other plant species may thrive.

How was the experiment site chosen?

This site was chosen due to its proximity to the Supervisors Office (Midewin NTP Headquarters), the conducive soil types for native prairie plant and forb growth, and its vast variety of populations for a baseline grassland bird measurement.

What does the experiment area consist of?

- 1,030 acres of non-native prairie
- There are 4 sub-pastures
- The corral handling facility is centrally located between the 4 sub-pastures
- A 6 ft. tall fence comprised of woven wire and barbed wire defines the pasture perimeter
- A 5 ft. tall interior fence comprised of 5 strands of barbed wire that divides the area into 4 sub-pastures

When did the bison arrive at Midewin NTP?

The bulls arrived on October 16, 2015. They came from Colorado. The cows travelled from South Dakota to Midewin NTP. They arrived on October 23, 2015.

How many bison are at Midewin NTP?

The U.S. Forest Service started with a small herd of 23 cows & 4 bulls. The herd will be allowed to grow to a maximum of 100 animals based on the sustainability of 1,030 acres of pasture. Every year the herd grows, so it is hard to keep an accurate number of bison in the herd.



What do we do with the bison when we cull the bison herd?

Previously, Midewin NTP has donated bison to Buffalo Rock State Park in Ottawa, IL and has also donated bison to the University of Georgia to help educate their students with humane treatment techniques. Forest Service staff also works with the Intertribal Buffalo Council to divvy the bison between Native American Tribes.

What are the Tribal interests and involvement in this experiment?

Tribes have expressed interest in obtaining our bison, as culling of the herd warrants. Consequent to the death of a bison, tribes have expressed interest in procurement of the remains for traditional and ceremonial purposes.

Will the public be able to enter the bison pastures?

Due to safety concerns, **no one** is permitted access in the bison pastures. There is a fence along the boundary of the pasture and signs are posted for clear designation of the bison pasture.

Visit Midewin National Tallgrass Prairie

Welcome Center
30239 S. State Route 53
Wilmington, IL 60481
815.423.6370
www.fs.usda.gov/Midewin

Twitter: @MidewinNatTP
Facebook: U.S. Forest Service - Midewin National Tallgrass Prairie

Visitors are encouraged to stop at the Welcome Center for current information, maps and advisories.

When & where can the public view the bison?

The public can view the bison from 4 am to 10 pm daily year-round. The bison pasture can be accessed from the Iron Bridge Trailhead or the Welcome Center. Follow the signs to the pasture for an opportunity to view the bison. There are also two available overlooks with telescopes and benches. These overlooks are stationed on the West side of the bison pasture and the Northeast corner of the bison pasture.

Will you see the bison?

The bison are on a large pasture with rolling hills. Bison are not always visible from the perimeter of the pasture. A live camera viewing the bison grazing area can be seen from 6 am to 6pm on the tallgrass prairie website.

Staff and volunteers are in the process of renovating a smaller show pasture, located at Iron Bridge Trailhead, that will allow weekend public viewing of a select group of bison from the Midewin NTP herd.

If the bison escape from the pasture, what will the response be?

Through low stress handling, the U.S. Forest Service will retrieve the bison and return bison to the pasture.

