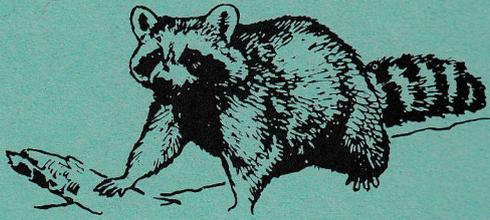


**Mammals  
of the**

**NATIONAL  
BISON  
RANGE**

**MOIESE, MONTANA**





The National Bison Range lies in the Flathead Valley of western Montana, approximately 50 miles (80 km) north of Missoula and 30 miles (48 km) south of Flathead Lake. It was established in 1908, with the aid of the American Bison Society, for the preservation and maintenance of a representative herd of American bison, or buffalo. This area, one of the oldest wildlife refuges in the nation, is administered by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service.

Bison and other big-game animals are restricted to the refuge by heavy-woven wire fence, which surrounds the 18,541 acres (7504 ha) that make up the range. Principle habitat types are the *palouse prairie* (wheatgrass-fescue mixture) and the *montane forest* (Douglas fir-ponderosa pine mixture). The Bison Range varies in elevation from 2,585 feet (788 m) above sea level at headquarters to 4,885 feet (1489 m) at the Highpoint Lookout.

The following list contains 40 species observed on the range. Anyone detecting errors in this list, or positively identifying species not included here, is urged to contact the refuge office.

### SHREWS

**Vagrant Shrew (*Sorex vagrans*).** Abundant along stream bottoms and in moist, heavily vegetated areas. Less abundant in the montane forest belt.

### BATS

**Little Brown Bat (*Myotis lucifugus*).** Commonly found in old buildings and attics, hollow trees, and rock ledges. Most often seen flying over or near water on summer evenings.

**Long-eared Myotis (*Myotis evotis*).** Present, but status unknown; there is one specimen from the refuge preserved in the Zoology Department of Montana State University.

**Silver-haired Bat (*Lasiorycteris noctivagans*).** A specimen was collected in 1959 and another in 1960. Other bats believed to be of this variety have often been seen along the Jocko River. This species is believed to be more common than the two positive records would indicate.



### BEARS AND RACCOONS

**Black Bear (*Ursus americanus*).** From 3 to 7 individuals are year-round residents of the Bison Range. At times, they feed heavily on thornapple and chokecherry fruit.

**Raccoon (*Procyon lotor*).** A recent arrival to the Flathead Valley. Presence on the range was first indicated by tracks found in 1960.



### WEASELS, SKUNKS & BADGERS

**Short-tailed Weasel (*Mustela erminea*).** Found throughout the refuge, although they are rather scarce.

**Long-tailed Weasel (*Mustela frenata*).** Found in limited numbers throughout the refuge; more common than *erminea*.

**Mink (*Mustela vison*).** Fairly common along the main water courses.

**Striped Skunk (*Mephitis mephitis*).** Fairly common at lower elevations but appear to be subject to population fluctuations.

**Badger (*Taxidea taxus*).** Found occasionally in prairie habitat where rodents are common.

## DOGS

**Coyote (*Canis latrans*).** Present throughout the refuge. Feeds heavily on small mammals.

**Red Fox (*Vulpes fulva*).** Very few observations of this species have been recorded on the range. First record was in 1936 when one was trapped. A recent observation was made in 1975.

## CATS

**Mountain Lion (*Felis concolor*).** Rare at best, and then only a transient. The first recorded observation was in 1932 when one was trapped on the range. One was observed in 1975 by a refuge visitor.

**Bobcat (*Lynx rufus*).** Found in limited numbers in the more rocky areas and in the creek bottoms.

## RODENTS

**Yellow-bellied Marmot (*Marmota flaviventris*).** Common in suitable rocky localities, especially in the vicinity of the Snake Pit and in the clay banks along Mission Creek.

**Columbian Ground Squirrel (*Citellus columbianus*).** Found in varying numbers in the grasslands. The species is subject to rather drastic population fluctuation. It is a favorite food for badgers.

**Yellow Pine Chipmunk (*Eutamias amoenus*).** Common to abundant in forested, brushy, and rocky areas.



**Red Squirrel (*Tamiasciurus hudsonicus*).** Found in moderate numbers in the Douglas fir-ponderosa pine belt.

**Northern Pocket Gopher (*Thomomys talpoides*).** Common in grasslands and scarce to absent in forested areas.



**Beaver (*Castor canadensis*).** Occasional along Mission Creek and the Jocko River.

**Deer Mouse (*Peromyscus maniculatus*).** Abundant throughout the refuge.

**Bushy-tailed Woodrat, or Pack Rat (*Neotoma cinerea*).** Found occasionally in old buildings and rocky areas.

**Meadow Vole (*Microtus pennsylvanicus*).** Common in grasslands at lower elevations. The population of this species fluctuates quite widely on a 3- to 5-year cycle.

**Long-tailed Vole (*Microtus longicaudus*).** Found at higher elevations, mainly in damp wooded habitat.

**Mountain Vole (*Microtus montanus*).** Common in grasslands, usually at higher elevations than *M. pennsylvanicus*.

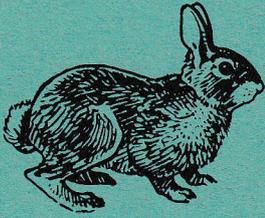


**Muskrat (*Ondatra zibethica*).** Occurs in quieter waters along the main watercourses and in some ponds.

**House Mouse (*Mus musculus*).** Common in and around human habitations.

**Porcupine (*Erethizon dorsatum*).** Seen occasionally in timbered areas and creek bottoms.

## RABBITS AND HARES



**Varying or Snowshoe Hare (*Lepus americanus*).** Quite uncommon; restricted to the Douglas fir-ponderosa pine forest.

**White-tailed Jack Rabbit (*Lepus townsendi*).** There are few, if any, jack rabbits left in this valley although they are reported as having been fairly common at one time.

**Mountain Cottontail (*Sylvilagus nuttalli*).** Occasionally seen but mainly at the lower elevations.

## HOOFED MAMMALS



**Elk (*Cervus canadensis*).** Found mainly in the Douglas fir-ponderosa pine forested areas. A herd of about 75 animals is maintained. These Rocky Mountain elk were introduced from Idaho and Wyoming during the years 1911-1916.

**Whitetail Deer (*Odocoileus virginianus*).** Although white-tailed deer habitat is somewhat limited, the herd is estimated to vary from 150 to 200 animals. These deer were first introduced to the refuge in 1910, a gift from the City of Missoula.

**Mule Deer (*Odocoileus hemionus*).** These animals were introduced into the Bison Range from Yellowstone Park in 1918. The present herd is maintained at about 200 to 300 animals, which range at higher elevations.

**Moose (*Alces alces*).** Although moose are not uncommon to western Montana, there is only one record for the refuge. This was a single cow that managed to find its way into the refuge in August 1958. It was seen frequently for about 2 or 3 weeks after which it apparently found its way out.

**Pronghorn, or Antelope (*Antilocapra americana*).** Pronghorns were first introduced in 1910 but apparently did not prosper; the last of these animals disappeared in 1926. The present herd is the result of introductions started in 1951 for research purposes. This herd will likely be maintained at about 100 head.



**Bison, or Buffalo (*Bison bison*).** Bison were introduced when the refuge was established in 1908. The present herd is kept at between 300 and 500 head, depending upon range conditions and the season of the year.

**Bighorn Sheep (*Ovis canadensis*).** Bighorn sheep were introduced from the Rocky Mountains Park, Banff, Alberta, in 1922. The herd is maintained at between 50 and 100 animals. Bighorns frequent the higher and rockier country, mainly on the south of the refuge.

**Mountain Goat (*Oreamnos americanus*).** Introduced on the range May 22, 1964, from the Sun River area of Montana. They spend most of their time on the south side of the range where there is a mixture of Douglas fir-ponderosa pine forest and open rocky slopes. Their numbers are kept between 14 and 18.