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FIRE ON BISON RANGE
IN MONTANA UNDER CONTROL

A disastrous fire started by an early-morning bolt of lightning at the National Bison Range near Moiese, Mont., on August 11 was apparently under control on August 12, after burning about 5,300 of the Range's 18,500 acres, and threatening destruction of one of the few herds of buffalo remaining in the United States, according to reports received today (August 13) by the Bureau of Biological Survey from Dr. Robert S. Norton, Superintendent of the Range. The fire hazard, Dr. Norton reports, remains high, and fire patrols are being maintained.

Unestimated losses are reported among mule-deer, elk, and mountain-sheep herds on the burned area, but the Range's herd of about 600 buffalo has apparently escaped, most of these animals having been grazing on areas that have probably been saved by the fire-fighters. Reserves and equipment were rushed from Missoula, Mont., by the Forest Service in response to an emergency call, and approximately 100 local men were employed to assist the Range employees.

The fire, starting from a bolt of lightning at about 5 o'clock in the morning, was soon a wall of roaring flames in the dry range grass, destroying forage and an extensive belt of timber that afforded shelter to the buffalo during severe weather. High winds pushed the flames across grass and timber land, as dry as powder from the long prevailing drought.

No estimate can be made of the loss of animals resulting from the fire, but the destruction of vegetation and timber cover over such a wide area will probably make it necessary to obtain emergency food supplies for the surviving animals during the winter months.

The threatened herd of bison, which numbers about 600 animals, is one of the 6 principal herds remaining in the United States, the sole remnant of the herds numbering millions of animals that in frontier days roamed the country west of the Mississippi. Other herds are maintained at the Wind Cave National Game Preserve in South Dakota, at Sullys Hill National Game Preserve in North Dakota, and at the Niobrara Big Game Preserve in Nebraska. All these herds are administered by the Bureau of Biological Survey. Another large herd is protected in the Yellowstone Park area by the National Park Service, and a herd on the Wichita Forest in Oklahoma is administered by the Forest Service.