

U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service

National Bison Range
58355 Bison Range Road
Moiese, MT 59824
406 / 644 2211
406 / 644 2661 fax
bisonrange@fws.gov
http://www.fws.gov/refuge/national_bison_range/

After Hours Contact
Lake County Sheriff
406 / 883 7301
Emergency: 911

For State Relay Service
TTY / Voice: 711

U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service
<http://www.fws.gov>

For Refuge Information
1 800 / 344 WILD

November 2019



National Bison Range

Nłto?x^wenč (*Fenced-in Place*)

Ya-qa-kiḥ Haqa'ki Kamququkuḥ
'lyamu (*Where the Buffalo Live*)



Bull bison in spring
Dave Fitzpatrick / USFWS

Welcome



This blue goose, designed by J.N. "Ding" Darling, is the symbol of the National Wildlife Refuge System.



Dave Fitzpatrick / USFWS

Fall colors along Red Sleep Mountain Drive auto tour route near Pauline Creek.

A Home for Wildlife

The National Bison Range (Refuge) is one of over 565 national wildlife refuges and 38 wetland management districts in the National Wildlife Refuge System – a network of lands set aside specifically for wildlife. Managed by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, the Refuge System is a living heritage, preserving wildlife and habitat for people today and for generations to come.

The 18,766-acre Refuge is located near the geographic center of the Flathead Indian Reservation, home to the Confederated Salish and Kootenai Tribes (CSKT) comprised of the Séliš (SEH-leesh), Qlispé (Kah-lee-SPEH), and Ksanka (KSAHN-ka) people.

In the late 19th century, as bison were being slaughtered on the Great Plains, the Qlispé (Kalispel or Pend d'Oreille) people helped save the bison by bringing orphaned calves from the plains back to the Reservation. Those calves were the start of what grew into the largest bison herd in the nation at the time. The Refuge's bison herd is directly descended from these bison; Tribal members continue to have deep relationships with this place and these sacred animals.

The Refuge encompasses a large area of native intermountain grassland, a rare habitat in North America which provides essential habitat for a variety of birds, mammals, plants, and other living creatures, along with bison. Well-known for its incredible wildlife viewing and photographic opportunities, this is a great place to experience a natural area in western Montana.

The Refuge is also part of the National Bison Conservation Initiative, an effort to restore genetically pure bison herds within the specie's historic range. As part of the Refuge management efforts, excess bison are removed each year and donated to partners for cultural or conservation purposes.

In the early 20th century, Congress passed laws that opened the Reservation to non-Indian homesteading. Around the same time, Congress expropriated land from the Tribes for the establishment of the Refuge, and President Theodore Roosevelt signed legislation on May 23, 1908, authorizing funds to obtain suitable land for the Refuge. This was the first time Congress appropriated tax dollars to secure land specifically to conserve wildlife.

Enjoying the Refuge

The visitor center is open mid-May through early-October. Staff at the visitor center can answer your questions and provide you with the latest wildlife sighting locations. Visitor center exhibits provide information about the wildlife and the natural and cultural history of the Refuge.

Refuge Hours

The Refuge is open during daylight hours, weather and road conditions permitting. Closing times vary seasonally and are posted at the entrance gate and at the visitor center.

Wildlife Drives

The primary means of experiencing the Refuge is by motor vehicle. The wildlife is accustomed to vehicles, so cars serve as an excellent observation and photography blind. Walking away from vehicles is prohibited except along designated trails or fishing access.

The West Loop and Prairie Drives are short drives in relatively flat land and are open year-round.

Large vehicles (over 30 feet long) and those towing trailers are welcome on the West Loop, but they are not permitted on Prairie Drive. Trailers can be left at the visitor center parking lot.

Red Sleep Mountain Drive is a 19-mile, one-way loop road that gains 2,000 feet in elevation. It is typically open mid-May to mid-October. There are many switchbacks and 10% grades along the drive. Allow at least 2 hours for this drive.

Trails and Walks

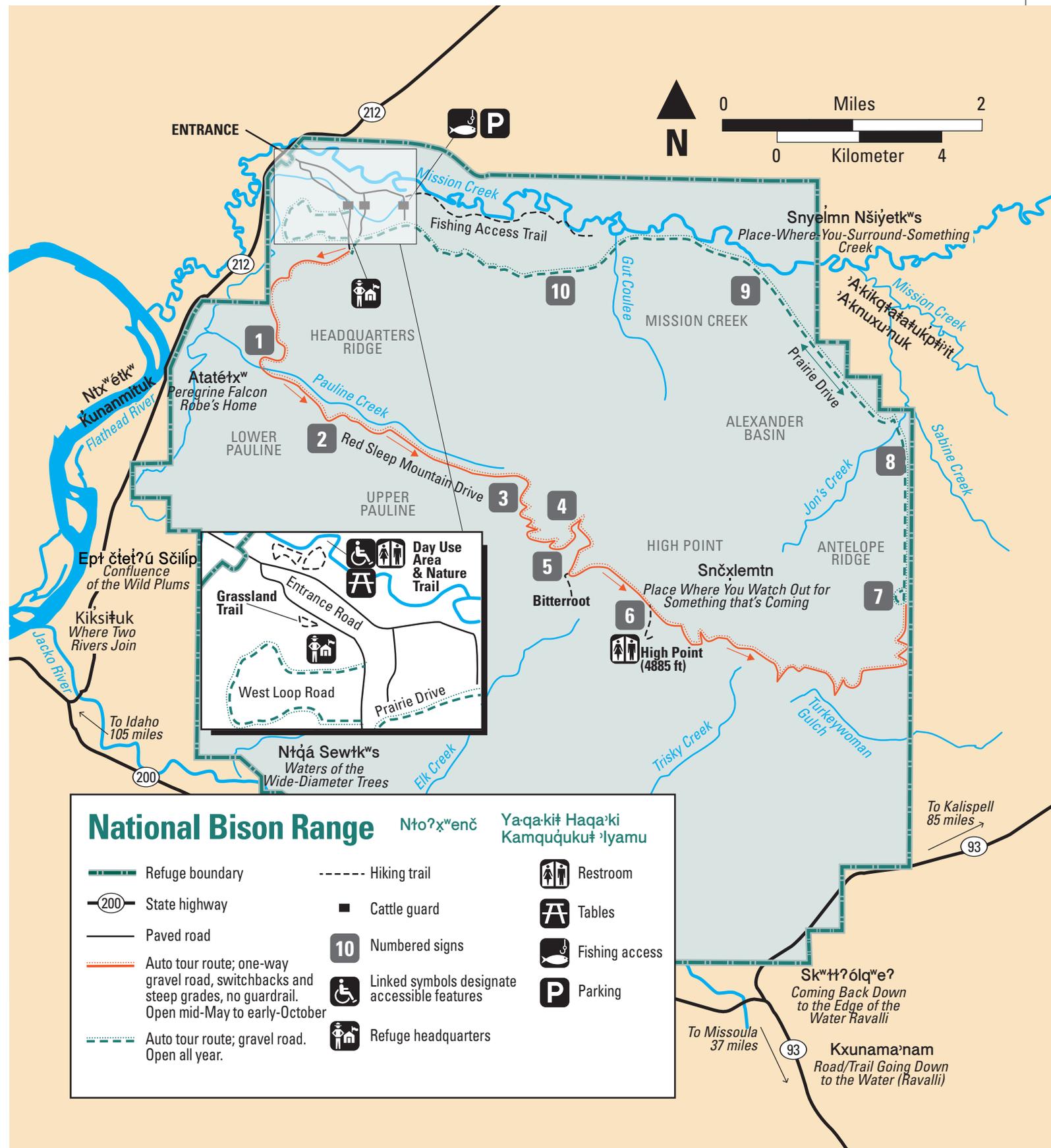
Located next to the Day Use Area, the 1-mile Nature Trail and 1/4-mile Grassland Trail are ways to experience the Refuge on foot. During the summer season, visitors along Red Sleep Mountain Drive can also walk the 1/2-mile Bitterroot Trail or hike to the highest point of the Refuge (4,885' elevation) along the 1-mile round-trip High Point Trail.

Protecting the Refuge

For your safety and the protection of resources, please follow all of the regulations.

Safety and Other Regulations

- Never approach animals. The animals at the National Bison Range are wild and unpredictable, no matter how calm they appear to be. The safest (and often best) view of wildlife is from inside a car. Always stay at least 100 yards (91 m) away from bears and wolves, and at least 25 yards (23 m) away from all other animals, including bison, deer and elk.
- To protect wildlife and visitors, pets must be on a leash and under control.



National Bison Range Nto?x'enč Ya-qaki# Haqa'ki Kamququku# 'lyamu

Refuge boundary	Hiking trail	Restroom
State highway	Cattle guard	Tables
Paved road	Numbered signs	Fishing access
Auto tour route; one-way gravel road, switchbacks and steep grades, no guardrail. Open mid-May to early-October	Linked symbols designate accessible features	Parking
Auto tour route; gravel road. Open all year.	Refuge headquarters	

- Collection or disturbance of natural objects such as plants, animals, feathers, and antlers is not allowed, except by special permit.
- Fishing regulations are available at the visitor center.

Vehicles

- Remain at your vehicle and on the road unless you are hiking a designated trail.
- All passengers must be seated inside vehicles or inside truck beds while the vehicle is in motion.
- Motorcycles, ATVs and bicycles are only allowed on the paved roads within the visitor center and Day Use areas - not on the Auto-tour routes.
- Parking is allowed along the wildlife drives, as long as traffic is not impeded.

Firearms

Persons possessing, transporting, or carrying firearms on National Wildlife Refuge System lands must comply with all provisions of State and local law. Persons may only use (discharge) firearms in accordance with Refuge regulations (50 CFR 27.42 and specific Refuge regulations in 50 CFR Part 32).

Red Sleep Mountain Drive Self-guided Tour

Red Sleep Drive is named for Louise Kʷil Sʔitʰ or Red Sleep. She was a woman of Salish, Nez Perce and Qlispé (Kalispel or Pend d'Oreille) descent and was married to Duncan McDonald, who was a Scottish and Nez Perce fur trader, interpreter, and tribal leader. Duncan McDonald assisted Dr. Morton Elrod of the American Bison Society in reviewing and recommending the Ravalli Hill location on the Flathead Indian Reservation for establishment of a national bison preserve.

The following information corresponds with numbered signs located along the Red Sleep Mountain Drive.

eBird Hotspots

We invite you to join our bird monitoring program by following the National Bison Range eBird protocol (available at the visitor center and online) to record bird observations at the numbered signs. located along the Red Sleep Mountain Drive.

1. The expansive grasslands on the National Bison Range consist of native bunchgrasses and wildflowers. Some species of conservation concern, like the grasshopper sparrow, nest only in these bunchgrasses.

2. Pauline Creek is an intermittent stream with several small impoundments that provide water for wildlife. Watch for a variety of songbirds that inhabit these riparian areas. During the summer season, black bears search these thickets for berries.

3. This fenced area, known as Elk Lane, was constructed to aid in bison management by joining the grazing units within the Refuge to a corral system. In spring and early summer, abundant wildflowers, birds, and other wildlife can be seen.

4. Edge habitat is where two different habitat types meet. These “edges” are excellent places to view wildlife, especially birds. Watch for Lewis’s woodpeckers foraging for flying insects.

5. Forest communities thrive at high elevations and in moist draws and depressions. Watch for red-naped sapsuckers in this habitat.

6. High Point trailhead is 4,700 feet above sea level. The highest elevation on the Refuge is 4,885 feet above sea level, a 1-mile round-trip hike from the trailhead. To the east is the 93,000-acre Mission Mountains Tribal Wilderness Area, where the

nearly 10,000-foot high peaks are part of the first wilderness area designated by an Indian Tribe in the United States.

7. Grasslands have evolved along with grazing animals such as bison, elk, and pronghorn, who depend on the grasslands for survival. Listen for the buzzy songs of clay-colored and grasshopper sparrows in the grasslands.

8. Bison wallows are shallow, circular depressions in the ground, often found in clay banks. Bison roll in these areas to rid themselves of insects. They also display dominance by displacing lower-ranked animals from the wallows.

9. Cottonwood and juniper trees line the creek and provide lush vegetation that serves as cover for wildlife. Watch for bald eagles year-round and for trumpeter swans in Mission Creek during the winter.

10. The bison corrals were built by Refuge staff to provide a place for safe handling of the bison. During fall, bison are captured to manage the population size and assess health.

Accessibility Information

Equal opportunity to participate in and benefit from programs and activities of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service is available to all individuals regardless of physical or mental ability. Dial 711 for a free connection to the State relay service for TTY and voice calls to and from people with hearing and speech disabilities. For more information or to address accessibility needs, please contact the Refuge staff at 406 / 644 2211, or the U.S. Department of the Interior, Office of Equal Opportunity, 1849 C Street, NW, Washington, DC 20240.



Dave Fitzpatrick / USFWS

Dave Fitzpatrick / USFWS

(top) Mountain Bluebird;
(bottom) Bee pollinating an Arrowleaf Balsamroot flower