

aim to restore this charismatic keystone species. The Blackfoot Reservation in northern Montana just two hours from Lethbridge recently received 88 bison. Their bison are coming from Elk Island National Park; today's Elk Island bison are descendants of herds originating from Montana. It's a true homecoming story.

Our neighbours to the south also signed the *Bison Legacy Act*, designating the bison as America's new National Mammal. The bison now joins the bald eagle as a U.S. symbol. Advocates of the Act say it will be an important step to increase bison restoration efforts and include the animal in classroom education.

In Canada, Banff National Park will welcome a herd of 30 to 50 plains bison by January 2017 to the Panther and Dormer rivers areas north of Banff. Fencing has been undergoing field testing, to ensure natural movements of other animals are not impacted. During the consultation process, participants voiced concern over bison moving onto adjacent ranchland. How Parks Canada will manage potential escapees remains to be disclosed to the public.

Lu Carbyn, a research biologist, suggested the following in a WLA article last year about the Banff reintroduction project: "initial introduction of 40 animals will, therefore, result in the population of over 80,000 animals or so over a 50-year period." He predicts wolf predation will not be enough to keep the population in check and that human intervention (likely by culling) will be necessary. A scientific paper released in February 2016 estimates that Banff National Park has enough habitat area to support 600-1,000 bison – this would easily make the Banff herd the largest plains bison herd in southern Alberta.

Bison reintroduction is happening outside of North America too. The European bison, also known as the wisent, was reintroduced to the Maashorst in the Nether-

For Bison: A Pretty Good Year

The bison, North America's largest land mammal, has made headlines in the conservation world this year. Across the prairies of North America, "rewilding" efforts

lands in March 2016. The wisent has also been reintroduced into Poland, Belarus, Romania, Germany, and Spain.

Here's the last good news story about bison: the first bison calves born in Alaska in more than a century were spotted in late April. These births represent a huge conservation win and deserve celebration.

For more information about the biology, distribution, and issues relating to bison in Alberta, visit <https://albertawilderness.ca/issues/wildlife/bison/>

- *Andrea Johancsik*