

Name \_\_\_\_\_

## The Role of Bison in the Ecosystem



Bison play a vital role in their ecosystems, especially in grasslands. These large, powerful mammals help maintain healthy habitats for other animals and plants. One of the main ways bison contribute is by grazing on grasses. As they eat, they prevent plants from overgrowing, which helps keep the land open and balanced. This process also allows sunlight to reach smaller plants, helping them grow.

Bison also help the soil stay healthy. As they move, their hooves dig into the ground, loosening the soil and helping seeds take root. This natural soil disturbance encourages the growth of new plants, which provides food for other animals like rabbits and birds.

Another important contribution of bison is nutrient recycling. Bison droppings return essential nutrients to the soil, acting like a natural fertilizer. This helps plants grow stronger and healthier, creating a better habitat for all species in the area.

Bison also create small depressions in the ground when they roll around, known as wallows. These wallows collect rainwater, forming temporary ponds where insects, birds, and other small creatures can find water.

In the food chain, bison are herbivores, meaning they only eat plants. Predators like wolves and bears may hunt weaker or older bison, which helps control their population and keeps the ecosystem balanced.

Overall, bison are essential to keeping their habitats healthy. They shape the land, support plant growth, and help other animals thrive. Protecting bison and their habitats ensures that many species can continue to live and grow in balanced ecosystems.