

Alexander Basin - principal antelope habitat on the Range, and long-favored by buffalo during the "rut" or breeding season in August.

Buffalo concentrated on preferred range areas such as this have caused extensive damage to both plants and soil. A system of deferred-rotation grazing now minimizes the reoccurrence of such damage and ensures proper utilization of forage. This explains the need for the division fences you have seen. Such fences do detract somewhat from the desired natural qualities of the bison-range association, but are nonetheless necessary for proper grazing distribution and forage utilization.

Mission Creek - originates in the Mission Mountains and flows into the Flathead River near Moiese.

When ponds and reservoirs throughout the Flathead Valley become ice-covered during the winter months, as many as

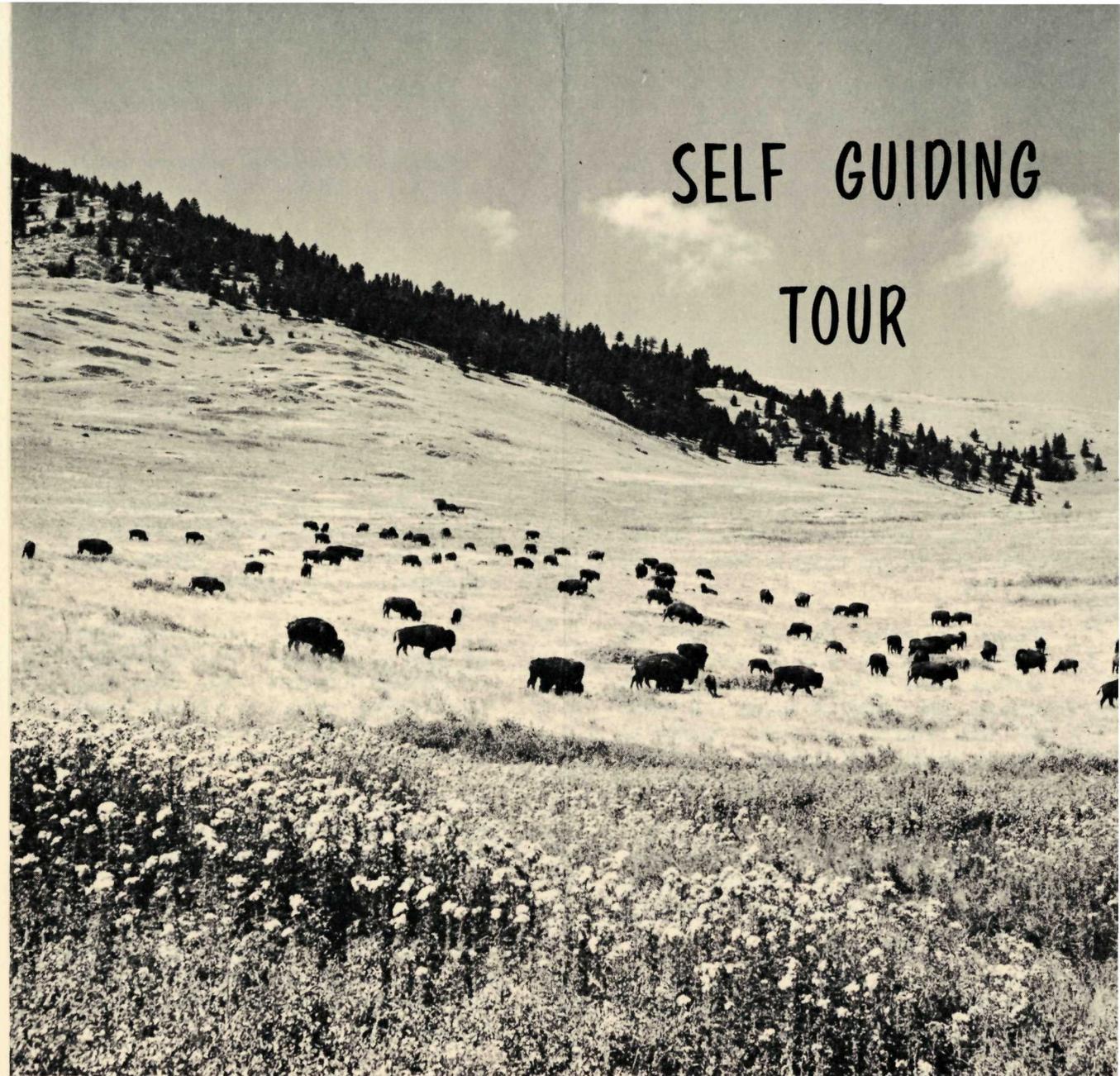
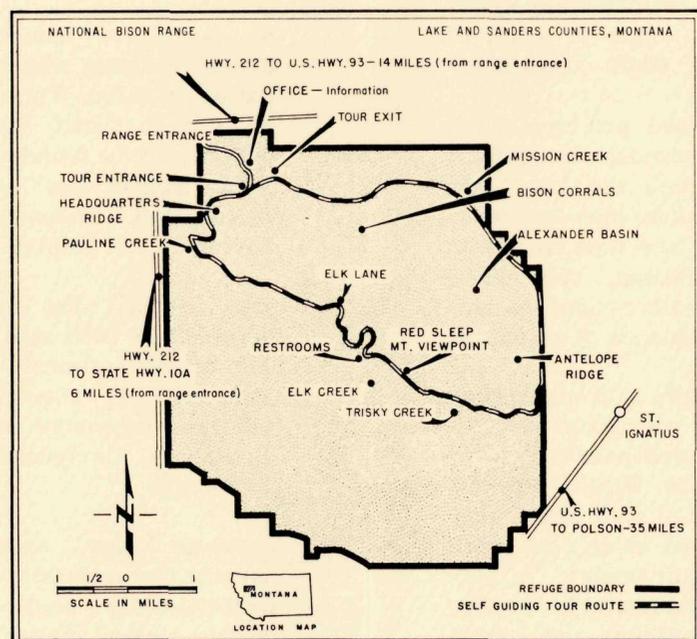
10,000 mallards may concentrate along this stream within boundaries of the Range.

Common summering waterfowl species include the mallard, American widgeon, redhead and common golden-eye. Brushy bottoms contain numerous white-tailed deer, and an occasional elk.

Bison Corrals - the buffalo herd is worked here during the annual roundup. A predetermined number of animals is culled from the herd at this time to maintain a proper balance with the available food supply.

A right turn at the tour exit will lead you to the elk exhibition pasture. We invite you to observe and photograph the various wildlife in the headquarters exhibition area.

Range personnel are available at the office to answer questions, and assist you in any way possible to make your visit an enjoyable one.



SELF GUIDING TOUR



UNITED STATES
DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
FISH AND WILDLIFE SERVICE
BUREAU OF SPORT FISHERIES
AND WILDLIFE

NATIONAL BISON RANGE
MOIESE, MONTANA

SELF GUIDING TOUR ROUTE NATIONAL BISON RANGE

The self guiding tour route through the National Bison Range has been developed to provide you with an opportunity to see and enjoy the Range and its wildlife. This tour guide is designed to enhance your understanding and appreciation of the area. A bird and mammal list, and general information leaflet are also available at Range headquarters.

The tour route is approximately 19 miles in length, over a good graveled road, and may be completed in one and one half to two hours' time. If your schedule allows for a more leisurely trip, you may easily enjoy several hours or an entire day in the study of nature along the way.

Please remember that the amount of wildlife you see will depend on the weather, time of day, the habits of each species, the speed at which you drive the tour route, and your ability to "spot" birds and animals. You will find a pair of binoculars or spotting scope very helpful.

CAUTION: To ensure your brief journey will be safe as well as enjoyable, we ask you to carefully consider the following points:

Buffalo are totally unpredictable and may be quite dangerous. Remain in or near your car at all times.

Rattlesnakes are generally quite common along the tour route and throughout the Range. Watch carefully where you place your feet and hands.

Fire is the greatest danger to the Range. Be particularly careful with cigarettes and matches.

This tour route contains several rather steep downgrades. Watch for caution signs, and reduce speed as directed. Drive carefully.

Firearms are not permitted on the Range.

Motorized two-wheel vehicles and bicycles are prohibited from the tour route.

BE CONSIDERATE: Your conduct on the Range may very well govern the degree of enjoyment experienced by those who will follow you, and may determine the future of the self-guiding tour itself.

Please use your litter bag. Nothing so thoroughly desecrates a natural setting than an accumulation of human refuse and garbage.

You will observe many beautiful wild flowers and other attractive forms of vegetation along the way. Please leave all plants for others to enjoy.

Enjoy your wildlife, but disturb them as little as possible. Excessive noise or physical disturbance may cause various wildlife species to withdraw some distance from the tour route, where they may no longer be observed.

As you travel along the tour route, notice the signs which identify various points of interest. They correspond to paragraphs which follow.

Headquarters Ridge - generally an excellent area in which to observe white-tailed deer and, occasionally, Rocky Mountain elk. Gray or Hungarian partridge also frequent these slopes.

The dense, nearly pure stands of perennial bunchgrass on the north-facing slopes above the road are comprised predominantly of rough fescue. Various grazing management practices employed on the Bison Range are designed to encourage growth of such desirable or "key" plants for maximum forage production.

Pauline Creek - the view upstream just ahead is quite typical of the Range generally. This grassland association is an

eastern extension of the Palouse Prairie vegetation zone. Bluebunch wheatgrass is the predominant grass in this drainage, and is the principal "key" species on most southern exposures throughout the range.

Watch for pronghorn, or antelope, on the open areas to your right. As you proceed along the stream, look carefully for whitetailed deer in the brushy creek bottom and mule deer on the rocky slopes to your upper left.

Shrubs along the stream consist primarily of snowberry; the trees, hawthorn and cottonwood. They harbor many species of small birds, particularly during the spring and early summer. Scattered stands of shrubs on rocky outcrops and stony areas above the drainage courses are variously comprised of chokecherry, serviceberry and mockorange. All of these provide an excellent source of wildlife food and serve as escape cover and protection from inclement weather for many birds and animals.

Elk Lane - originally constructed to facilitate live-trapping of surplus elk, which were used to restock other areas within the state. It leads to a set of corrals and loading chute about one-quarter mile north.

The lane is now used principally for the annual buffalo roundup in October. Buffalo are hazed into the lane from adjoining range areas by men on horseback. The animals are then moved to the corrals for culling, vaccination against disease, and other purposes necessary for the maintenance of a healthy, productive herd.

The grade ahead enters a Montane Forest vegetation zone, with Douglas fir on northern exposures and ponderosa pine on southern exposures. Wildlife species tend to be associated with those vegetative zones or types which best fulfill their individual requirements. In forested areas, watch particularly for blue grouse, Clark's nutcracker and Lewis' woodpecker.

Elk Creek - elk are quite often observed on the upper reaches of this drainage. Rocky Mountain bighorn sheep frequent lower slopes, although are rarely seen from this vantage point.

Red Sleep Mountain Viewpoint - Red Sleep or "Quil-c-e" in the Flathead Indian language. From this vantagepoint you may enjoy a beautiful view of the Lower Flathead Valley area, including the majestic Mission Range of the Rocky Mountains.

The tower above sets on the highest point ("High-Point") on the Range, at an elevation of 4,885 feet, or over 2,000 feet above the tour entrance. It is utilized for fire detection during the fire hazard season.

In late spring and early summer, this area possesses an interesting variety of wild flowers, including the delicate Bitterroot - state flower of Montana.

Trisky Creek - bighorn sheep are commonly found in lower reaches of this drainage and are occasionally seen in this area.

St. Ignatius - founded in 1854 by the Jesuit Fathers who established St. Ignatius Mission. This is the oldest town on the Flathead Reservation. Before the Mission's founding, it was known as "The Rendezvous" - where Kalispell, Salish, and Kootenai tribes gathered for bartering and gaming.

The original log cabin mission constructed in 1854 still stands. The present Mission church, which is open to visitors, was constructed in 1891 and contains extensive frescoes painted by Brother J. Carignano over a period of 14 months.

Antelope Ridge - excellent area for observing the pronghorn. Drive slowly and look carefully - the protective coloration of this animal makes it rather difficult to see.