

JERRY SMITH PARK



Elk were Native to the Prairies and Forests of Missouri



In 1804, the expedition of Lewis and Clark recorded encountering elk in the western part of what is now Missouri, near today's Kansas City.

Elk were once abundant in Missouri. Hunted for their meat, hides and antlers, it was thought their numbers were unlimited. But as more and more settlers arrived, the elk's habitat was destroyed. Elk grazing land and forests were turned into agricultural land, homesteads and cities.

The elk were eliminated from Missouri by 1865, more than 150 years ago.

Today, the Missouri Dept. of Conservation is reintroducing about 100 elk into the forested Ozarks region, near Winona, Missouri.



Compare size of a Deer next to Elk

<https://mdc.mo.gov/conservation/2010/12/missouri-history-elk>
<http://www.lewis-clark.org/article/328>

American Bison – Our National Mammal

Often called buffalo, these large grazing mammals are very beneficial to prairies.



Grazing bison helped prevent trees from growing on the prairie by trampling or eating seedlings. Bison were important for the dispersal and germination of prairie grass and wildflower seeds that stuck to their fur or were in their droppings, and recycled nutrients to the soil.



Herds of grazing bison kept plants short, creating a good habitat for other animals such as ground-nesting prairie chickens and bob-white quail.

Bison calves are an orange-red color and are up and moving within 3 hours of birth. Herds travel 10-15 miles each day. A bison may live 30 years.

