

Moose Podcast #441

Moose Peterson Howdy folks and welcome to Moose Podcast number 441, Iconic Western Symbol. How you guys doing this week? Trust you are doing well. My heart goes out to all the folks affected by everything from the fires in Oklahoma to the tornadoes. Tell you mother nature. She's just not a happy, happy lady. And she is taking her out on us. So you folks be careful out there. And I'm really, really am quite saddened by events the last week. So please. Please take good care. As far as I go, I, uh, well, this past weekend, Mother Nature, uh, didn't help my efforts either between wind and Rain and snow. Sadly, my two ears got postponed for a few weeks. Not as dramatic as some of the other things that mother nature has done, but, uh, that's how it goes. I mean, getting skunked is part of the process. Just makes it a much sweeter later. This episode of the Moose Podcast is being recorded by the Adobe Beta Podcast using its AI voice cleaner upper. Yeah, it does a great job. Still at 50%. Somebody asked this past week. Yep, I'm at 50%. Seems to be the one that, at least for my voice, does the best job. But that's the Adobe beta podcast. Now they create a transcript, which you will find on the blog post for the podcast on my website. You go to Spotify, you'll find the one that Castro's make. You go to iTunes, you'll find the one they make. But you can go to all those places to find the transcript and or listen to the podcast. And remember, on Spotify, you can leave a comment. We can have a conversation. And, uh, I didn't have any this past week, so I'm hungry to talk. So, hey, rattle my cage, would ya? I wanna thank my good friends at Bedford Camera, bedfords.com. Now, these folks, you know, they are truly our best friends. Besides having this amazing inventory with great prices, They know what's going on with life right now. And, uh, they have this very, very cool 0% special financing going on. So there's gear you need for upcoming spring or summer projects, something you might need to expand your business. Or perhaps just gotta have that piece of gear and the tax refund doesn't cover it all. Well, Bedford's will have it. They'll have the price. They have the inventory. They've got the expertise so you get the right piece of gear the first time. They'll take care of that financing and, of course, got the Moose discount after you checked out. So please head out to my good friends at Bedford's.com, either on the internet or Via the phone or in person, one of their many stores, they're there to help you. So I have a book recommendation this week, kind of goes with what I'm talking about. You know, for every probably ten or maybe even twenty bird ID books that come out, one might come out on mammals. Um. Whatever it is, you don't see people doing mammal ID trips or, you know, like you see people doing birding trips. I mean, there's birding, but you don't see anything called mammaling, right? Sounds funny, right? Is there one book on mammals that would put you on the right track, give you the information you need for learning a species, even writing an article? Yeah, that's this week's book recommendation. It's called The Smithsonian Book North American Mammals edited by Don Wilson and Sue Ruff. Good people. Now this is, this is a heavy duty book. I mean, it's a big book. It's an inch and a half thick. It has got lots of great information. How many pages? It is, what, seven hundred and what, 732 pages. Yeah, we're talking about a massive volume that will cover almost all you ever want to know about mammals. If you really went into specific details, you'd have to find something that's like 2025 new kind of things. Otherwise, this has got you covered. So. Check it out. Got longer evening hours now. Good time to pull out a book. The Smithsonian Book of North American Mammals on Moose's book recommendation list. So

I didn't, uh, do a mammal or a critter story last week. Um, some of you called me out on it because I said I'd do it the second week. Well, I was saving it for this week. The iconic western symbol. Know what it is? Yeah. It's the bison. I mean, the bison is a classic. Now, the very first thing I want to... Just cover, okay? Because I'm always saying bison. And some people say, no, it's called buffalo. And no, it actually is bison. The scientific name is bison, bison, bison. Seriously, not making it up. It's the genus bison, the species bison, the subspecies bison. Its Latin name is bison, bison, bison. So where did buffalo come from? Did it come from that unfinished score left on a piano long ago about where the deer and the antelope play? Don't know. Most Pistorians believe the term buffalo is Grew from a French word for beef, kind of the bastardization of B-O-E-U-F. And how they get buffalo out of B-O-E-U-F is beyond me. But then again... What do I know about writing and spelling and grammar? But I can tell you. We don't have bison buffalo, we have bison in North America. Which, interesting enough, it was like 2,000 2016, In 2016, it was actually officially made the National Mammal of the United States. Yeah, we're a little slow, but we get some things done. So, most folks know bison from Yellowstone. Which has a population, it's around four to five thousand. In case you have forgotten, last spring, a white bison calf was born. And was seen for what? Uh, two weeks and then it's disappeared. Nobody seems to know. And I am here to tell you, I honestly, I've not seen it. I don't know where it is. I've asked folks. Those that know, they say they've not seen it, they don't know what happened, but they're very rare. Most of the time, bison are a chocolate brown to a tannish color. Now, when they're first born, uh, they kind of, some, especially in the old days, used to be called red dogs. That's because that calf, which is about, what, thirty to seventy pounds when it's first born and And it can be born anytime between March, like the ones that you'd see in New Mexico, like at Philmont Scout Ranch, um, all the way up to, um, Both, uh, through May, which is typical, which you see in Yellowstone or Custer State Park. You know, they have that orange red color and it's when they're first, they first drop them and they literally drop on the ground. You know, like I said, they're about thirty or seventy pounds. They, they instantly kind of inst as fast as they can be. I mean, they're not like within seconds, but within a few minutes, they're actually standing wobbly and they're good to go. Now, it takes a few months for them to start changing into that more classic chocolate brown that we're kind of used to, and they get that more distinguished hump, which I'm going to talk about here in a moment. Why am I talking about bison at this point? That's a really good question. Well, that's because April's around the corner and if, depending on where you are, you could have You could have young calves if you're down in New Mexico. And pretty soon as you start moving up the continent, you're going to start having those calves and I tell you, there is nothing cuter than a brand new bison calf. They are just absolutely just the most, ah, the cutest thing on the planet. Now, you might have heard the story that once upon a time, we pretty much decimated the herds of bison. Uh, first for their, uh, their coats and then for their bones and, uh, So it was almost about turn of the century, 1900. When, uh, can't make this stuff up. The American Bison Society, um, started to work towards bringing them back. They started with a little group from Wind Cave National Park, which is adjacent to Custer State Park there in South Dakota. And they slowly started reestablishing the herd. Now, this is the seed for some of the big herds we have now. But it wasn't the ones at... Wind cave weren't the only bison left on the, you know, North American continent. Now keep in mind, keep in mind that, and it's kind of a, you know, uh, I don't, I'm gonna say it's just not carved in stone, but it's, it's, they think that, you know, the

millions that were here, they got down to less than a thousand. So millions down to a thousand, that's pretty, that's pretty decimated. Now, bison, you know, they can run up to thirty-five miles an hour. Did you know they can go that fast? I can't run that fast. They're not even close. And the thing about them is that they kind of like can almost spin on a dime. And I watched and I've talked about the wolves we saw take down a cow. There in Yellowstone in January when we saw two cows spin in the snow 180 degrees on a dime. So their agility For lack of better terms. And their speed, you know, leave those things alone. You don't pet the big shaggy dogs. I'll get to more of that in a second. Now. They're born. And one thing I always, uh, they, they, they just, all they, all that bulk that they get, you know, keep in mind that, uh, They can get up to 2,000 pounds. That's a ton for an old bull, okay? And old bulls are the ones you see not with a herd. You'll see them as loners. They're just too poop to pop anymore. Those are 2,000 pounds. That's just like, that's crazy, right? Well, those big guys, all right, they do it all on grass, right? And a biologist once said very clear to me that in the springtime, they're like eating the cereal in a cereal box. And then in the fall winter, they're eating the cereal box. But with their dual stomachs, they're able to process all that grass and get that huge bulk and keep themselves going. It's an amazing biological, you know, machine. And keep in mind that back in the day, the folks coming across the plains where there is no trees, right, that you would have all these Bison biscuits that they would burn as fuel because it was just basically condensed straw. One piece of trivia that I want to pass along right now before I forget. If you're going in Yellowstone and you see a whole lot of trees along the road that are missing the bark, Most folks think that's bison doing that, trying to scratch off their, their winter coats. Actually, most of that bark that comes off the trees is from the snow plows that go by really fast and shoot out that snow. That's what's stripping most of that bark. So there's your piece of Yellowstone trivia for the day. So bison, they put on weight. They put on fat. That's how they, that's the weight. And they put on this huge thick coat for the winter. And then starting when they start dropping calves, depending on where you are, March through May, they start shedding that coat. Now why am I telling you that piece of trivia? Because I think you might want to photograph them. I know I love photographing bison. I have been photographing them for a long time. So you've got, as far as I am personally concerned, two real, well, two and a half times in the year. It's the best to photograph. So those times. Is in the very, very last draws of dropping the little calves. So whether you're down in Mexico in March or up in Yellowstone, maybe in Canada, May. That's probably the last time I'll photograph Bison in the springtime. Summertime, they're just, they're just kind of, they just don't have the same majestic Iconic western symbol status when they have just their summer coats on. They start putting on the coats and they look kind of, you know, some of them look really ratty. Um, and you can go in Yellowstone some places and see big clumps of that fur blowing around. Now, starting in, oh, oh, The second week of October and then going through November that's my favorite time to photograph Bison when there's a green landscape. I love it then. It's just gorgeous. And on really good, crispy November mornings, you'll have that green landscape and you'll have that It's a thick coat, but you have a really mellow light. So a golden tinge on their guard hairs, on their hump and their back. Just, it's just spectacular. It's like this golden thread that's woven. It's just gorgeous. Now the other little halftime when I like to photograph them, and this is really specific, it's when it's at least minus ten if not minus twenty And you've got snow falling. Snow will clump on their fur. They've got so much insulation. That the snow

gathers and you'll start getting what I call crusties. You'll see little snowballs and some of the big bulls on their bells. They've got a, it's about a grapefruit size ball of snow frozen on their, on their, You could call it their beards or bell. And when they have those crusties and all around their face and their eyes, that is absolutely when I love to photograph bison. And the days of doing that seem to be Less and less each year, which is why I said it's kind of like a half little thing because I didn't have any crusties this January, not a one. Now, Couple pieces of trivia. So that big hump they have, they've got this giant hump. Now if you know anything about grizzly bears, you know their hump is a part of their big muscles for digging. They'd like to dig. They root around for everything from earthworms to ground squirrels to forbs and tubers, stuff like that. Well, a little bit different on that hump on the bison. That big hump is to help them move that big head back and forth in the snow like a big kind of snow plow but it goes sideways and that's how they get the big drifts of snow cleared out. To get that snow underneath. That's why they have that big hump. That's where their muscle is connected for their neck for going back and forth. They're kind of a You know, they're very much a throwback to prehistoric times. Uh, I mean, their, their ancestors are much bigger, but they're highly evolved for the world in which they live in, which is kind of really cool. Now let's talk about photography and let's first start off with ethics. Now, our National Park Service, I don't know if you are aware, is going through some really hard times. A number of my friends are no longer, um, employed. Point blank. Put it out there. They, uh, And, uh, I mean, after twenty-two years boggles my mind, but anyway, um, staffing at national parks are good. It's going to be less. And it's not like they were really having a lot of luck convincing people and photographers last year. To keep away from the bloody bison. They're not to be petted. They're not to have a selfie with. Um, I mean, like I mentioned, they do thirty-five miles an hour. They can spin on a dime. What are you thinking? Stay away from the brown shaggy dogs. Don't need to pet them. So then if that's the case and thinking that, uh, humans being humans and taking advantage, you know, what they say when the cats away, what will the mice do? Yeah, with less being, uh, less eyes watching in the national parks like Yellowstone. Hey, don't be part of the problem. Be part of the solution. Use our longer lens. How long? Man, 400 millimeters would be the shortest. Be the shortest. I like 600 millimeters. Or 840 millimeter. So I'm using that Z600F4 I got from bedrooms with engaging the internal 1.4. Now why do I like the longer lens? Couple reasons. I'm gonna look one for the best light, not only for the bison, but for the background. Yeah, if I can get that really great headshot, I'm going to talk about that in a second, right? If I can get that really great headshot, then the background's not, um, As an important, but typically I'm getting that environmental shot because they're like everything else, their world's getting a little bit smaller. And with that longer lens, a couple things. One, I can be a whole lot more selective of that background to tell a story, to include the elements that help that bison pop in the frame while excluding those to take the eye away from it. Next thing is, with that longer lens, I'm gonna get a little bit lower in altitude. No, I'm not gonna lay down on the ground. No, I'm not gonna take a knee. I find topography, you know, a piece of ground where they're a tad higher. It just has to be six inches. It doesn't have to be a lot. But I like to shoot them with a little bit higher. Shoot up on them. One, they look more majestic. They look more masculine. Uh, two, and keep in mind, most of the time I'm shooting bulls. I'm not working with cows. The next thing is when you shoot up a little bit on them. When you shoot up, they kind of Um, they'll never ignore you. Okay. And they're, they've got good vision, but they tend to just,

just go about their business. When you're eye level or above them, um, That's when you could get, you know, into trouble, right? And I don't want to get in trouble. I don't get ran over. Moose doesn't like getting ran over. So with that longer lens, I shoot up a little bit more, a little more majestic, I control the background. And lastly, in this whole process, That longer lens kind of visually compacts them a little bit more. And so that 2,000 pound looks a little bit more like 2,500. It looks a little beefier. And I love bees, I love bison, I have some in the freezer, don't get me wrong, okay, but uh, hey, it's just common sense, good photography, Good environmentalism. Good field ethics. Keep your physical distance. Use that longer lens. Now, last little thing about photographing bison. It's where to crop them. And I see a lots of what I call awkward crops. Awkward crops are where you've cut off hooves or a tail or near tip. Little pieces that, you know, that's just too tight. It's an awkward crop. Another awkward crop is when you have maybe a vertical or they're up closer, you have a longer lens is where to crop them, you know, between their hind legs and their front legs. There is, there's, and here's the thing, you're not going to find a guide, a book, anything that says this is where to crop them or this is not where to crop them. You just have to look at them and if it feels awkward, if there's anything in your mind that says awkward, don't take the picture. Just wait, move, adjust, you know. Awkward crops. Now, one of the most awkward crops is the headshot. And all I can say is you don't want your headshot to look like it's off some, you know, trophy hunter's wall of their living room. You don't want, that's a very awkward crop. Um, otherwise I wish I had defined text Definitive examples of, you know, to give you, but I don't. Just give me the heads up. Watch out for that awkward crop. Lastly, places to photograph bison. My favorite place for calves for sure is Custer State Park, the Black Hills. They're just, uh, they're just a no-brainer. And I've done it with a 200 F2 all the way up to the longest length you can think of. Now, what about the overall, the big bulls, the big landscapes? Definitely Yellowstone. Definitely National Bison Range north of, uh, North of Missoula, south of Kalispell in Montana. And then another favorite place which you just can't have, you have to Have permission to get to is Philmont Scout Ranch, excuse me, down in New Mexico, which is, those bison are spectacular and it's a totally different world because they're in cactus and it's just, that's just, they're just amazing. When you get down there, you realize just, uh, kind of how habituated the bicep have gotten in those other parks with people looking at them because down at Philmont, Yeah, they don't really like us. They, you know, if you get out of the vehicle, they, they run away. Literally they're gone. Um, and you can't, they go through all this cactus and stuff and you just can't keep up with them. But that is, um, you know, it's that time of year. Go out and photograph them red doggies. Um, have some time. Be respectful. And, uh, share those images. You come back of the, with everybody else of bison, you know, the iconic Western symbol. You folks have a great week. Take care. Please reach out. I'm here to help any way I can. And remember to make every click your story. Thank you.