

YOU'RE IN **BISON COUNTRY**

WATCH OUT!



Parks
Canada

Parcs
Canada



Who?

Northwest Territories drivers and visitors must be aware of the potential of bison on southern NWT highways. Passengers can also play a part by acting as a second set of eyes for the driver.

When?

Most collisions occur from mid-August through the end of December as the days become shorter, but bison can be encountered at any time of year.

Where?

Bison can be encountered on and along Highways 3, 5 and 7. Although they seem to be numerous in these areas, they are a species at risk of extinction.

You're in Bison Country

The long drive through bison country can be a difficult one, even for the most experienced driver. It is important that drivers take every precaution necessary to avoid a collision.



PAY ATTENTION:

Be aware of what is ahead and around you to give yourself a better chance to stop in time if there are bison on the road.

MOVE YOUR EYES:

Drivers who aren't consistently surveying the area in front of them will quickly become tired and their vision less effective. Regularly move your eyes and occasionally look toward what is in your peripheral vision.

STAY AWAKE:

Remember, fatigued driving is impaired driving. Be well rested before entering bison country.

MIND YOUR SPEED:

For safety, speed limits must be followed in bison country. This is particularly important in hours of dusk and darkness when visibility is low.

WEAR YOUR SEAT BELT:

This is necessary for everyone in the vehicle. Seatbelts save lives in collisions with other vehicles and with bison.

AVOID DISTRACTIONS:

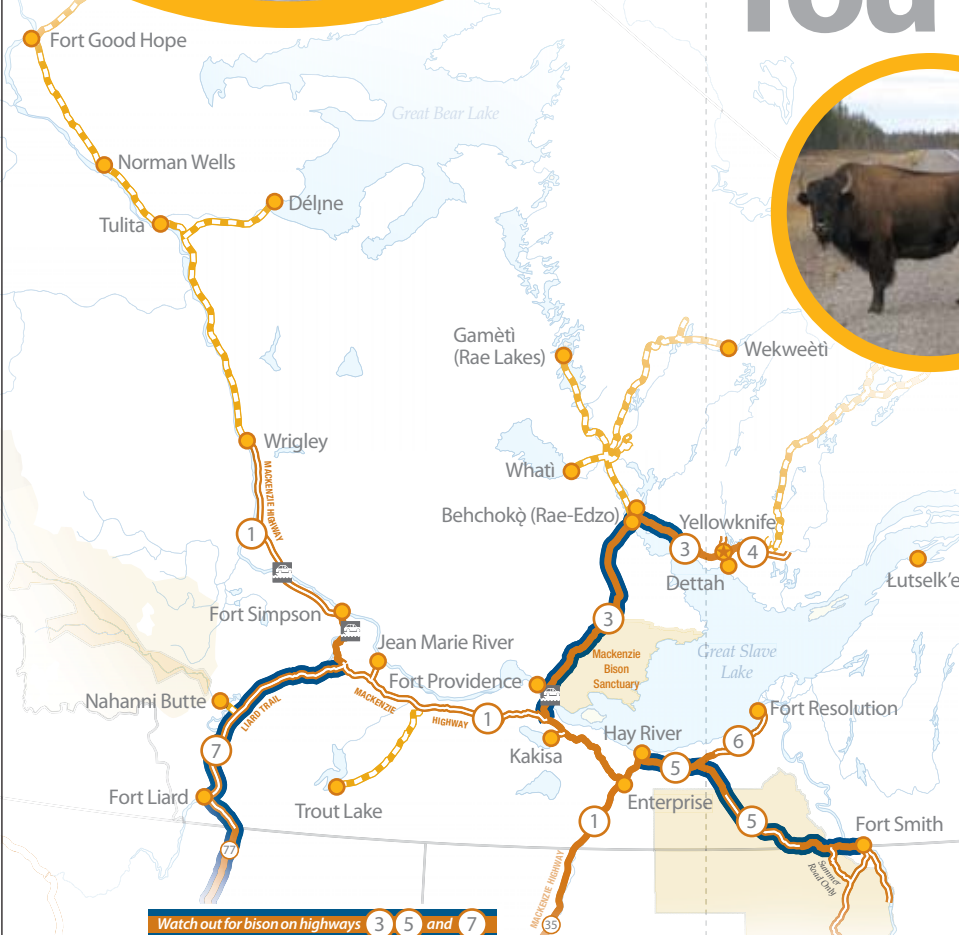
Taking your focus off the road for even a few seconds could spell disaster. If you need to get a drink or a snack, pull over, or ask a passenger to assist you.

KEEP YOUR DISTANCE:

If the car in front of you has to stop suddenly, you will need ample space between your vehicle and theirs to stop safely.

DO NOT SWERVE SUDDENLY TO AVOID ANIMALS:

This could cause you to lose control of your vehicle or put you in the path of oncoming traffic.





Too Close for Comfort

The Philipp family's Highway 3 bison encounter

JEFF PHILIPP has driven the road between Fort Providence and Yellowknife hundreds of times. However, a trip in the fall of 2009 could have changed his life forever.

It was around 10 pm when Jeff and his wife, eight and eleven year old children, nanny, and family dog departed Fort Providence for Yellowknife. Darkness had already set in when the family's SUV began the three-and-a-half hour drive. It was within an hour of their destination when they encountered the first bison.

"I was going 100 km (per hour) at the time," he said. "I didn't see it, my wife saw it." It was only after the bison, standing in the middle of the road, "went zipping past my mirror" did Jeff realize he had almost collided with the large animal. Shaken by the experience, he slowed down, but it wasn't enough.

Jeff caught sight of the second bison on the shoulder of the road. "Just the horns and the head," he said. "I could see them in the glow of the headlights." In the blink of an eye, the bison darted in front of them. The vehicle clipped the bison and spun the large animal.

"We hit his back end," Jeff said. The collision "was like watching a slow motion movie. The hood of the vehicle popped up on the windshield." The bison hit the vehicle on the driver side door and mirror.

With only a one-inch gap to see through, Jeff was able to safely bring the vehicle to a complete stop. "When we hit him I think his back end must have been off the ground," he said. "It wasn't as solid an impact as it could have been."

Jeff managed to get out and assess the damages. "I picked the grill and fender up off the road," he said. Meanwhile, his children had slept through the collision.

Jeff said he puts about 50,000 km a year on his vehicle, but he's never had an experience like this one. He has this warning for drivers in bison country: "They're very difficult to see. People need to be aware."

In the meantime, Jeff and his family are grateful to have survived. He's aware his bison encounter could have been much more severe. "We're just lucky," he said. "Never have I been that close to meeting my Maker."