

A photograph of a herd of bison in a lush green field. In the foreground, a large bison with dark brown fur and prominent horns looks towards the camera. To its left, another bison is partially visible, grazing on grass. The background features rolling green hills and mountains under a bright sky. A white rectangular box with rounded corners is overlaid on the upper part of the image, containing the text 'The Midwest'. At the bottom center, there is a white rounded rectangle containing a blue heart icon and the text 'beanstack originals'.

The Midwest

 **beanstack originals**



The Midwest

Get to know bison, gray wolves, and other unique animals of the midwestern United States.



Take an amazing animals tour of the American Midwest! Home to vast prairies, expansive lakes, and rich forests, the midwestern region is also inhabited by fascinating animals. Get ready to meet some of the wonderful creatures that call the Midwest home.

Bison

Often called buffalo, the American bison is the national mammal of the United States. Centuries ago, these powerful mammals roamed across most of the country and lived in several habitats, or natural environments. But after European and American settlers overhunted bison, only a few hundred remained by the 1800s. Thankfully, a combined effort from many Indigenous Americans, other passionate activists, and the U.S. government led to bison conservation. Today, herds of bison can be found across parts of the American West and Midwest, including Oklahoma, Nebraska, North Dakota, and Iowa.

Bison live in large groups known as herds and graze on grasses. During the winters, they stay warm thanks to their dark, shaggy coats and beards. However, the coats of baby bison, called calves, aren't dark brown—they're red! Because of this, bison calves are sometimes nicknamed "red dogs." However, they certainly aren't the size of dogs; by the time they're

FUN FACT

Bison communicate through grunts, snorts, and bellows (but no moos)!



Animals Across America: The Midwest



adults, bison can weigh up to 2,200 pounds (997.9 kg) and reach up to 6 feet tall (1.8 m).



A pack of gray wolves hunts together.

Gray Wolves

Today, gray wolves are known to roam parts of the American West, such as Wyoming, Alaska, and Montana. But did you know that gray wolves also live in Michigan and Minnesota? In fact, gray wolves used to live in about two-thirds of the U.S. But over the centuries, many people misunderstood gray wolves or were frightened by them. Some people wanted to protect their livestock. Others wanted to hunt them for their fur, or for sport. Because of this, many wolves were killed—and gray wolves almost went extinct.

Fortunately, many people also wanted to save and protect wolves. On top of being social and smart animals, wolves are very important for local ecosystems. Wolves are what is known as a keystone species. This means that local ecosystems, or interconnected places in nature, cannot thrive when wolves are gone. Without wolves, the animal populations that wolves normally hunt grow out of control. They eat lots of plants that other animals need to survive. With wolves, everything remains in balance, and lots of animals flourish. Today, gray wolves have been reintroduced to many areas—including the Midwest!



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A bobcat rests in the shade.

Bobcat

Found across almost all of the U.S., bobcats are right at home in the forests of the Midwest. They also easily adapt to, or change to better survive in, other habitats. Bobcats can thrive in deserts and swamps, and even around cities. These wild cats are known for their short tails, from which they get their name, and for their furry, tufted ears.

Like house cats, which are their relatives, bobcats are excellent hunters. However, reaching twice the size of a housecat at 4 feet (1.3 m) long, they can take down larger prey—including deer. Bobcats also have powerful hind legs, which let them leap long distances, climb tall trees, and run at fast speeds. They may look adorable, but these felines are fierce!

DID YOU KNOW?

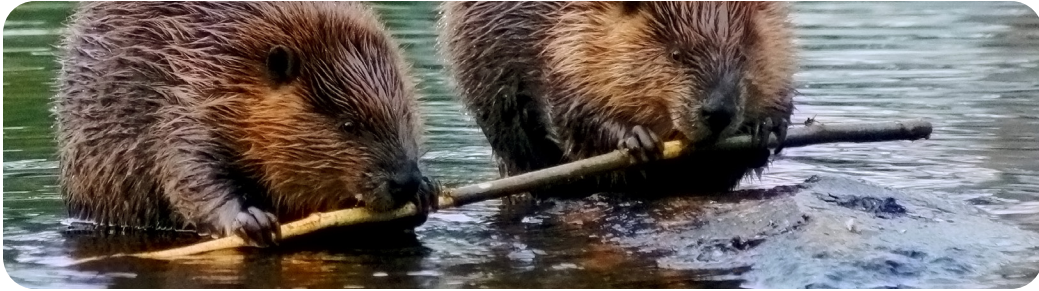
Bobcats have two white spots on their ears. Scientists think that young bobcats, or cubs, might use these white spots to follow their mom in the darkness of the night.

Beaver

Did you know that beavers are rodents, like mice and rats? In fact, they are the largest rodents found in North America! However, unlike rodents who have long, thin tails, beavers have large, paddle-shaped tails. These tails help beavers steer and swim quickly in the water. They also sometimes slap their tails against the water to create loud sounds that scare off predators.



Animals Across America: The Midwest



Two beavers chew the bark off a branch.

Beavers are perhaps most famous for their homes, called lodges, and for their dams. Beavers use their strong teeth to gnaw through twigs or topple trees. They then use pieces of these trees or logs to build their dome-shaped homes. Beavers usually construct their lodges on ponds, where they can make sure that the only way to enter is from the water. However, if there is no pond around, beavers sometimes use twigs and logs to block streams or rivers by building dams. These dams cause the water to collect in one place, making the perfect spot for a beaver lodge.