



THE STATE OF TEXAS ANNIVERSARY REMEMBRANCE DAY FOUNDATION
THE TEXAS BISON STUDENT STUDY GROUP JOURNAL

“The Official State Bison Herd of Texas”

By

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MAY 13-CAPROCK CANYONS STATE PARK-The newborn bison calf with his mother represents the future of “The Official State Bison Herd of Texas.” The photograph was captured by Park Ranger Interpreter and Volunteer Coordinator Le’Ann Pigg. Ms. Pigg has volunteered to act as an eAdvisor for The Texas Bison Student Study Group.

The State of Texas has customarily recognized a variety of official symbols as tangible representations of the state's historical and cultural heritage; figuring prominently in that distinctive list are animals that played a central role in the rich Western heritage of Texas, including the longhorn and the American quarter horse.

Another deserving candidate for recognition is the bison, popularly known as the buffalo; after arriving in North America some 25,000 years ago, the bison adapted particularly well to the environment of the Great Plains; by the 1700s, as many as 60 million buffalo were living on the continent, and the lands that were to become Texas were among the areas roamed by the vast herds.

The animals were central to the livelihood of the Native Americans of the Great Plains, providing not only their main diet but also materials for shelter, clothing, and many other staples; the ample supply of bison and the hunting culture of the Plains tribes were not to last, however; with the completion of the transcontinental railroad in 1869, it became possible to profitably ship bison hides and meat to eastern markets by rail, and in the next 15 years, buffalo hunters almost completely exterminated the herds; by 1885, fewer than 1,000 animals remained.

Fortunately, some Texans had the foresight to try and save this noble creature; Mary Ann "Molly" Goodnight, the wife of legendary Texas rancher Charles Goodnight, was so distressed by the rapid disappearance of the bison that she convinced her husband to begin capturing and protecting bison calves from the small number of wild animals that remained on the Southern Plains; he began to round up young bison in the 1870s in the northern Texas Panhandle, and the herd at Goodnight's JA Ranch eventually grew to about 250 head by the time Mr. Goodnight passed away in 1929.

The Goodnight bison herd became one of the five foundation herds in the United States from which the majority of surviving buffalo have developed; a number of animals directly descended from the Goodnight stock were donated to the Texas Parks and Wildlife Department in 1996, and a subset of that group was determined to be a pure strain that had not been crossbred with bison from other areas; given a home at Caprock Canyons State Park, those buffalo and their offspring are today known as the Texas State Bison Herd and are notable for their strong genetic link to the original Southern Plains buffalo and because they continue to live in the area where their ancestors were first caught.

NOTE: The photograph was captured by Le'Ann Pigg; the Interpretive Park Ranger and Volunteer Coordinator at Caprock Canyons State Park in early May 2013. Ms. Pigg has volunteered to act as an eAdvisor for The Texas Bison Student Study Group. This male bison calf has been designated as "The Official Mascot of The Junior PALS of Texas Volunteers" a youth group founded in 2002 and sponsored by The STAR DAY Foundation. The text above is the text of House Concurrent Resolution (HCR 86) filed on March 7, 2011. The bill designates the "Texas State Bison Herd" at Caprock Canyons State Park as the "Official State Bison Herd of Texas." State Representative Pete Gallego was the initial author of HCR 86. State Representative Warren Chisum at the request of Rep. Gallego volunteered to be the primary author of HCR 86. State Representative Jim Landtroop and State Representative Pete Gallego volunteered to be joint authors of HCR 86. HCR 86 was sponsored by State Senator Robert Duncan. The Texas Bison Student Study Group (The Group) was organized on September 12, 2010, the birthday of Molly Goodnight (1839-1926), at Presidio ISD Lucy Rede Franco Middle School (LRFMS) as an after-school student enrichment program under the supervision of

School Principal Teresa Porras and sponsored by The STAR DAY Foundation. The primary goals of The Group are to provide students with the opportunity to explore and discover the origin of The Official State Bison Herd of Texas; to honor and remember the life and achievements of Molly and Charles Goodnight as the first Texas bison ranch family; to plan, develop and conduct school history and science field trips to partnering Texas Plains bison ranches and Caprock Canyons State Park; to study and evaluate school lunch menu applications of Texas bison ground meat in partnership with student families and school cafeteria staff; to seek ways and means to help raise needed funds to support the conservation, preservation and restoration work of the Official State Bison Herd of Texas management team as a service achievement of merit to enhance the story of Texas for the people of Texas. Governor Rick Perry, a 1999 STAR DAY Founder, issued a Commendation Letter to honor, recognize LRFMS teachers and students for their service achievement of merit in proposing HCR 86.

Editor's Note Dennis M. Kulvicki is a founder and president of The STAR DAY Foundation established in 1999 as a Texas nonprofit 501(c)3 tax exempt organization with a primary mission to carryout the legislative intent of the STAR DAY bill passed in 1999 in partnership Texas schools and other organizations by celebrating each year the birthday of the State of Texas on February 19th each year to inspire and motivate students to explore and discover the founding and founders of the State of Texas at partnering schools.

FOR ADDITIONAL INFORMATION, PLEASE CONTACT:

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