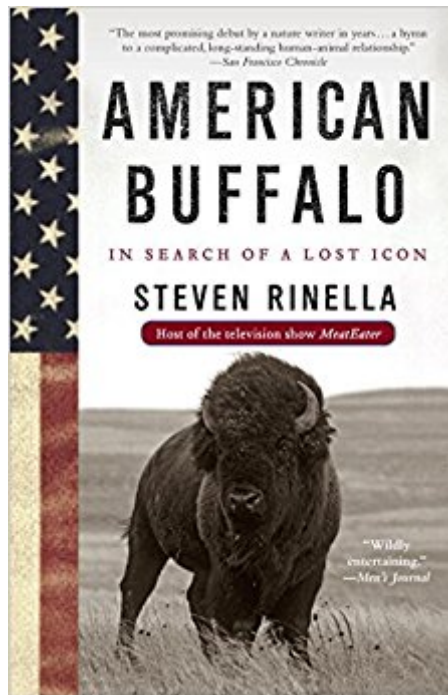




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# American Buffalo: In Search Of A Lost Icon



## Synopsis

From the host of the Travel Channel's *The Wild Within*: A hunt for the American buffalo • an adventurous, fascinating examination of an animal that has haunted the American imagination. In 2005, Steven Rinella won a lottery permit to hunt for a wild buffalo, or American bison, in the Alaskan wilderness. Despite the odds, there's only a 2 percent chance of drawing the permit, and fewer than 20 percent of those hunters are successful. Rinella managed to kill a buffalo on a snow-covered mountainside and then raft the meat back to civilization while being trailed by grizzly bears and suffering from hypothermia. Throughout these adventures, Rinella found himself contemplating his own place among the 14,000 years' worth of buffalo hunters in North America, as well as the buffalo's place in the American experience. At the time of the Revolutionary War, North America was home to approximately 40 million buffalo, the largest herd of big mammals on the planet, but by the mid-1890s only a few hundred remained. Now that the buffalo is on the verge of a dramatic ecological recovery across the West, Americans are faced with the challenge of how, and if, we can dare to share our land with a beast that is the embodiment of the American wilderness. *American Buffalo* is a narrative tale of Rinella's hunt. But beyond that, it is the story of the many ways in which the buffalo has shaped our national identity. Rinella takes us across the continent in search of the buffalo's past, present, and future: to the Bering Land Bridge, where scientists search for buffalo bones amid artifacts of the New World's earliest human inhabitants; to buffalo jumps where Native Americans once ran buffalo over cliffs by the thousands; to the Detroit Carbon works, a "bone charcoal" plant that made fortunes in the late 1800s by turning millions of tons of buffalo bones into bone meal, black dye, and fine china; and even to an abattoir turned fashion mecca in Manhattan's Meatpacking District, where a depressed buffalo named Black Diamond met his fate after serving as the model for the American nickel. Rinella's erudition and exuberance, combined with his gift for storytelling, make him the perfect guide for a book that combines outdoor adventure with a quirky blend of facts and observations about history, biology, and the natural world. Both a captivating narrative and a book of environmental and historical significance, *American Buffalo* tells us as much about ourselves as Americans as it does about the creature who perhaps best of all embodies the American ethos.

## Book Information

Paperback: 304 pages

Publisher: Spiegel & Grau; 39471st edition (September 15, 2009)

Language: English

ISBN-10: 0385521693

ISBN-13: 978-0385521697

Product Dimensions: 5.2 x 0.6 x 8 inches

Shipping Weight: 8.8 ounces (View shipping rates and policies)

Average Customer Review: 4.8 out of 5 stars 291 customer reviews

Best Sellers Rank: #13,074 in Books (See Top 100 in Books) #3 in [Books > Sports & Outdoors > Hunting & Fishing > Hunting](#) #3 in [Books > Science & Math > Biological Sciences > Animals > Wildlife](#) #14 in [Books > Science & Math > Biological Sciences > Animals > Mammals](#)

## Customer Reviews

Best of the Month, December 2008: Before the 18th century, the American buffalo was the largest land mammal in North America, largely predator-free and roaming the continent in numbers estimated in excess of 40 million. In just over a century, widespread slaughter reduced the population to a few hundred head, and the American West lay beneath a till of bleached bones. When Steven Rinella stumbled over a buffalo skull in Yellowstone National Park, it sparked an obsessive search for the beast's past, from its migration across the Bering land bridge to its near extinction at the hands of western settlers. *American Buffalo: In Search of a Lost Icon* is his fascinating chronicle, beginning with a search for Black Diamond (the doomed model for the Buffalo Nickel) and including an exploration of "buffalo jumps" (where thousands were run over cliffs by Native American hunters), and tales of bone piles--harvested from the plains for a thriving fertilizer industry--stacked 10 feet high, 20 feet wide, and a half-mile long. Rinella's history is deftly interwoven with his own literal buffalo hunt in Alaska's Wrangell mountains, complete with grizzly bears, raging, ice-rimmed rivers, and bouts of hypothermia and frostbite. Written in a spare style appropriate to the rigors of the frozen wilderness, *American Buffalo* is engrossing, informative, funny, and a welcome achievement of both natural history and outdoor adventure. --Jon Foro --This text refers to an out of print or unavailable edition of this title.

Starred Review. In this spare, eloquent memoir, Rinella (*The Scavenger's Guide to Haute Cuisine*) describes his fascination with the American bison, which culminated in his tracking, shooting and butchering one. Rinella was one of 24 people in 2005 to win a lottery to hunt buffalo in the foothills of Alaska's Wrangell Mountains. So Rinella set off into the wilderness to fulfill his lifelong ambition. As he pursues the buffalo herd, Rinella also explores the long relationship between humans and an

animal that they drove to the edge of extinction. In his journey through the wilderness, Rinella encounters grizzlies, white water rapids and frostbite; in his trek through history he depicts fur traders, early Native Americans and epics of slaughter that left the prairies littered with buffalo bones. Rinella's understated prose shows great flexibility, and he is by turns moving and downright funny. An experienced outdoorsman and hunter, Rinella writes with authority about the process of turning a living creature into steak, and easily renders an enormous amount of historical and scientific information into a thoroughly engaging narrative. (Dec.) Copyright © Reed Business Information, a division of Reed Elsevier Inc. All rights reserved. --This text refers to an out of print or unavailable edition of this title.

I first became aware of Steven through his tv show MeatEater. I greatly enjoy his intellectual curiosity and thoughtful approach to hunting and eating game animals. This book covers so much ground, documenting the history of the bison and of early native American life and the effects of the westward expansion of white settlement on the populations of both bison and Indians. Interspersed are Steven's personal experiences hunting and killing a wild bison in Alaska. I found the book fascinating.....non-hunters be warned that the harvest of the bison's meat is described in respectful detail, I did not find these passages non-appetizing as I am a hunter myself.

I've always had an affinity for Bison. After reading American Buffalo I've become even more enamored by these giants of the west. I love reading Steven Rinella's works, he's an incredibly talented and articulate outdoorsman, and this book was very engaging.

Made me want to hunt a buffalo. Also, tons of handy little tidbits about buffalo lore to amaze people. Seriously. People will think you're brilliant if you randomly drop hits like "native Americans slaughtered buffalo in far greater numbers than they could ever eat". Seriously. Great read though.

I usually read history books, mostly military and political, but war, revolution, treachery and violence can only go so far before a new tack is needed and this book provided one. Far from being just a pleasant change of pace, "Buffalo" was engaging and informative about a man and his relationship to an animal that he loved and respected.

An extremely good book to learn about the American buffalo, where they lived and where they roamed. The book does a lot to educate the reader about the history of buffalo since its arrival. The

writers experience is very well documented. A lot of misconceptions are dispelled. For me, the book was a little too detailed and that is the difference between a 4 and a 5. However I heartily recommend it if you really want to learn about the buffalo and how they were almost slaughtered to extinction.

Far more than I was expecting. A great historical narrative, wrapped around a hunting yarn. The writing is strong and the story is a page turner.

Have not finished this book but so far it's a good read. Steven Rinella is the man. It's smart and fun book filled with information and adventure

A fantastic read for hunters and history buffs alike. Rinella takes you with him on a once in a lifetime hunt and shares both his personal history as well as the history of the species that is so integral to the story of North America. Rinella loves the animals he chases as well as the part they play in the ecosystem around him. Follow his podcast or TV show Meat Eater if you want to learn about harvesting and eating some of the healthiest food on the planet.

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