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## Review of Buffalo

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*Buffalo*. Edited by John Foster, Dick Harrison, and I. S. MacLaren. Edmonton: University of Alberta Press, 1992. Introduction, tables, graphs, maps, photographs, illustrations. xii + 244 pp. \$16.95 paper.

*Buffalo* consists of twelve articles written by Canadian authors of diverse backgrounds. Their efforts support the editors' assertion that the bison has ceased to be a mere "artifact," but has become an integral part of today's world and an animal whose "fate may mirror our own" (p. vii). The articles examine buffalo in three primary areas. First, archeological studies reveal bison natural history. Head-Smashed-In Buffalo Jump reigns as Alberta's premier site, a project where scientists, government officials, and Native leaders have succeeded in working together. Second, history articles analyze the tie between bison and society, linking the demise of the great herds in the nineteenth century to growing industrialization and portraying the ever-changing perception of the buffalo in image

and word. Third, scientific investigations reveal the environmental issues surrounding the buffalo. Disease, predation, aboriginal uses, economic benefit, and political value figure into bison survival.

Despite each article's distinctness, a few common threads run through the entire book. For example, the historical background of each piece emphasizes human interaction with buffalo. Even the scientific literature, whether discussing seemingly unrelated topics such as wolves or brucellosis, stresses this interconnectedness. Native peoples are considered in most articles. The authors acknowledge the special kinship of Natives and buffalo and the enormous impact on both from the perpetual increase of Euro-Canadian influence. A major theme of the book is that Canadian land stewardship will dictate the bison's future. Still, the authors indicate that the issues surrounding the bison are not just a Canadian dilemma. Environmental tampering has ramifications everywhere.

This larger application of the author's conclusions provides the real value of *Buffalo*, but the work does stand well on its own. Its gracefully presented, sometimes controversial information stimulates serious thought. Scientific data are presented with adequate explanation and clarity. Yet the general reader should be forewarned that *Buffalo* is not a popular work dealing simply with either the history or behavior of the species. It does, however, yield valuable insights into the interaction between humans and bison, people and the environment, and into the future of that relationship. *Buffalo* would enhance the library of anyone concerned with Canadian and American western history, natural history, Native peoples, environmental impact, and, of course, buffalo.

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