

Welcome



Welcome to the Jester Park Educational Plaza. Both elk and bison are remnants of our last ice age which ended about 12,000 years ago.

They are built for cold weather and are able to withstand very frigid temperatures. Where other ice age animals like woolly mammoth and saber toothed-tiger went extinct, elk and bison have been able to adapt to a post glacial environment.

Although both animals were native to Iowa, elk were thought to have been more common and plentiful. Iowa populations of both animals were modest compared to the historic herds in some western states.



Some individual bison herds in Nebraska, the Dakota's and Colorado numbered as many as

400,000 animals. Prior to settlement, North American populations of bison have been estimated between 60-70 million. By the 1880's less than 1,000 bison remained on Earth.

Surviving near extinction, presently both bison and elk populations have rebounded to safe numbers. In Iowa, only captive herds remain. The drastic change in Iowa's landscape, going from predominately prairie to almost entirely agricultural, makes it unlikely elk or bison will ever again roam freely across our state.



The Jester Park Elk and Bison Educational Plaza celebrates the beauty, strength, and history of these majestic animals and gives visitors an opportunity to learn more about Iowa's natural heritage.

Thank you for visiting the Jester Park Elk and Bison Educational Plaza. We hope you enjoyed your experience.

Jester Park Elk & Bison Educational Plaza



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Land and Water Conservation Fund
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Polk County Conservation
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For more information contact
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Both elk and bison once roamed freely across Iowa. By the 1870's they had disappeared from the state. These animals are part of Iowa's heritage and a reminder of how fragile our natural world can be and the impact we can have upon it.

Imagine

Imagine a state almost completely covered with tall grass prairie, rich with herds of elk and bison. Imagine a landscape only seen by the earliest settlers. A landscape that has long since vanished.

Experience

The elk and bison on display at Jester Park remind us of our natural heritage and to help visitors experience what our landscape once looked like and the animals that dominated it.

Explore

The following are a few of the activities you may explore during your visit.

Can you find the **ELK TRACKS**? Why do they suddenly stop in 1870?

Can you find 4 **PETROGLYPH CARVINGS**? What are they and how did the images impact elk and bison populations?

Touch and feel a real **BISON HORN & ELK ANTLER**. What is the difference between a horn and an antler?

Dial up free **GUIDE BY CELL** messages to hear more about these amazing animals. Scan a **QR CODE** to see a video of how elk antlers grow and are shed.

Use the observation deck **SPOTTING SCOPE** to locate all three predators of elk and bison hidden in the animal pasture. What are they?

Marvel at the beautiful and mighty **STEEL ELK** measuring over 6 feet tall and weighing 900 lbs. How much do you think a real elk weighs?

Experience the **EDUCATIONAL PODS** each with its own unique steel art panel and fascinating information about these amazing animals.

Get spectacular views of **LIVE ELK AND BISON** as you watch them roam about the exhibit. How many animals can you see?