



## NEWS RELEASE



*For Immediate Release*

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### **Rosamond Gifford Zoo Acquires Pair of American Bison**

Syracuse, N.Y. (June 18, 2015) – The Rosamond Gifford Zoo is pleased to announce the addition of a pair of American bison to its animal collection. The bison are female and named Hope and Sue. They were acquired from the Brookfield Zoo in Chicago.

“It’s been a few years since we’ve had bison here at the zoo. As guests may remember, bison were part of our animal collection for many years,” says Ted Fox, zoo director. “Bison are an iconic, easily recognizable species that has had such an important and impactful history in the United States.”

The largest terrestrial mammals in North America, bison are symbolic animals of the Great Plains and once covered much of the continent. Numbering in the millions, they were critically important to Plains Indian societies. During the 19th century, settlers killed some 50 million bison for meat, hide and sport and they were nearly wiped out. Thanks to conservation efforts, their numbers have rebounded. Now they are a near-threatened species, with an estimated 1 million in the U.S.

Bison are one of the largest wild cattle. Their coloration is shades of reddish-brown to black. They stand 5 to 6.5 feet tall at the shoulder. Older males may weigh up to a ton (around 2,000 pounds) and females are typically about half the size. Bison have a reputation for having a bad temperament and can be quite formidable. Despite their massive size, bison are quick on their feet and can run at speeds up to 40 miles an hour. Their curved, sharp horns can grow to be two feet in length.

Bison are herbivores and feed on grasses, herbs, shrubs and twigs. They regurgitate their food and chew it as cud before final digestion. Herds will often keep on the move as they eat grasses and sedges on the American prairies.

Hope and Sue are on view in the zoo’s former reindeer yard, located on the Wildlife Trails across from the Penguin Coast exhibit. The exhibit’s former resident, a female reindeer named Tundra, is now living with a herd at the Buffalo Zoo.

Hope is three years old and almost full-size. She weighs 946 pounds and could reach 1,000-1,200 pounds when fully grown. Sue is Hope’s half-sister and is two years old. She is roughly half the size of Hope and will be recognizable to the public by her smaller size and horns.

According to the zoo’s curator of animals, Thomas LaBarge, Hope is very curious about humans. Sue is younger and naturally less at ease, and prefers to stay close to Hope.

The zoo plans to add a male bison to the exhibit later in the fall.

**FUN FACT:**

**Mature bison have thick, woolly coats of fur which insulate them both from extreme cold and extreme heat on the American grasslands. The bison's coat is so well-insulated that snow can settle on its back without melting -- perfect for Syracuse winters!**



Hope, one of two American bison now at the zoo (photo by Jaime Alvarez)

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Founded in 1914, the Rosamond Gifford Zoo at Burnet Park is among the top 10 percent of zoos in the country as an accredited member of the Association of Zoos and Aquariums and is dedicated to connecting people to the natural world by providing engaging guest experiences, exceptional animal care, and unparalleled conservation education.

The zoo actively collaborates with Friends of the Zoo to provide its guests “the best day ever,” ensuring experiences that excite, memories that endure, and knowledge that inspires worldwide conservation.

The Rosamond Gifford Zoo is open daily from 10:00 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. Admission is \$8 for adults (19-61), \$4 for youth (3-18) and \$5 for seniors (62+). Children two and under are free. For more information, call the zoo at (315) 435-8511 or visit [rosamondgiffordzoo.org](http://rosamondgiffordzoo.org).

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Rosamond Gifford Zoo Director, Ted Fox • Friends of the Zoo President, Janet Agostini

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