



## PRESS RELEASE

### BELWIN BISON FESTIVAL RETURNS SATURDAY, MAY 21

*Community event will feature Bison Release, 5k "Run with the Bison" Fun Run, Live Music, Art Making, and Food Trucks*

May 12, 2022 (AFTON, Minn.) — After a two-year hiatus due to COVID-19, Belwin Conservancy is once again inviting the public to welcome a herd of juvenile male bison to their summer home. **The 2022 [Belwin Bison Festival](#) will be held on Saturday, May 21, from 10:00 am to 2:00 pm.**

Activities include a family friendly 5k "Run with the Bison" fun trail run, which is free for children 12 and younger; Youniverse Foodie and TC Pita food trucks; and a festival tent featuring interactive eco-arts, live music, kids' art making, prairie trail exploration and native plant sales. The Riddle Brothers, Sarah Greer and Dean Magraw, and Robert Everest with Michael Bissonnette on percussion will perform.

The main attraction is the release of a herd of 3-year-old male bison from NorthStar Bison in Rice Lake, Wis. The males spend their summer grazing Belwin's restored prairie and return to NorthStar in the fall where they are peacefully field harvested.

#### **Event Details**

Everyone is invited to attend this festival, taking place at Belwin's Lucy Winton Bell Athletic Fields (15601 Hudson Road, West Lakeland, Minnesota). Fee: \$10 per car, cash or check only. Pay as you drive in. No RSVP required. No dogs allowed at this or any Belwin event. [belwin.org/event/belwin-bison-festival/](http://belwin.org/event/belwin-bison-festival/)

#### **Schedule**

##### **10:00 am: 5k "Run with the Bison" Fun Run**

Before the bison take to the prairie, have a fun run through it! (Pre-registration required. Runners may arrive for check-in starting at 9:00 am; there is a 10-minute walk to the starting line.) \$20 registration through May 20; \$25 same-day registration.

##### **10:00 am – 12:00 pm: Live Music, Activities in the Tent, Food Trucks**

##### **12:00 pm – 1:00 pm: Arrival of the Bison Herd**

The bison generally arrive sometime between 12:00 pm and 1:00 pm. (Animals don't always follow our schedule, so we give them some wiggle room!)

##### **1:00 pm – 2:00 pm: Live Music, Activities in the Tent, Food Trucks**

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### **Festival Partners**

[Minnesota Nature Photography Club](#)  
[NorthStar Bison](#)

### **Festival Sponsors**

[Pioneer Press/TwinCities.com](#)  
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### **Belwin's partnership with NorthStar Bison**

Since 2008, Belwin Conservancy and NorthStar Bison have partnered to bring bison back to their native prairie habitat. And each year, with the exception of 2020 and 2021, the spring release of the bison herd onto Belwin's 130-acre Bison Prairie has been witnessed and celebrated by hundreds of people from across the Twin Cities and eastern Wisconsin.

"Our relationship with Belwin is really the heartbeat of NorthStar and what bison, as a species, is all about: restoration and regeneration. Restoring healthy ecosystems, healthy people and, ultimately, a healthy, thriving species. When you have that, everyone wins," said Sean Graese of NorthStar Bison.

The bison play a critical role in Belwin's land management and restoration activities. "Since I joined Belwin, I've seen that the bison actually do a better job managing the prairie than anything we humans can do," said Belwin Conservancy Operations Director Justin Sykora. "The response of the flowers and grasses has been better than we could have hoped. The diversity of the prairie has greatly improved since the bison have been coming. They are modifying our management strategy."

### **Interesting facts about bison:**

- As much as 99% of a bison's diet is grass, with an adult bison consuming up to 30 lb. of grass in a single day. The herd of juvenile males from NorthStar Bison will summer on Belwin's 130-acre northern prairie, or Bison Prairie, eating the native grasses that we have worked to restore on this former cropland.
- Bison bulls range in height from 5.5 to 7 feet at the shoulder; bulls can weigh up to 2,000 lb.
- According to 2017 data, roughly 184,000 bison live on private ranches and farms in the U.S. Roughly 20,000 bison roam on public lands in the U.S. and 20,000 roam on Tribal lands.
- Estimates are that 30 to 60 million bison may have roamed North America prior to 1600. Though they ranged across the continent, the majority lived on the Great Plains. Less than 1,000 bison remained before restoration efforts were undertaken beginning in the late 1800s.

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**PHOTOS: Courtesy of Belwin Conservancy.**

**2022\_BelwinBisonFestival\_5kRun\_Promo.jpg**: Participants in the 5k “Run with the Bison” fun trail run.

**2022\_BelwinBisonFestival\_EcoArts\_Promo.jpg**: Interactive eco-arts inside the Belwin Bison Festival activities tent.

**2022\_BelwinBisonFestival\_Release\_Promo.jpg**: The release of the NorthStar Bison herd.

**2022\_BelwinBisonFestival\_BisonTower.jpg**: A new two-story bison viewing platform will give visitors a bird’s eye view onto the Bison Prairie—and a unique vantage from which to watch the bison release.

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### **MEDIA CONTACT**

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### **ABOUT BELWIN CONSERVANCY**

[Belwin Conservancy](https://www.belwin.org) is a nonprofit organization with a mission of inspiring connection and engagement with the natural world. At Belwin, we spark passion for wild places through a variety of innovative experiential programs that include the arts, astronomy, athletic fields, bison, education, and public access to our restored lands. Through land protection and habitat restoration, we revive threatened ecosystems so wildlife can thrive for generations to come. Located in Afton, Minnesota, on the ancestral home of the Wahpekute Dakota people, Belwin’s 1,500 acres of permanently protected land includes woodland, prairie, oak savanna, ponds, streams, and wetlands.

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