



The Palace

Prairie Animals

Watch for these animals found in South Dakota.



Pheasant: South Dakota's state bird, the Chinese ringneck pheasant is a vital part of South Dakota's economy. Hunters from across the world come mostly to eastern South Dakota to chase these wily birds. Population estimates figure there are between 8 and 10 million of these birds in the state.

Prairie Dog: Mostly in western South Dakota, this small mammal burrows a series of tunnels and rooms underground where large colonies live in what are called "prairie dog towns." While actually a rodent, the prairie dog gets its name from a warning call it makes that sounds similar to a small dog's bark.

Whitetail deer: Located

throughout the entire state, the whitetail deer is a common animal in South Dakota. Most active during the fall in a time called "the rut," these deer can be seen feeding in fields during morning and evening hours.

Pronghorn Antelope: The antelope primarily inhabits western South Dakota. It uses its speed to escape danger, running speeds that can top 60 mph, making it the fastest land animal in North America.

Canada Goose: This large waterfowl inhabits the entire state. Its characteristic black and white feather patterning with the unmistakable honking noise make it easy to recognize. During fall and spring migration, one can often see the large birds flying in the characteristic "V" pattern.

Eagle: Bald eagles winter below Missouri River dams, in the flowing stretches of the Missouri River, and

in parts of the Black Hills. During spring and fall migration, they can be seen east of the Missouri River, especially in cottonwood forests of the James and Big Sioux rivers. Golden eagles nest mainly west of the Missouri River.

Coyote: This canine is an opportunistic hunter that is located throughout South Dakota. Though they may cause many farmers and ranchers fits by scaring or hunting their cattle, coyotes are a vital part of the state's ecosystem and South Dakota's state animal.

Bison: South Dakota is the nation's top bison producer, with nearly 40,000 of the animals living within the state's borders. While bison, also known as buffalo, no longer roam wild over the plains, there are pockets where bison roam in near-wild conditions. Nearly 1,600 buffalo roam Custer State Park's 71,000 acres, and about 450 bison live in the Badlands National Park Wilderness Area.

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