European bison return to Spain: reports

June 6 2010

A bison shakes off dust at a pasture in a Slovakian forestry farm in 2007. The nearly extinct European bison has been reintroduced after centuries in Spain with seven animals coming from a rare herd in Poland, Spanish media reported Saturday.

The nearly extinct European bison has been reintroduced after centuries in Spain with seven animals coming from a rare herd in Poland, Spanish media reported Saturday.

The seven bison, cousins of the North American buffalo, are set to be isolated in the mountains of Palencia in northern Spain after arriving Friday at the country's conservation centre for bison.

The two male and five female bison will roam free in a controlled area.

The reintroduction of the European bison, which lived on the Iberian peninsula until the 11th century, comes after eight years of work by the

Spanish association for the conservation of European bison.

A unique herd of some 800 European bison live in the Bialowieza forest spanning part of Poland's border with Belarus, a rare European primeval forest and a protected national park.

Some 450 of the endangered mammals live on the Polish side.

A herd of about 700 bison that lived in the forest prior to World War I was all but wiped out by German troops and local poachers. The existing herd was bred from seven surviving animals.

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