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Study: U.S. buffalo kills spurred by trade

CALGARY, Alberta, Aug. 1 (UPI) -- A Canadian environmental economist has determined European demand for bison leather caused the near-extinction of U.S. buffalo.

M. Scott Taylor of the University of Calgary argues the story of the buffalo slaughter on the Great Plains is not an American one. Instead, Taylor claims the slaughter of some 30 million bison between 1870 and 1880 was spurred by a tanning innovation created in Europe and maintained by a robust European demand for buffalo hides for use as industrial leather.

Taylor said he used international trade records and first-person accounts of the hunt to show the widespread bison slaughter was the result of a market for industrial leather that was virtually unregulated by the U.S. government.

The study is included in a working paper for the Canadian National Bureau of Economic Research.

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