MT Ridge

Official State Symbols

A010 · v0.3 · DRAFT

MTR Research · November 11, 2026

Wyoming's Official Symbols, Written Into Law

By Miles Ridge. Feature article, DRAFT v0.3, November 11, 2026. Target: wyovote.com. Companion to A010 v0.3 Official State Symbols.docx. v0.3 is an edit pass at the owner's request: the flag line now ends in "unbranded," and the piece uses a few more tongue-in-cheek, double-meaning ranch and range words tied to specific symbols; repetition is trimmed so each point is stated once; the closer lands a new beat. All facts, sources, and the lead photograph are unchanged from v0.1 and v0.2. No MTR Research data, no private data, and no draft or unreviewed internal reports are used.

1. Summary and angle

A010 is a short family explainer of Wyoming's official state symbols and the fact that the Legislature wrote them into law. The Word article is meant for parents and children. It still uses a short list of well-known symbols rather than a complete catalog. v0.1 was accurate but dry. v0.2 rewrote the prose with more color and wry Western voice. The owner then asked for a little tongue-in-cheek wordplay, starting with a change from "unmarked" to "unbranded" on the flag, and to look for other opportunities. v0.3 also follows the standing rule from A009: say each point once and do not repeat it; the closer should land a new beat. Facts, sources, photograph, and order are unchanged. Humor is commentary, not a new claim.

Wordplay changes in v0.3, each used once:

- Flag: "A state that brands cattle was not going to leave its flag unmarked." became "A state that brands cattle was not going to leave its flag unbranded."
- Indian paintbrush: "a paintbrush does not fade into the grass and hope to be ignored" became "that paintbrush already came fully colored."
- Meadowlark: "The meadowlark, at least, was already doing the work of living here" became "A state could do worse than officially sing its praises."
- Cottonwood: "A tree that finds a place on the plains and holds its ground is a reasonable official choice" became "With that, the official list put down

roots."

- Bison: the late honor is told once, as "The honor did not arrive in a stampede," plus the 1917 flag and later paperwork line. The earlier echo "It already stood on the flag, and now it stands in the statute book too" was cut.
- Triceratops: added "old bones, it turns out, can still get a title."
- Rodeo: added "That year, Wyoming saddled up an official sport."

Jade ("gem of an idea") was not used, because the state gemstone is not in the Word article. "One fish is stone, and one fish still swims" was already in v0.2 and was kept; no second fossil pun was added. The Secretary of State's seal-as-brand description was moved up beside the flag, so the closer would not repeat it.

Repetition also trimmed: the closer no longer restates that the Legislature wrote the symbols into law, or that the names are down on paper, or that the flag, flower, bird, and bison share the same chapter. The "hurried official business" echo of the nearly-30-year seal joke was dropped at the meadowlark. The closer is a new beat: a rider carrying the flag around a rodeo arena, with the bison on the cloth and the wind at its back.

The one main idea is that the flag, the flower, the bird, the bison, and the other official signs did not become official by accident. They sit in Title 8, Chapter 3, of the Wyoming statutes because lawmakers adopted them, one bill at a time.

The Word article covers:

- The Great Seal (1893, revised 1921) and the motto "Equal Rights."
- The state flag, designed by Verna Keays of Buffalo, later Mrs. A.C. Keyes of Casper, adopted Jan. 31, 1917; white bison, seal, red border, white stripe, national colors.
- The Indian paintbrush, adopted the same day.
- The meadowlark (Feb. 5, 1927), the cottonwood (Feb. 1, 1947), and the bison as state mammal (Feb. 23, 1985).
- Later, kid-friendly picks: Knightia (fossil) and the cutthroat trout (both Feb. 18, 1987); the triceratops (March 18, 1994); rodeo as the state sport (2003).
- The official state code, adopted in 2010, drawn from Cowboy Ethics by James P. Owen, with two quoted lines: "Take pride in your work" and "When you make a promise, keep it."

Symbols listed by the Secretary of State but left out of the Word article, to keep the piece short: jade (gemstone), horned toad (reptile), Sacagawea golden dollar (coin), western wheatgrass (grass), Sheridan's green hairstreak (butterfly), Wyoming big sagebrush (shrub), blotched tiger salamander (amphibian), the state songs, the territorial flag, and the full ten-line state code.

Type: Feature (A_CATEGORY code F), for the same reason as A009. Class is not yet confirmed by the owner.

The article target is wyovote.com.

2. Voice and target

The article target is wyovote.com. The wry ranch-hand kitchen-table voice from v0.2 is kept. At the owner's request, v0.3 adds tongue-in-cheek, double-meaning ranch and range wordplay tied to specific symbols, each wink used once, and trims repetition so each point is stated once. Asides about lawmakers and the Legislature remain gentle and nonpartisan, aimed at institutions and human nature, never at a living person or a party. No first person. No crude language. No dialect spellings, and no howdy, partner, or yeehaw. No number, date, quotation, or sourced claim was changed or added to fit the voice. Commentary is framed as commentary. The brand comparison remains tied to the Secretary of State's description of the seal on the bison. Byline: Miles Ridge.

This is a Feature family piece, not a news inverted-pyramid story. The tighter "flavor only in the lead, transitions, and closer" habit of v0.1 remains relaxed, as in v0.2, because the owner asked for color throughout.

The 1917 color symbolism on the Secretary of State's page (the red border "represents the Indian and the blood of the pioneers who gave their lives reclaiming the soil," and so on) was left out of the Word article. The language is of its time and needs more context than a short family piece can hold. The article describes the flag's design and says the colors are the same as those of the national flag, both of which are in the statute and on the official page. The older symbolism is recorded here for review.

3. Facts used and the source for each

All pages were opened and checked on Nov. 11, 2026 (America/Denver). Adoption dates come from the Secretary of State's official Student's Corner page. The current official statutes name the symbols but do not, in the compiled text, always restate the year of adoption.

Subject	Statute (Title 8, official compilation)	Adoption date (Secretary of State)
Great Seal	W.S. 8-3-101	Adopted by the Second Legislature, 1893; revised by the Sixteenth Legislature, 1921 (Great Seal page)
State flag	W.S. 8-3-102 (white silhouetted buffalo; great seal on the ribs; red border, white stripe, blue field; national colors)	Jan. 31, 1917; designer Mrs. A.C. Keyes of Casper, formerly Miss Verna Keays of Buffalo
State flower	W.S. 8-3-104 ("Castillija linariaefolia," commonly called "the Indian paint brush")	Jan. 31, 1917

Subject	Statute (Title 8, official compilation)	Adoption date (Secretary of State)
State bird	W.S. 8-3-105 (genus Sturnella, commonly known as the meadowlark)	Feb. 5, 1927
State tree	W.S. 8-3-106 ("Populus Sargentii," commonly called cottonwood tree)	Feb. 1, 1947 (Secretary of State notes a 1961 amendment to the scientific name)
State motto	W.S. 8-3-107 ("Equal Rights," as it exists on the great seal)	Listed as the official motto on the symbols page
State mammal	W.S. 8-3-111 (Bison bison, American bison or buffalo)	Feb. 23, 1985
State fossil	W.S. 8-3-112 (the fossilized fish Knightia)	Feb. 18, 1987; Green River Formation detail from the Secretary of State
State fish	W.S. 8-3-113 (commonly known as the cutthroat trout)	Feb. 18, 1987
State dinosaur	W.S. 8-3-116 (to be designated by election, with results filed with the Secretary of State; the compiled section does not itself name the animal)	Secretary of State: triceratops, adopted March 18, 1994
State sport	W.S. 8-3-119 (rodeo is the official state sport)	2003
State code	W.S. 8-3-123 (code of the west, derived from Cowboy Ethics by James P. Owen, including "Take pride in your work" and "When you make a promise, keep it")	March 3, 2010

Sources:

1. Wyoming Secretary of State, Student's Corner, State Symbols. https://sos.wyo.gov/Services/StateInfo_Symbols.aspx
2. Wyoming Secretary of State, Great Seal. https://sos.wyo.gov/Services/GreatSeal.aspx
3. Wyoming Legislature, Wyoming Statutes Title 8 (official compilation), Chapter 3, accessed Nov. 11, 2026. https://www.wyoleg.gov/statutes/compress/title08.pdf

The Word article uses "Mrs. Keyes of Casper" in the body (the initials in "Mrs. A.C. Keyes" are reserved for the credits, so a period after an initial is not read as the end of a sentence). Credits and this file use the full official form.

The statute calls the figure on the flag a "buffalo." The Secretary of State calls it a bison. The Word article uses bison, which matches both the mammal statute and the Secretary of State's flag description. The two words refer to the same animal.

The statute spells the flower "Indian paint brush" and "Castillija." The Word article uses the Secretary of State's common form, "Indian paintbrush," and does not use the scientific name.

The ordinary bill path in the Word article (a member introduces a bill; the House and Senate vote; the governor signs) describes the usual constitutional path for a statute. This draft did not open the original session law for every symbol. Adoption dates are taken from the Secretary of State.

4. Claims considered and dropped or limited

- A full catalog of every official symbol was dropped, so the family article would stay near 500 to 800 words.
- The 1917 official color symbolism for the flag was kept in this file and out of the Word article (see section 2).
- The scientific-name difference for the cottonwood (statute: Populus Sargentii; Secretary of State: Populus deltoides variety monilifera, after a 1961 amendment) was not taken into the Word article. The common name cottonwood is used.
- W.S. 8-3-116 does not itself name the triceratops. The Word article's naming of the triceratops and the March 18, 1994, date rests on the Secretary of State's official list, not on the compiled section text.
- "In late spring," "sings from fences," and "bison still lives on the high plains" were considered as local color and dropped, because they were not stated on the official pages used for this draft.

v0.2 and v0.3 commentary checked against the same sources: "nearly 30 years" between the 1893 adoption of the Great Seal and the 1921 revision is 28 years; "ten years later" for the meadowlark is 1917 to 1927; "three-horned dinosaur" follows the Secretary of State's description of triceratops; the seal-as-brand comparison remains the Secretary of State's description. The closer's rider and rodeo arena are commentary tied to the lead photograph (a rider carrying the state flag at the Jubilee Days rodeo) and to rodeo as the official state sport; no new event is claimed. No new dates, names, or quotations were added.

5. Photograph

- File: Wyoming flag-bearer at the outdoor rodeo that is part of the Jubilee Days festival in Laramie, Wyoming (75th anniversary). A rider on horseback carries the state flag.
- Photographer: Carol M. Highsmith. Date: July 12, 2015. Gates Frontiers Fund Wyoming Collection, Carol M. Highsmith Archive, Library of Congress Prints and Photographs Division (LCCN 2015633099; LC-DIG-highsm-33084).
- License: public domain. The Library of Congress lists "No known restrictions on publication." Highsmith has stipulated that her photographs are in the public domain.

- Item page: https://www.loc.gov/item/2015633099/ . Display width in Word: 6.5 in.
- The photograph shows both the official flag and a rodeo, which the Legislature later named the official state sport (2003). The caption states both facts and the photograph date.

6. Publishing checks (tools/check.py, v0.3)

Body word count 774, excluding title, deck, caption and credits. Longest sentence 29 words. Checked with credit markers removed. The usual 800–1,500 word publishing check is for longer newspaper pieces and is not the target length here. This is a family piece of about 550 to 900 words. The article's target is wyovote.com.

Check	Result	Measured
Word count 800-1,500	FAIL (expected)	774 (family draft, about 550 to 900 words; trimmed from 839 by cutting repeated points)
No sentence of 20+ words	FAIL (expected)	longest 29; a few sentences run longer for yarn rhythm
Paragraphs of no more than 4 sentences	PASS	no paragraph over 4 sentences; some short (allowed)
Keyword "symbol" 5-6 times in body	PASS	6
3+ links	PASS	3
Keyword in title and description	PASS	title and description

Flesch-Kincaid grade level of the Word body: 5.2 (average sentence about 13 words). The informal aim for this revision is grade 5 to 7. Voice and target check: target wyovote.com; v0.3 adds tongue-in-cheek wordplay and trims repetition, at the owner's request; each point stated once; no number, date, quotation, or sourced claim was changed; humor is commentary; no first person; no crude language; no mocking of living people or parties; byline Miles Ridge; no private data.

Appendix A. Version log and change log

Version	Date	Change
v0.3 DRAFT	2026-11-11	v0.3: tongue-in-cheek wordplay (e.g., flag "unbranded") at the owner's request; repetition trimmed; facts unchanged. Same sources, photograph, structure, and credits as v0.1 and v0.2. Status remains 30 Drafting.
v0.2 DRAFT	2026-11-11	v0.2: rewrite with more color and wry Western voice, at the owner's request; facts unchanged. Same sources, photograph, structure, and credits as v0.1. Status remains 30 Drafting.
v0.1 DRAFT	2026-11-11	First draft. Folksy family feature for wyovote.com, at the owner's request. Sources: Wyoming Secretary of State (Student's Corner symbols page and Great Seal page) and the Legislature's official compilation of Wyoming Statutes Title 8, Chapter 3. Public-domain Highsmith photograph of a state-flag bearer at the Jubilee Days rodeo in Laramie. Status 30 Drafting.