



Pryor Mountain
WILD MUSTANG CENTER

FALL 2024 NEWSLETTER

P.O. Box 385 • 1106 Road 12 • Lovell, WY 82431

SEASONAL CHANGES



9/11/2024
Ouaid's band on top of the mountain



9/20/2024
London's band at Mystic Pond



10/18/2024
Shoshone's band on Cheyenne Flats



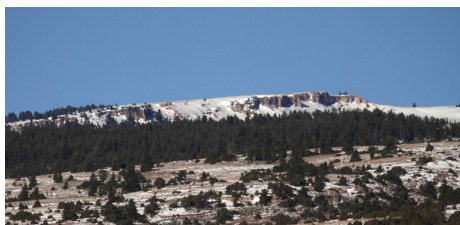
10/25/2024
Nimbus/Encore & Xacara on Lower Sykes

A common question we are asked at the Mustang Center is, "Where do I find the horses?" The appropriate response is, "This is entirely dependent on two main climactic factors: temperature and precipitation." Is the temperature above or below freezing? And is there snow on the ground? These are important things to know for the folks who seek wild horses during this time of the year as the weather changes from fall to winter.

There are water sources at the highest and lowest elevations of the Pryor Mountain Wild Horse Range. These include ponds on the top of East Pryor Mountain. Scattered across the mid-low elevations are a number of water guzzlers. These were developed in 2010 as a way to better distribute the horses across the range. On the Dryhead, there are two main water sources, Crooked Creek Bay at the south entrance of the horse range and Layout Creek at the north entrance. At those times throughout the year when the temperature is above freezing, the horses continue to utilize these water sources, moving to water one or two times a day.

This changes when the temperatures begin to fall below the freezing mark. Concurrently, this is when the snow begins to fall and produces even a small amount of ground cover. During this transition time, the predictable water sources freeze up and the horses become reliant on snow for their main source of hydration. As the snow drifts more heavily in the upper elevations, the horses get pushed down the mountain and all across the horse range. Their remarkable ability to exist solely on snow for hydration allows them to live pretty much all across the range below the deep snow line.

The time from late summer to the onset of winter illustrates the transitions described above. It is the mountain horses that have the most visible seasonal migration patterns as shown by the observations from 2024. In September, the mountain horses were pretty much at the top of the mountain. And then, throughout the next two months, they began to move. This is an exciting and challenging time for horse watching as the wild horses can be just about anywhere across their rugged land.



11/6/2024
Snow covers the top. Horses below trees.



11/8/2024
Banjo's band on Lower Burnt Timber

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HIDALGO - THE QUIET LIFE

PHOTO, POEM & STORY BY ANGELINA HUTZENBILER

Hidalgo has been through a lot in his 17 years. He possesses only one eye and many battle scars, yet he is a handsome, strong stallion, capable of surviving this rugged, rough country on his own.

I was out one evening looking for horses. After hiking up a ridge I looked around for a while not seeing anything. Then all of a sudden, there he was, such a wonderful fall surprise! I must have been over 200 yards away from him. Hidalgo is easily recognizable with his unique red dun color and flashy white markings. He is a beauty!

It just so happens that he was on a small hill off to the side of the main dirt road. I quickly made my way down the ridge and drove over closer to him so that I could capture a few photographs of his splendor. He knew I was coming of course. This stallion is wise. He also surely saw me trying to quietly scamper my way down the ridge opposite from him without falling. It was no surprise to him that I would make way over to say hello.

I kept thinking to myself, how does he find so much peace being out in this vast land by himself? Somehow, he is always content being on his own. I never truly understood it until I spent a few moments with him that evening. Seeing him standing alone, with the golden light of the evening casting warmth and peace upon him. The simplicity of him grazing what little was left of the short grasses created such a powerful image and strength about him. What a bright, shining light he is on the range, all on his own!

This stallion is a beautiful reminder that it is possible to find peace and pleasure in our own company. In a world filled with so much chaos and noise, one can still find stillness and serenity, alone with just their thoughts and nature. No matter what we've been through, or the challenges we have faced, there is always peace waiting to be found.

I was so blessed to spend a few moments with him that evening, those of which I will certainly treasure for the rest of my life. He continued to graze calmly with only the sound of the clicking of my camera. It was a feeling much like seeing an old friend again. He has that way about him. What a gift this horse has become as he lives his quiet life on the range!



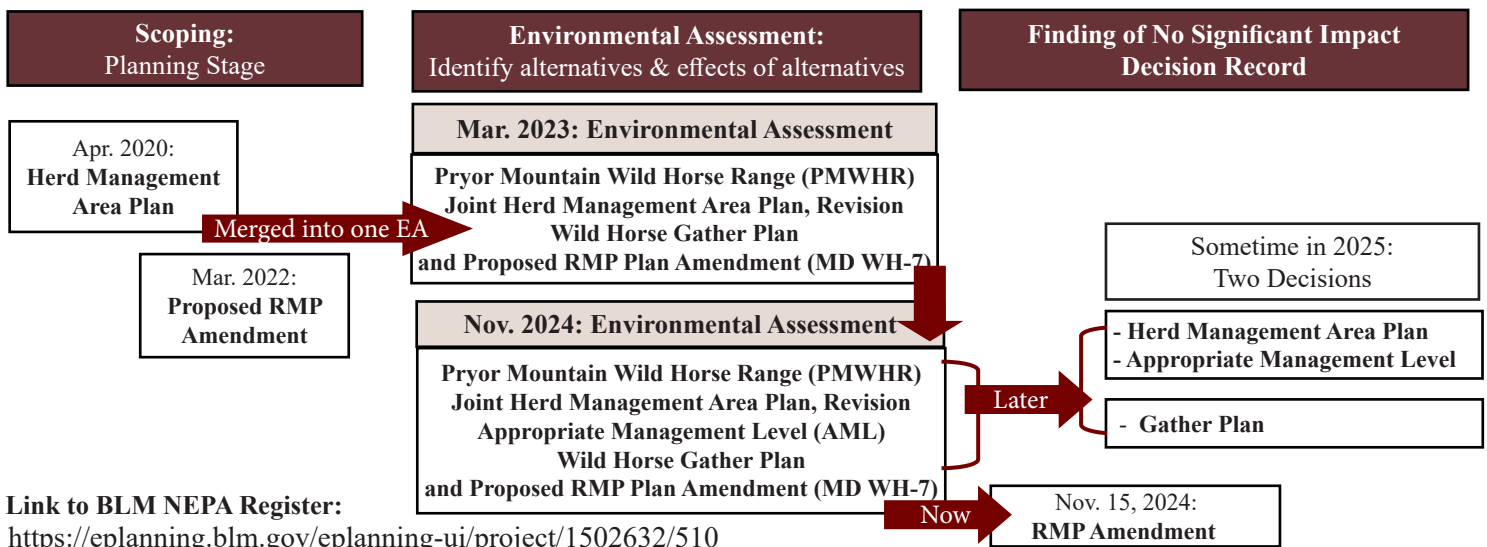
Fall on the Range

*The warm, fall sunlight danced
across his coat,
An experienced stallion at peace
on a land desolate and barren.
The ground looks parched,
What is left of the short grass has
died back,
Its color a dulled beige.
There is not another horse in sight,
And yet still, this stallion is at
peace on a land desolate and
barren.
He grazes alone this evening, like
many evenings,
Content with his solitude.*

BLM MANAGEMENT PLANS - CURRENT STATUS

On November 15, 2024, the Billings-BLM Field Office released the Proposed Resource Management Plan (RMP) Amendment that is part of a long road of management actions for the Pryor Mountain Wild Horse Range. What started out as two separate actions with the 2020 Herd Management Plan and the 2022 Proposed RMP Amendment merged into a single Environmental Assessment (EA) in March 2023. In addition to the two plans, a gather plan was included, as was an Appropriate Management Level (AML) Re-Evaluation.

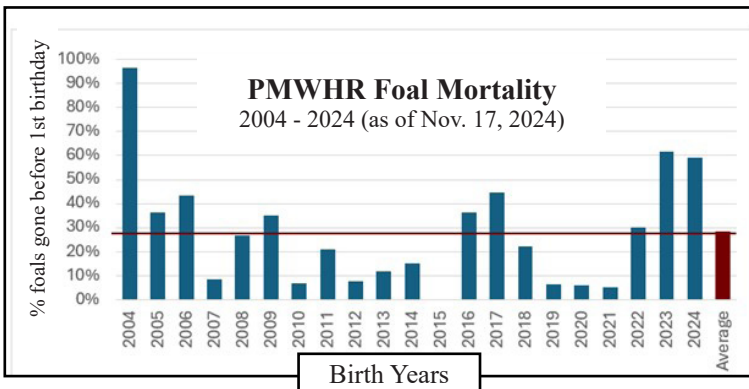
In November, the plan was released in its entirety once again as a revision of the first EA. However, another separation happened at this point. The Proposed RMP Amendment was moved to the Decision Stage with a 30-day Public Protest Period (which will end on Dec. 16, 2024). The decisions for the other parts of the EA will be released sometime in 2025. The BLM was required to release the whole EA, although the only decision at this point is with the RMP Amendment Proposal. The plan, along with the response to comments, is found on the link below: BLM NEPA Register. At this point, there is not much opportunity for more public comment. Keep an eye on our Facebook page and website for updates. The flowchart below shows the management steps that started in April 2020.



FOAL MORTALITY - A MATTER OF HEART AND HEAD



The 2024 foal crop was one of the largest in many years, with 27 known foals being born. The first foal was born in early April and the last, that we are aware of, was born at the end of August. However, starting in April and continuing throughout the summer, foals started to disappear. To date, eleven of those foals now remain. In 2023, thirteen foals were born. Of those, five now remain. Both years represent a much higher foal mortality rate than usual, as shown by the chart below.



The death of foals can be attributed to several factors. Foals born to young mothers (2-3 years old) often have a lower survival rate. A mare may not have enough milk. A foal could be injured. The foal may have been exposed to harsh weather conditions. Another cause for foal mortality is predation. The increased loss of foals in recent years is thought to be due to much higher-than-normal mountain lion predation. This has been a harsh reminder of 2004, when 28 foals were born and only one survived to his first birthday. Now, like back then, a foal is seen one day and gone the next. It happens so quickly. These deaths can affect a person in two levels: first, the heart, then, the head.

No matter what, the loss of a foal affects the heart first. When a mare is seen without her foal, heartbreak immediately sets in. This was experienced so frequently in 2004 and now, twenty years later, emotion once again runs high each time a foal goes missing. The feeling of grief is normal and speaks of care and concern for these animals. Yet it is important to keep emotions

in check and not become overwhelmed by the loss. The mares who lose their foals provide a great example of how to grieve. They may call out to their lost foal for a short time, but it doesn't take long for them to go back to the business of living. They carry on.

That is when the head starts to kick in: the intellectual part of us that considers mortality, even that of the foals, as a natural part of an ecosystem. Likewise, predators are part of a healthy ecosystem. In the Pryors, mountain lions are the main predators of wild horses. Normally, the preferred diet of a mountain lion is mule deer. A declining mule deer population was surmised as being a cause for the lions to turn their attention to foals. However in a recent conversation with Shawn Stewart of Montana Fish, Wildlife, and Parks, the mule deer population has remained stable for several years with an average population of 280.

The question persists, why, then, do lions hunt the foals when there are ample deer for them? A lion can adapt to a new food source. In the Pryors, this can be horses or Bighorn Sheep. Lions have big home ranges that can cover up to 200 square miles. They are stealthy and secretive with their nocturnal habits. It may be possible that as few as 1-2 lions are responsible for the foal deaths in the Pryors. As shown on the chart, the mountain lion predation tends to be cyclical on the Pryor Mountain Wild Horse Range.

Many people ask if anything is done to control the lion predation. There is a hunting season for mountain lions in the Pryor Mountains to manage their population, yet the area of the horse range is extremely hard to hunt. This is where logic reminds us that a predator/prey relationship is part of natural management, a critical key to population control. These horses are wild animals, exposed to the same challenges faced by any other prey animal. Therein lies the challenge for us as humans: to understand and accept this factor of being wild and all that it entails. This is best summed up by the phrase, "Love them enough to let them be wild."

For more information about the 2024 foals visit: <http://www.pryormustangs.org/the-foals-2024/>

We give a special thanks to Alessandro Trimboli Pitterman for compiling the Foal Mortality data and Shawn Stewart of the Montana Fish, Wildlife, and Parks for information on deer & mountain lions in the Pryor Mountains.

THE MUSTANG CENTER BOARD OF DIRECTORS THANKS YOU FOR YOUR DONATIONS AND ASKS FOR YOUR CONTINUED SUPPORT AS WE WORK TO PRESERVE THE FUTURE OF THE PRYOR MOUNTAIN WILD HORSES.

**Joann Almlof, President Jason Beal, Vice President Georgette Lewis, Secretary/Treasurer
Amanda Bennion Matthew Dillon Angelina Hutzenbiler Debra Heiser**

2024 AT THE MUSTANG CENTER

We rely on donations and gift shop sales to help us with our work.

The Mustang Center works hard to carry out our mission to “Preserve the Future of the Pryor Mountain Wild Horses.” In 2024, we have been busy with activities that help us meet our mission statement and our goals:

Educate and Inform:

- The operations of the Mustang Center itself is a primary way to educate and inform others of the Pryor Horses.
- In 2024, we had nearly 3,000 visitors from all 50 states and 15 international countries.
- This season the Mustang Center continued their partnership with PryorWild Tours. Nearly 200 folks braved Burnt Timber Ridge Road to witness the beauty of the mountain horses.
- Throughout the year, we provided a variety of educational presentations to school and community groups.
- We provide ongoing education through social media including Facebook, Instagram, and our website.



Visitors stop by to learn more about the Pryor Horses.

On-Range Projects: We are constantly seeking out ways to carry out projects that will benefit the wild horses on the horse range.

- Fencing Repairs: The Mustang Center helped finance damaged fencing near Cottonwood and Crooked Creek Bay. This was critical to help keep the horses secure on the range.
- Fertility Control assistance: We helped the BLM complete their fertility control objectives by locating and identifying mares needing treatment.
- Field Observations: We are out on the horse range frequently to monitor the horses, the water guzzlers, fencing, etc.
- Monitoring Range Conditions: Through a series of trail cameras placed strategically on the range, we monitor weather and the patterns of the horses and other wildlife. We hope this effort may produce answers to the questions regarding the current predation issues.

Mustangs at the Center: We currently have five Pryor horses at our facilities. These horses provide visitors with a first-hand look at Pryor Horses.

- Replaced and updated fencing to keep the horses safe. At the same time, we made improvements to our parking area to improve and beautify the grounds.
- Purchased hay to provide for horses.



MUSTANG DAYS 2024 LOVELL, WY



Anna, Ford, Katie, Deb, Joann, and Joscelyn lead the way!



It is only fitting that the Mustang Center join in the fun of the community celebration, Mustang Days! We had a booth in the Kid’s Fun Night where kids could walk the WILD MUSTANG TRAIL.”

The next day we had a great time in the parade with our fleet of classic Mustangs...Ford Mustangs. Lovell is known as “Mustang Country” and we take great pride in that distinction!

Nancy & her grandsons ride in Gene Lely’s classic Ford Mustang.

2ND ANNUAL A MORNING WITH MUSTANGS



Steve Cerroni and Whisper

On September 14, 2024 we held our 2nd Annual: A Morning with Mustangs at the Center. We celebrated the day with a list of special guests of honor. The first was Wyoming Whisper, the almost two-year-old filly that was rescued off the mountain in January 2023.

Whisper showed that she was still a spirited mustang as she pranced around the corral at the Mustang Center! Meanwhile we had a reprise of our children’s game of “Wild Mustang Trail” which is a musical chair type activity with lots of great horse prizes.

The next guests of honor were Amanda Bennion and Emily Asay as they entertained the nice crowd with songs of Big Horn Canyon.

The beautiful music was followed by a guest speaker. Timothy McCleary, a professor at Little Big Horn College at Crow Agency, Mt. gave an interesting and informative presentation on “The Horses in Crow History.”



Tim McCleary shares his knowledge of the Crow Indians and the Horse

FOLLOW THE PRYOR MOUNTAIN WILD HORSES THROUGHOUT THE YEAR

Website: www.pryormustangs.org

PryorWild Tours: www.pryorwild.com

YouTube: [PryorWild](https://www.youtube.com/PryorWild)

FaceBook: [Pryor Mountain Wild Mustang Center](https://www.facebook.com/PryorMountainWildMustangCenter)

Online Store: mustang-center-gift-shop.com