

# Pryor Mountain

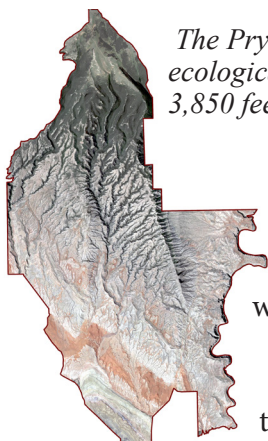
## WILD MUSTANG CENTER

# SPRING 2024

# NEWSLETTER

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

## PRYOR MOUNTAIN WILD HORSE RANGE - A LAND OF EXTREMES



*The Pryor Mountain Wild Horse Range is extremely diverse and complex topographically, geologically, and ecologically. It varies in environment and elevation from a sagebrush/salt-shrub dominated cold desert at about 3,850 feet in Wyoming, to a subalpine setting with subalpine fir and open meadows in Montana at about 8,750 feet.*

*Pryor Mountain Wild Horse Range Survey and Assessment: Natural Resources Conservation Service, April 2004*

The wild horses of the Pryor Mountains have adapted to the extreme diversity and complexity of their home. Through the years, the horses have adapted to their world in two main ways. A small group of horses, those of the Dryhead and Lower Sykes areas, spend their whole lives in the lowland desert with mainly the seasonal changes to contend with. The majority of the herd go through a seasonal migration, moving from the bottom to the top of the mountains and back down again.

The weather in the Pryors is complex and unpredictable. At times, fall can usher in a winter of harsh, brutal weather to the land of the Pryor Mountains. However, this was not the case for the winter of 2023-2024. This past winter could best be described as mild, with occasional bursts of wintry weather. Despite this, the horses carried on their typical patterns. The lowland horses continued to be very visible in the



*Mica/MatoSka  
October 24, 2023*



*Outlaw Lady & Wild Bill  
January 26, 2024*

area known as the Dryhead, along Highway 37. The dramatic change each winter is with the mountain horses. It was late October 2023 when the annual migration down the mountain began. From that point on, any area below the snow line was fair game as the mountain horses scattered themselves across the vast low- to mid-elevation areas. The new year brought in a skiff of snow, which prompted many of the mountain horses to move all the way to the lowest elevations. Luckily, despite the mild temperatures, the horses were protected with their thick winter coats.

Watching the wild ones can bring a complexity of emotion as well. The recent years have been difficult with the large loss of Pryor horses. Since the winter of 2022, twenty-three horses have died. This represents one of the highest mortality rates in years. The horses lost were of all age groups, from the very young to the very old. There was strong evidence that many of the foals and yearlings died of mountain lion predation. Mountain lion predation is not new in the Pryors, and the continued impact into the summer of 2024 is unknown. When the losses are so overwhelming, they can overshadow everything. But it is best to step back and look at the big picture. Wild horse society of today has been shaped by the ones that are gone. Although each loss tears at the heart and emotion, there is comfort in knowing that these horses lived their whole lives in this wild land.

*Article & Photos by Nancy Cerroni - Map by Matthew Dillon*

**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   Debra Heiser   Angelina Hutzenbiler

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One of the primary considerations for the success of a nonprofit organization is “capacity building.” Capacity building is the ability of an organization to deliver its mission now and in the future. One component of capacity building is creating a leadership succession plan. It is the generational stair-stepping of people, committed to the mission, which is foundational for the long-term sustainability of that organization.

I was privileged to learn about the horses and their land from Reverend Floyd Schwieger. Whether by accident or intention, somehow he came to me to seek out my help as an educator. In this case, he was the teacher and I was the student. As his health began to decline, he told me, “The horses need a local advocate.” That was twenty years ago, which led to two decades, so far, of a life filled with wild horses. Somehow, I became a link from the past to the present in the work of the Mustang Center and the mission for the wild horses.

A key to capacity building is that generational stair-step. In these pages, you will read examples of just that: the younger generations, both past and present, voicing their thoughts and opinions, hoping to create positive change, both at the creation of the Pryor Mountain Wild Horse Range and today. Below you will see the words of Katie Rundell, a young woman who has wholeheartedly embraced the Pryor Horses. Through her work with the historical archives of the Mustang Center, she has written a beautiful tribute to the past. You’ll also see the Pryor world through the eyes of two of our newer board members, Angelina Hutzenbiler and Amanda Bennion. And finally, to show the timeless efforts of children, we’ve included words and photos of children from the past. We are proud to honor our rich history while simultaneously cultivating and fostering new and exciting ideas. In doing so, we continue to fulfill our mission to preserve the future of the Pryor Mountain Wild Horses for generations to come.



*Katie, Amanda, and Angie  
on the mountain.*

## DEDICATED DEFENDERS & FRESH EYES - THEN & NOW

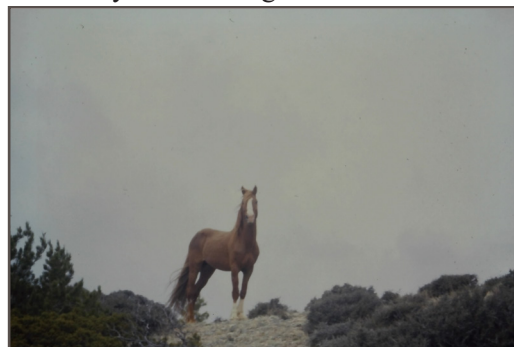
BY KATIE RUNDELL

In the early months of 1968, Hope Ryden became involved with the plight of the then-unprotected Pryor Mountain Wild Horses. Her unique position as a reporter in New York with a wide audience helped catapult the controversy surrounding the wild horses in the Pryor Mountains onto the world stage. Her dedication to the horses and her skills as a communicator and advocate helped eventually lead to the establishment of the Pryor Mountain Wild Horse Range (the first in the nation!) later that year.

But Hope wasn’t the first person to sound the alarm about the potential removal of all the wild horses living in the Pryors. For years—decades, even—a committed group of Lovell-area residents had been vying for protection for the horses they knew were so special. In fact, it was an article written by a Lovell Chronicle reporter named Beverly Robertson that was picked up by the Associated Press and got the attention of Hope Ryden in the first place.

The tireless work of Lovell’s wild horse advocates was invaluable. So were Hope Ryden’s unique skillset and the larger audience she brought with her. Together, the local advocates and Hope’s fresh eyes created the perfect scenario for generations of positive change for the Pryor Mountain Wild Horses.

Over fifty-five years since the establishment of the Pryor Mountain Wild Horse Range, the same important pattern continues to emerge. There are countless indispensable people who have forever altered and dedicated their lives to those same horses that the likes of Reverend Schwieger and John Nickle fought tooth and nail to save all those years ago. But, now as it did then, the work of the Pryor Mountain Wild Mustang Center benefits from the perspective of those with fresh eyes—the visionaries, the creatives, the Hope Rydens of our generation. Respecting longstanding norms and values while welcoming new, healthy ideas is the best way to ensure our grandchildren’s children will find the wonder in seeing a band of Pryor horses as they crest a distant ridge.



*Then...Lone Romeo  
1982 - Reverend Schwieger*



*Now...Viho  
2024 - Katie Rundell*

As a part of our Preserving the Past project, we digitized historic slides containing pictures of Pryor horses. Out of those hundreds of slides, the one with this photo of a stallion named Lone Romeo was one of my favorites by far. The second I saw his beautiful, proud stance show up on the screen, I knew he had to have been an incredible force on the mountain and a blessing to all who witnessed his beauty. And today, over 40 years since the photo of Lone Romeo was taken by Reverend Schwieger, we are still able to see scenes that practically mirror the one he saw that day. The photo of a young stallion named Viho from April of this year shows just how similarly striking the Pryor Mountain Wild Horses are. The time and hard work put in by Reverend Schwieger and countless others throughout history helped pave the way for me to see Viho on that beautiful spring day, and I hope that the work of myself and other modern wild horse watchers/protectors will pave the way for some lucky individual to see a similar sight 50 years from now.



I joined the Pryor Mountain Wild Mustang Center in the winter of 2024. My first trip out to the horse range with Amanda (fellow Mustang Center board member and my dear friend) was on February 3, 2024. I had been out to the range before to hike some of the Bighorn Canyon trails and really enjoyed the miraculous views at the end of each trail, but it wasn't until after I joined the Mustang Center board and started going on adventures with Amanda that I fell in love with the horses.

On this day, we took a drive later in the afternoon just for fun. We weren't sure we would see anything that day, as we had limited daylight, but we thought "what the heck, let's go out anyway." The range greeters were at the beginning of the range, Hickok and his band, and Quasar and his. We went up a bit further past the state line and Ranger's Delight trail. The sun started to sink a little bit lower, getting ready to take its leave behind the Pryors. That is when we saw Tawa trotting down the road. Upset and disheveled, you could tell he had just been involved in some sort of ordeal. We noticed some horses up further on a hill on the opposite side of the road as he whinnied and trotted after them.



*Tawa and Ukiah face off in the classic "Stallion Pose."*



*Tawa stands between Ukiah & his former band and Hidalgo*

As we got closer to the Devil Canyon Overlook turnoff, we didn't see the horses again and decided to drive down to Mustang Flats. On our way, we encountered Umatilla trotting down the road. It was strange for a mare to be roaming on her own. Clearly something had happened, and we missed it. Amanda and I looked around Mustang Flats for a while, didn't see any other horses, and decided to make our way back home.

We crested the hill at the Overlook turnoff, and there they were: a new horse standing with Icara & Winoka, Tawa's former band. We later learned that this stallion was Ukiah, a young bachelor that had come off the mountain with Stillwater, another bachelor. As we stopped to identify the horses (with Nancy's wonderful field guide) Tawa came trotting over. I'll never forget the beautiful and exhilarating moment when Tawa and Ukiah faced each other in what I now refer to as the classic "stallion pose." It was one of the most beautiful things I had ever seen.

At that moment, Amanda and I decided to park at the restroom there and get up on a little hill across from them for a better vantage point, cameras in hand. We had to witness this story unfold. From up top we could see Tawa approach Ukiah several times, but the two never fought that night, from what we saw. Then off in the distance Hidalgo came running into the picture. That was when things got really interesting. Young Tawa was caught in between two stallions. Ukiah, who recently stole his band, and Hidalgo, an older, more experienced stallion who wanted to be next in line for his band.

That evening, we witnessed Tawa and Hidalgo battle for what seemed like a very long time. With hoof blows to the jaw, neck, and wherever else they could make contact, the two were relentless. I can still hear the clashing sounds and the loud thumps from when their hooves would make impact with one another. We watched for a while, as Tawa ran Hidalgo off gallantly, battled with him for a while and then ran back to Ukiah and his former band. He never once let Hidalgo reach his band.

When the sun sank low behind the Pryors that night, Tawa stood between his former band with Ukiah, and Hidalgo. A picturesque view of dark horses against an ultramarine blue sky. I found Tawa later on Mustang Flats, and with him was his band (Umatilla had also found her way back to them). He won them back.

I later found out that Tawa had acquired the band after their former band stallion, Pax, died this winter in a tragic accident. Tawa has fought for his band valiantly since he acquired them. He wears the battle scars to prove it. After that first night and seeing him with his band later in February, I was hooked.



*L-R: Ukiah, Winoka, and Icara*



**THE DRYHEAD:** The area Angie described above is known as "The Dryhead." This comes from the large landscape that adjoins the Pryor Mountain Wild Horse Range to the north. A subgroup of the Pryor Horses make their home year-round in this desert land. For many, this is the most convenient place to see the Pryor horses as it is easily accessible on a paved highway. The Mustang Center is prepared daily to give you a map and directions on where you are most likely able to see wild horses.

**VISIT THE PRYOR MOUNTAIN WILD MUSTANG CENTER!**

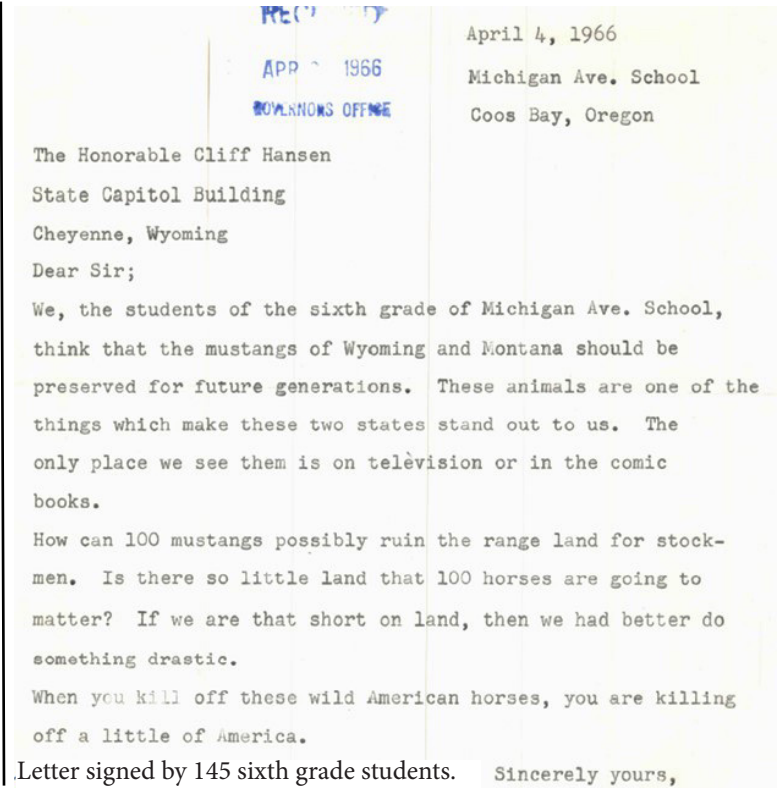
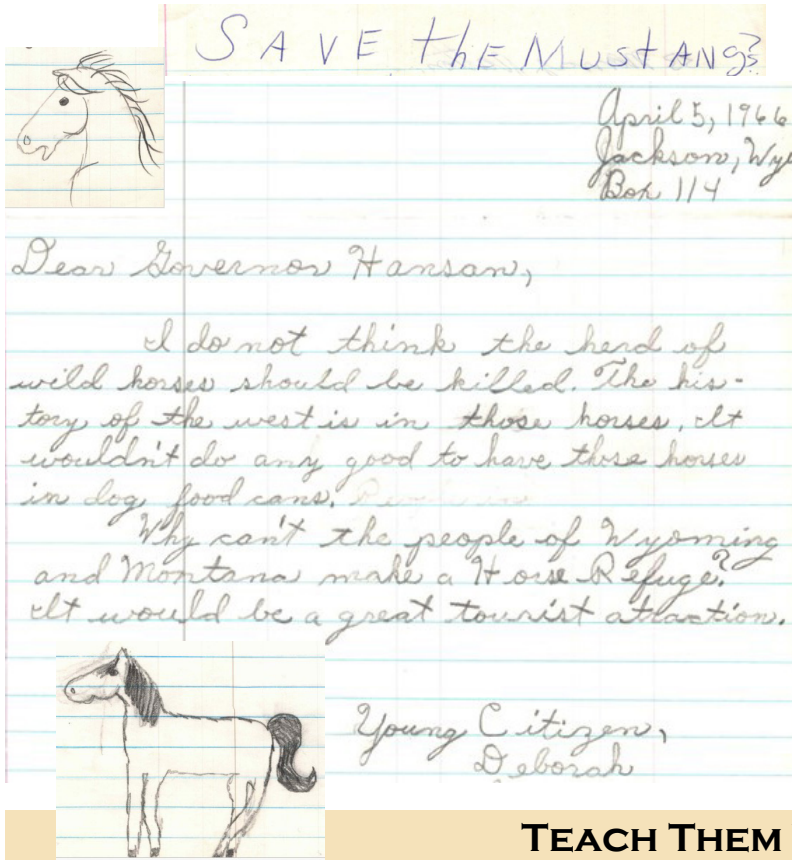
**OPEN DAILY 9:00 AM - 4:00 PM FROM MAY 25 - SEPTEMBER 30, 2024**

**WE ARE PLANNING SPECIAL EVENTS FOR 2024.  
WATCH OUR FACEBOOK PAGE FOR DETAILS.**



## THROUGH THE EYES OF CHILDREN...THEN AND NOW

**THEN:** A letter, written to the governors of Wyoming and Montana, by Beverly Robertson, was published in the Lovell Chronicle in 1966. This prompted children from all over the United States to join the efforts to save the Pryor Horses. Thousands of letters poured into the community of Lovell. Many of these are a part of the Mustang Center archival collection. We've shared letters and drawings to show how these young people cared about the plight of the Pryor Mountain Wild Horse.



### TEACH THEM YOUNG

BY AMANDA BENNION

Before I became a mom, I had dedicated my life to learning about and preserving the local area. At a young age, I was able to see just how special the Lovell and surrounding areas were. This early interest is because of my dedicated parents, who took us out on family drives, hikes, and adventures.

When I became a mom, that work didn't stop. It was just the beginning! How lucky am I to get to share the things I love most with my four-year-old son? The best part is that he loves it too. I am always being asked, "Mom, when are we going hiking to look for wild horses again?"

When out on the range, I'm constantly warned, "Mom, watch out for that cactus," "Mom, we got to be quiet so we don't spook the horses." Nothing makes a person feel better after walking uphill more than hearing, "Mom, this hike is beautiful! Can I ride on your shoulders?"

I'm one lucky mom to have a son who loves the outdoors as much as I do. I can't wait for when my youngest son can start coming too!

I think one of the best ways to help preserve this area is to pass a love for it down to the next generation.



Photos by Angelina Hutzenbiller

### FOLLOW THE PRYOR MOUNTAIN WILD HORSES

Website: [www.pryormustangs.org](http://www.pryormustangs.org)

PryorWild Tours: [www.pryorwild.com](http://www.pryorwild.com)

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

FaceBook: Pryor Mountain Wild Mustang Center

Online Store: [mustang-center-gift-shop.com](http://mustang-center-gift-shop.com)