



Pryor Mountain
WILD MUSTANG CENTER

FALL 2025 NEWSLETTER

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

CROOKED CREEK BAY - HOME OF THE GREETERS



Crooked Creek Canyon

Crooked Creek is quite a landmark in the Pryor Mountain Wild Horse Range. The creek originates at the gap between the two mountains of the Pryor Range. Through time the small but mighty creek carved a spectacular canyon that forms a partial boundary on the west side of the horse range. Miles later, Crooked Creek Bay drops with beauty into the Bighorn River at a point where the horse range overlaps with Bighorn Canyon National Recreation Area.

Crooked Creek Bay is the area where many people see the Pryor Mountain Wild Horses for the first time. This is true for me as I ventured into the wild horse world back in 2004. This area provides ideal habitat for wild horses with

its abundant water, ample food, and protection. Through the years, various bands of horses have taken up residency in the area. These are the ones that often give visitors their first glimpse of wild horses. These are the ones that have special status with monikers such as: the Greeters, the Gatekeepers, the Ambassadors.



Sam - Oct. 2004

Back in 2004 there were two bands in the area. The black stallion, Sam, claimed the Crooked Creek area for a long time and was the official greeter. At that time, the young mare, Seneca, was with Sam and part of the greeter group. In 2003, Sam's large band was trapped along the rocky shore by rapidly rising water. Efforts by the BLM and the Park Service rescued the band and returned them to safety. Shortly after this event, Sam lost part of his band to the handsome dun stallion, Sitting Bull. Eventually more change happened, and in 2010, the bay stallion, Hickok, gained the band which included the mare, Seneca.



*Seneca & Exhilaration -
Oct. 2004*

From that point on, Hickok and his band were frequently seen in the Crooked Creek Bay area. The band expanded with the addition of mare, Kitalpha, her daughter, Nova, and their numerous offspring. The greeter band was fun and charming to watch with the colorful band hanging out near the waters of Crooked Creek. It became quite a large band, and in time Hickok's son, Quasar, challenged his sire and succeeded in splitting off part of the band. This left Hickok with his two devoted mares, Seneca and Kitalpha.

Life in the spotlight of Crooked Creek Bay lets visitors see both the highs and lows of the greeters. The year 2025 brought difficult change to Hickok's band. The now 18-year-old Hickok was a target for young bachelors. In the spring he was challenged and lost his mares to the mountain stallions, Tor and Ukiah. It was a tough battle and Hickok retreated into the bachelor world. At the age of 26, the change took a toll on Seneca as well. Eventually Hickok did regain his mares, but this was short-lived as he was soon under siege by his young son, Uinta. This challenge proved to be the final chapter in the lives of both Hickok and Seneca as the two disappeared shortly after. Hickok's body was found in a quiet ravine. In her own shy way, Seneca was seen for the last time down in her home where she had lived for most of her long life.

Despite the loss of the Greeter band, we are shown that while the individual horses change through the generations, the patterns of their lives in Crooked Creek Bay remain the same. Hickok's son, Quasar, and his band are frequently seen in this area. For now, it is their turn to serve as the greeters who welcome visitors into their beautiful world.

A Greeter's Welcome: Ursula, Nova, Quasar, and Prima



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I've always loved horses. My parents had me around horses at only months old, and I fell in love with them. I was gifted my first horse as a Christmas present when I was four years old. I always said he helped pull Santa's sleigh. From there, I just fell further in love.

When I was eleven years old, my parents surprised me with a trip to the Pryor Mountain Wild Horse Range. When we entered the range, Hickok, the old Gatekeeper, greeted us at Crooked Creek bay. I remember walking to the top of a bluff and being in awe of the horses, wild and free, in the valley below me. Watching the band captured my heart, and I told my parents I would one day work for the range. The next three years I begged to return to the mountain.

During the time when I wasn't on the mountain, I was at my Colorado home showing my own horses in 4-H competitions. I bought my heart horse, Rosie, and began following the Pryor horses on Facebook.

Finally, for my fourteenth birthday, my parents and I returned to the range. This was when I met Nancy and really started wanting to be with these horses. Throughout the next few years, I began documenting the horses and learning them individually. In my senior year of high school, I conducted a genetic project on the horses, looking at inbreeding. This project really pushed me towards wanting to be more involved with the range.

My knowledge and love for the horses led me to want to work in Lovell. I asked to work at the Pryor Mountain Wild Mustang Center and got accepted. And just like that, I had my dream job since I was eleven.

So, this past summer I worked at the center and got to speak with people from all over the nation and even some from other countries. The majority of the visitors came to Lovell specifically for the horses. They were intrigued and passionate about the horses, just as I am. When visitors would return to the center after a trip to the Dryhead, they were always so excited to tell me their stories. Seeing their happiness was so beautiful as more and more people fell in love with the horses just like I did, as a little girl, all those years ago. It was an absolute dream come true.



Forellen Bonham

LIVING ON THE EDGE

STORY AND PHOTO BY STEVE & NANCY CERRONI



Garcia in the lowlands - Aug 2025

We had a recent conversation about horses that live on the edge. By this, we mean stallions that have made an impact on the mountain, yet often remain somewhat anonymous. They live an elusive life, away from the mass of horses that congregate in the upper alpine meadows in the summer.

The horse that comes to mind as one who lives on the edge is Garcia. He learned this behavior well from the buckskin stallion, Chino, who raised him. Chino roamed the range with his band, including Garcia. For years, Garcia was with the mare, Greta. Together they had six offspring that are still alive and on the range. Ironically, these offspring were all named after movie stars, yet Garcia's band was not typically in the limelight. They lived around the fringes and could be spotted anywhere from the lowlands of

Burnt Timber Ridge to the upper mountain areas. Even if they were in the vicinity of other horses, they tended to keep off by themselves...on the edge.

In 2025, most of the bands showed the behavior of "safety in numbers" clustering together, perhaps in response to the high level of predation of the foals. At the age of 19, Garcia was one of the oldest stallions in the Pryors. He shared this distinction with only Galaxy. Throughout much of the spring and summer, Garcia had the mare, Ukulele Lil, and their son, Zorro. Garcia continued to maintain his "living on the edge" behavior. His band would show up in different parts of Burnt Timber, one day at the very low end of the ridge and the next day up in the alpine meadows.

On October 3, 2025, Garcia was seen alone near the top of the mountain. He had moved to the bachelor world, now living the life of a lone stallion. Who knows what the winter holds or where Garcia will next show himself. When the snow melts and the horses return to the grassy meadows, we only hope that Garcia will be found roaming on the range, living somewhere on the edge.

WELCOME TO SYKES TRAIL!

PHOTOS AND STORY BY DENNIS MCCOLLOUGH



Welcome to Sykes Trail! There are a few things you need to know before you get going. The trail hates you AND your vehicle! It wants to rattle your fillings and the fillings of all your long-gone ancestors and your future family members! The Cougar Canyon part of the trail is twisty, tight and guaranteed to autograph both sides of your vehicle and slap your mirrors around. Then comes Dead Biologist Curve....not too sure just why it got that name but it has woken up parts of my own biology a few times.



The Red Buttes

On the serious side, the scenery along the way is world class. The lower regions are stunning in their own way, those red buttes dominate the area, reminiscent of those old westerns filmed in Monument Valley. Farther up the trail, the view into Dryhead and the Bighorn River will stop you dead in your tracks. Some favorite photo stops are the Hole in the Wall, the old horse trap and Cathedral Overlook. Again, all offer some kind of view worth the time.



Hole in the Wall

The challenge is to spot something new each trip or to wander into a new area. As far as finding horses, a pair of binoculars and a pair of good fitting hiking shoes are mandatory. Plus a heaping helping of luck, those critters specialize in hiding at times. Knowing where the water sources are is a big help, except for winter when there is water everywhere in the form of snow. But then, horses still like to drink rather than chew their hydration.

It's taken us years of effort to get to know Sykes and there is still so much

we still don't know. Sykes is a place of mysteries, hidden caves, deep ravines, bizarre dead trees, newborn foals only ever seen once, oddball bird encounters, the occasional bear sighting, just to name a few. Plenty of material for campfire stories! If it wasn't for the horses, parts of Sykes Trail would be another spot on the way to the top of the mountain. But for me, along came another interest, like I didn't have enough hobbies. So, things changed. Mostly me. Thanks, Sykes!



This tree is called the Bad Marriage Tree, half of it is dead and the other half is struggling to survive.



We give a special thanks to Dennis McCollough for his unique writing style and beautiful photographs of Sykes Ridge. Dennis is a longtime friend and a great friend and supporter of the Pryor Mountain Wild Horses. He and his wife, Toots, frequently travel from their home in Lockwood, MT, to observe and photograph the horses. Dennis' willingness to travel to Sykes throughout the year is a great help as he can closely monitor the horses of that area for the rest of us. In addition, he takes time to make sure the Mid-Sykes water catchment has plenty of water for the horses and other wildlife.

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.

Jason Beal, President Angelina Minchow, Vice President Georgette Lewis, Secretary/Treasurer
Amanda Bennion Matthew Dillon Debra Heiser

2025 AT THE MUSTANG CENTER

PRESERVING THE FUTURE OF THE PRYOR HORSES

Work continued throughout 2025 to carry out our mission to ***Preserve the Future of the Pryor Horses***. With a small staff and a group of dedicated volunteers we are able to examine the work of the past and the present in order to best preserve the future of these iconic horses.

Preserve the Present:

- ***Educate and inform*** the public both on-site in the Mustang Center and through our website and social media.
- ***Observation and documentation*** of horses on the range is two-fold both out on the range and through the lens of our trail cameras.
- ***Advocacy Work:*** In 2025, we continued to voice our comments and look for other ways to make a difference in response to the BLM's proposed management plan. Our focus is to best ensure the preservation of this herd of wild horses with their Spanish origins.



Nancy & Rosey
Photo by Diane Granger

Preserving the Past: The Mustang Center continues to digitize and organize the “treasure trove” of archival materials to better understand the horses and management decisions of the past.

Preserve the Future: One concern for the future is the genetic viability of the herd. We continue our bloodline work and are seeking out ways to add to our understanding through molecular genetics.

3RD ANNUAL A MORNING WITH MUSTANGS



Whisper's Arrival with Steve

This year's Morning With the Mustangs was quite special. The day began early on September 13 when Steve brought one of the special guests, Wyoming Whisper, to the Mustang Center. Soon to celebrate her 3rd birthday, Whisper has grown up in the eyes of the public through these special events.

Chad Hanson! Though the morning consisted of bouts of rain, a small group of locals and visitors came out to support the Center and listen to an informative and inspirational talk by our guest speaker, Chad Hanson. Chad is a professor at Casper College and teaches in Religion and Sociology. He is also an author of various books, two of which are about wild horses. Chad offers a unique and bold viewpoint on wild horses in Wyoming. In his new book, “The Wild Horse Effect, Awe, Well-Being and the Transformative Power of Nature,” Chad sheds light on how wild horses are beacons of light in our world, inspiring awe and feelings of reverence. Chad shared thoughts from his book during his talk and gave great insight into how wild horses interact, their unique behaviors, and how science shows they have their own societies/social behaviors. After his informative talk, Chad spent time with visitors through conversation and a book signing.



Chad Hanson shares his knowledge of and passion for wild horses.

Photos of A Morning with Mustangs by Forellen Bonham

A MESSAGE FROM OUR BOARD PRESIDENT JASON BEAL

I want to take this opportunity to thank you for the support you have given the Pryor Mountain Wild Mustang Center through the years. This support comes from the local area citizens and businesses, citizens from different states, and citizens from many countries from around the world. It always amazes me how far support for the Pryor Mountain Wild Mustangs reaches each year. Your generous donations have assisted the Pryor Mountain Wild Mustang Center to continue to inform and educate visitors about the unique characteristics and significance of the Pryor Mountain herd. It has been a privilege to be a part of such a great organization and work with such amazing people that have the common goal of working to preserve the history of this irreplaceable herd.

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