



Pryor Mountain WILD MUSTANG CENTER

FALL 2017 NEWSLETTER

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

Pryor Mountain Wild Horses...Through Different View Points

If you look at the Pryor Mountain Wild Horses from a bird's eye view you could say they are doing well on their mountain home. Year-after-year, they follow the circle of life from the fragility of birth, to the curious enthusiasm of the young, the strong years of adulthood, and back to the fragility of old age. The pattern of life stays pretty much the same too as determined by the snow line. In the spring and summer as the snow melts, the horses move up the mountain. In fall and winter, this reverses and the horses move down the mountain in an attempt to stay ahead of the deep snow line. Thus forms the predictable pattern of their seasonal migration. Not much changes from year to year when you look at them from that bird's eye view.

Another view of the horses comes through monitoring and documenting the herd bands and individuals. The demographic chart below shows three years of numbers of horses. Since the horses live in a finite amount of land, over 39,000 acres, there is a need for a balancing act of management of the population. Too many horses can degrade the fragile ecosystem which can cause both long-term and short-term problems. Too few horses can cause genetic loss which has a negative impact on the future of the horses. One reason the Mustang Center spends time on the range is to monitor the herd population. For the most part, Steve & Nancy Cerroni monitor the mountain horses and John & Lynda Nickle monitor the Dry-head horses. However, the work is made easier through the contributions of many people who keep us well informed of the horses and the changes seen when we are not out there. The practice of locals monitoring/documenting the herd was started in the early 1990s by Reverend Floyd Schweiger who kept track of horses and the bands in small spiral bound notebooks. Since then, the list has evolved and is now kept in a database spreadsheet. This information is shared with the BLM and is available upon request.

	December 2015 Herd Population			December 2016 Herd Population			December 2017 Herd Population		
Age Range	Female	Male	Total	Female	Male	Total	Female	Male	Total
Total Horses	93	73	166	96	68	164	92	65	157
Over 10	35	23	58	39	18	57	40	19	59
1-10	49	46	95	52	47	99	49	44	93
Foals	9	4	13	5	3	8	3	2	5

The most rewarding way to view the horses is right there in their land witnessing their behaviors as they travel from birth to death and up and down the mountain year in and year out. In 2017, the 157 horses organized themselves into around 28 family bands each with one stallion, one or more mares and their offspring. The largest bands in 2017 were headed up by Irial and Galaxy who both had bands of 10. All the band stallions had to be on guard as there was considerable pressure from 21 bachelor stallions, both old and young, who were alert to opportunities to challenge for the band. These bachelor stallions provided lots of action as they were always ready to spar with one another. In 2017, there was a very small foal crop due to the effects of fertility control. Nine foals were born with the first reported on April 3 and the last on November 8. Of the nine, three foals died and one had to be removed (see related story on Renegade), leaving only five foals heading

into winter. It was a whole different atmosphere on the mountain with so few little ones scurrying around on their long spindly legs. 2017 was also the first year without Cloud. The famous palomino was last seen in 2015. By this year, it was pretty clear that he was gone. We came into 2017 with three, and maybe four, band stallions at the age of 21. The point during the winter of 2016-17 when Custer lost his band or when he died is unknown. We just know that he hasn't been seen since the snows of winter hit the mountain a year ago. Duke, the red bay stallion, lost his band in the spring. He handled the change with grace and seemed to do well in his first year of retirement. Morning Star and Baja both came through much of the year with their bands, both displaying wisdom as strength began to decline. Perhaps the bright spot on the mountain literally and figuratively is the mare, Phoenix. She is a bright palomino who is either 25 or 26 this year. As the mother of Cloud, she is well known and beloved. She is beginning to show her age, but what a pleasure it is to watch her elegant "wildness" and know of her legacy will always live on.



Ruby...youngest horse in 2017
Photo by Jack Sterling



Phoenix...oldest horse in 2017

2017 at the Mustang Center



Kendra & Lynda

It was a busy and successful year for the Mustang Center. John and Lynda Nickle continued to be the primary operators of the Mustang Center in 2017. Just about every day you could find one or both of them busily working with visitors, on the grounds, or at the computer. This year Kendra Price served as the main intern. She is incredibly professional and brings expertise and

friendliness to the Center. We have missed her after her fall enrollment at the University of Wyoming. In addition to Kendra, Katrina Twitchell joined the intern staff. Katrina is a Lovell High School student who is very active in FFA. She was a natural fit to the Center as she, herself, rides a mustang!

The staff at the Mustang Center spend their days providing information to the visitors about the wild horses. They use a detailed map to inform people of where they are most likely to find horses. It is always fun when the visitors stop back in to share their day's pictures.

Lovell, WY isn't particularly well known as a tourist attraction. However, this year the Mustang Center showed otherwise. Once again, we had nearly 4,000 visitors from every US state and 29 international countries.

The Mustang Center received a huge honor this year as being voted as ***USA Today 2017 Wyoming's Best Attraction!***



Wyoming's best attraction? Pryor Mountain Wild Mustang Center!

Contact us for more information about the Pryor Horses or to schedule your 2018 tour:

- **Mustang Center:**

~ Website: pryormustangs.org/tours.shtml

~ Phone: 307-548-WILD

- **PryorWild Tours:**

~ Website: www.pryorwild.com

~ Phone: 307-272-0364

PryorWild Tours

Since 2014, PryorWild has worked in partnership with the Mustang Center to provide an exciting adventure to the top of the Pryor Mountains to watch the wild horses in their natural environment. PryorWild, a private business owned and operated by Steve & Nancy Cerroni, provides a service for the Mustang Center to take people up the rugged Burnt Timber Ridge Road. The majority of the Pryor Horses spend the summer months in the upper elevation meadows which aren't easily accessible for all. For many, the trip provides a once in a lifetime chance to see these magnificent horses in that setting. In 2017, we headed up the mountain 74 days with the first tour on April 22 and the last on October 15. A total of 221 people joined us from 31 states and 7 international countries. The trip is popular with photographers, artists, and those that have a dream to see wild horses. People ask if we always see horses. The answer to that is a resounding "yes." It isn't unusual to see from 40-100+ horses in a day.

Make your plans now to join us on a 2018 PryorWild tour!



Management of the Herd

2017 was one of the first years when a negative growth rate was documented with more deaths than births. As shown on the front page, the number of horses has declined by 9 horses in the last two years. This doesn't seem like a huge number, but it does indicate that current management is having an effect on the horse population. The fertility control has significantly reduced the birth rate in the last two years. There are 8 yearlings from 2016 and only 5 foals from 2017 currently alive on the mountain. Looking back on our records, there were around 30 foals born per year in a population of mares not treated with fertility control. Death has taken a toll on the Pryor horses this year.

In September 2017, the BLM issued a scoping notice, "Capture and Removal of Excess Wild Horses and Continued Fertility Control in the Pryor Mountain Wild Horses." The intent of this was to gain public input through the initial planning process for management methods of capture/removal and fertility control. The Mustang Center submitted comments that stress the need for careful attention to the existing gene pool in order to not cause further genetic loss of the herd. We provided an alternative for fertility control that is based on ensuring all mares have at least one offspring on the mountain. We will be watching for the BLM to release an Environmental Assessment (EA) which will propose various alternatives for management.



Photo by Madison—Age 11

Making A Difference...Jack Sterling

The Mustang Center would like to recognize Jack Sterling of Billings, MT as one who works to make a difference in the lives of the Pryor Mountain Wild Horses. Recently we asked Jack to reflect on his story with the Pryor Horses in their mountain home. Jack and his wife, Carol, made their first trip to the horse range on Father's Day 2004. They went up Burnt Timber Ridge Road with one roll of film each, not expecting to be able to get close to any wild horses. They were pleasantly surprised to get to the top of East Pryor Mountain where they saw lots of horses up close.

Jack has worked on several range improvement projects on the Pryors. About five years ago, he became aware of barbed wire that remained from old fences in the area. Jack has made it a mission to remove wire to prevent injury to the horses. Check out the huge pile of barbed wire behind the Mustang Center to see evidence of his labor.

Another of Jack's pursuits has been in removing invasive species of weeds from the Horse Range. Working with the Montana Wilderness Association, Jack has focused efforts to remove spotted knapweed and leafy spurge. He has seen the effects of these invasive species and works to protect the Pryors from this type of result.

Jack is an avid hiker and challenged himself to find a way to hike from Burnt Timber to Sykes Ridge. As he says, "I found a number of ways it couldn't be done and this year found a way to get across from Cheyenne Flats."

Jack spoke of the relationships built on the Pryors, "It seems strange to me that I can go shopping in Billings and never run into anyone I know and then go to the Pryor Mountain and run into lots of friends. Some of those are first name only but it is always good to see them."

Jack has a motivation for his work in the Pryors, "My hope is that my great grandson can enjoy the Pryor Mountain Wild Horses and share them with his children." Jack, we share that hope and thank you for all you do for the Pryor

Mountain Mustangs.



Jack goes up to the Pryors in all four seasons. Here he is on one of his winter excursions to search for the passage from Cheyenne Flats to Sykes Ridge.

Pryor Mustangs—A Special Adoption “The Mighty Renegade”

During 2017 a situation came up with stallion Baja and his longtime companion, mare Washakie. Both horses were aging with Baja at age 21 and Washakie at age 24. While Baja's health and strength were good, Washakie wasn't faring so well.



Washakie & Renegade
July 13, 2017

She was a mare who kept having offspring despite the fertility control program. In 2017, she had a yearling, Quahneah, at her side and had a new colt on July 12. We named him Renegade. To make things worse, Washakie, had a wound, possibly a puncture wound, on her withers. This isn't unusual, but in this case, she developed an infection that just wouldn't heal. Washakie had to battle her age, her health, and two nursing offspring. It isn't a surprise that her health began to fail.

In September, we got a report that Bacardi and Quahneah were with the strong, young stallion London. There was no sign of Baja, Washakie, or the young Renegade. On October 17 the BLM contacted us to bring some hay to Britton Springs. Along with this was a message that they were bringing Renegade down. This was the only opportunity to determine the cause of Washakie's infection and ensure that it hadn't been passed on to her foal. Although there is no certainty as to his parents' status, at that point in time, he was considered as a two-month old orphan foal. He was small with growth stunted by his mother's health and the nursing competition of his sister.

The BLM reached out to Steve and Nancy Cerroni to provide the constant care needed by a foal in his condition. They knew the big, empty corral at Britton Springs was not the place for a young orphan foal to recover from malnutrition. In the nearly two months since that time, Renegade is thriving at the Cerroni's place. He quickly responded to human touch and loves the attention from his many visitors.



Renegade
Nov. 27, 2017

As for his family, we know that his sisters, Bacardi and Quahneah, are still with London. We haven't seen or heard about Baja and Washakie since September, but we know that their son, Renegade, is safe and sound in his new home.

Follow us and the Pryor Horses on and off the Range:

Our Website: www.pryormustangs.org

FaceBook:

Pryor Mountain Wild Mustang Center

Pryor Mustangs: Beyond the Range

Getting Ready for Next Year...

50th Anniversary of the Pryor Mountain Wild Horse Range!

Since the turn of the 20th Century, local people have worked on behalf of the horses that lived free in the nearby Pryor Mountains. For many of those years, there was action on the part of the BLM to be rid of the horses. Names like Bessie Tillett, Lloyd Tillett, Royce Tillett, and the Reverend Floyd Schweiger were among those who led the charge to protect the small herd of horses. In 1966, the BLM made plans which would lead to the total elimination of the herd. The local advocates went full bore against the BLM. Beverly Robertson, of the Lovell Chronicle, wrote an open letter to the Montana and Wyoming governors, *"There has been a lot of horse talk in Lovell lately. Reverend Floyd Schweiger, a local minister, and Howard Lusch, Pacific Power & Light manager, have been urging people to write to you. Won't you use your influence in the preservation of a herd of 140 horses that roam in rough terrain on the south side of Pryor Mountain."* The letter prompted the attention of the media, including Hope Ryden who was sent on assignment by ABC to film the Pryor Horse story. This helped catapult the herd of horses into the national spotlight. These events marked the beginning of the fight to save the Pryor Horses which eventually led to the establishment of the Pryor Mountain Wild Horse Range in September 1968. Fifty years later, the Pryor Mountain Wild Mustang Center will celebrate and honor the Pryor Mountain Wild Horses and the people who worked to help ensure their future. We will be planning events to mark this special occasion.



The Wind Drinker 1000 program continues to be a successful fund raising program for the Mustang Center. Since 2007, we have added brass plaques onto our large Wind Drinker display board with the donor's name and address. As of December 1, 2017 we have 855 Wind Drinkers. Once we hit 1000, we will have our drawing for the table-sized brass sculpture, "A Family Matter" by T.D. Kelsey. Help us with our goal to reach 1000 by the end of the year...just 145 more!

*Donations may be made online at <http://www.pryormustangs.org>, over the telephone, or through the mail.
Your donations help us continue in our mission to preserve the future of the Pryor Horses.*

Please mail the enclosed form to:
Pryor Mountain Wild Mustang Center
P.O. Box 385

Pryor Mountain Wild Mustang Center Mission and Goals

In 2017, the Mustang Center Board of Directors updated the mission statement and goals to best define and direct the work of the Center.

Mission Statement: The Pryor Mountain Wild Mustang Center is dedicated to preserving the future of the wild horses of the Pryor Mountains.

Goals: The Pryor Mountain Wild Mustang Center is a public, not-for-profit 501(c)(3) educational institution whose purpose is to:

- Inform visitors of the historic significance of the local mustang herd.
- Provide visitors with an unforgettable experience, viewing live mustangs in a magnificent setting.
- Educate visitors to learn about the dynamics of a mustang herd, the social interactions within individual bands, and the mustang's place alongside other wild species.
- Work collaboratively with the Bureau of Land Management, the Forest Service, and the National Park Service to preserve and promote a genetically viable herd of wild horses in the Pryor Mountains.



Wind Drinker 1000

When they run it looks like they are drinking the wind.

Reverend Floyd Schweiger