

## **INSIGHTS: Wild Horses in the Wild - Targets of Ruthless Exploiters**

**By Craig C. Downer**

**MINDEN, Nevada**, July 7, 2006 (ENS) - I am disturbed by the distortions of truth put out by enemies of wild horses in the American West. Extreme prejudice distorts their view of the life of horses in the wild. Instead, with closed minds, they disregard the many positive aspects of the natural, free life of horses.

They should read my book, "Wild Horses: Living Symbols of Freedom" to get a fairer picture and stop listening to the bar room philosophies of public land exploiters who are blinded to the true ecological value of wild horses by their own possessive interests.

Some aspects of wild horse behavior may seem harsh, yet they prove to be wise in the long run. For example, when a stallion prevents its male progeny from re-entering his band, he prevents inbreeding. The bachelors soon accept this rejection and go off to form their own bands, when sufficient habitat is available.



**A band of wild horses in Nevada (Photo courtesy [State of Nevada Commission for the Preservation of Wild Horses](#))**

The problem today is that people with vested interests in the livestock and game hunting industries are concocting all sorts of lies and distortions to denigrate wild horses in the wild.

The greater truth is that North America is the ancient cradle of evolution of the horse family. Upon returning to their natural free state in the West, these animals resume an age-old, harmonious lifestyle, restoring this continent's mammalian fauna and enriching its ecosystem, complementing the native plants and animals in many ways, such as seeding.

Wild horses naturally disperse their own grazing pressure over large areas within their individual band home ranges, if U.S. government authorities would allow them to do so in their legal herd areas. But these herd areas are now being emptied of wild equids by our public servants - contrary to the law.

Officials in the Bureau of Land Management's (BLM) Elko District plan to remove 1,700 horses this year from the Buck-and-Bald Complex of legal herd areas, in addition to the 795 horses removed from this complex last year.

This so called "gather" will leave only 500 horses in an area of 12 million acres, achieving a further

monopolization by livestock and mining interests in direct defiance of the Wild Horse Act, the National Environmental Policy Act, and other multiple use laws.

No Environmental Assessment has been prepared for this year's severe cutback of these herds, as required by law. This unfair, excessive gather is scheduled to begin today, according to Brian Fuell of the Elko BLM office.

In Colorado, a state where BLM has zeroed out all but a few of the wild horse herd areas, the West Douglas herd is slated for elimination. Officials say this action is being taken to accommodate oil and gas drilling activities, though Wyoming's Red Desert has for years seen the compatible coexistence of both wild mustangs and oil pumps.



**Wild mare shot in the Calico herd management area in northern Nevada. February 14, 2006. (Photo © Alice Gladwill)**

In the Calico herd area north of Gerlach, Nevada, the gruesome 2006 St. Valentine's Day shooting of several wild horses with varmint rifles, including mares who thrashed about aborting their foals, coincided with a hunter competition event organized by a sporting outlet in Reno.

Although the sporting outlet has been identified, the BLM investigation into this heinous crime seems to be slipping into oblivion.

The Sheldon National Wildlife Refuge had a long-standing agreement with Wild Horse Annie's organization to allow for a healthy, balanced herd of wild horses in perpetuity, but has just cruelly removed 300 horses during the foaling season. This removal resulted in much suffering among the horses, abortion by mares and social disruption of the bands and their herd.

Repeating the same old biased justifications and betraying its earlier agreement, Sheldon Refuge officials have announced their intention to eliminate all wild horses from the reserve, in spite of widespread public support for the horses and scientific studies indicating that they co-exist harmoniously with antelope, sage grouse and other native species.

I could fill a book with such injustices.



**Three year old sorrel gelding, captured in Nevada January 2006, held at Mantle Ranch. This horse is placed for adoption by the BLM, but no bids have been received for him. (Photo courtesy [BLM](#))**

Our challenge today is to learn to restore and live in harmony with the great freedom represented by wild horses. Our challenge is to allow a greater diversity and balance of species upon the land, a balance in which the wild horse has a place, justified by the highest of ecological laws.

The sweeping roundups that are currently taking place under the authority of the BLM, and also the U.S. Forest Service, the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service, the National Park Service, state and local agencies, are unfair. They are motivated by ignorance and prejudice, not by enlightened views of the magnificent horses and wise burros.

These roundups are setting these wild equid populations up for inbreeding and extinction.

The roundups are not at all in accord with true multiple use laws governing the public lands such as the Wild, Free-Roaming Horse and Burro Act, the Federal Land Policy and Management Act, and the Public Rangelands Improvement Act.

We must root out the corruption of favoritism and restore integrity and true caring among our public servants. People who really love the West also love and make sacrifices to preserve its beautiful, free-living horses.

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