

A photograph of a wild horse running through a field at sunset. The horse is seen from behind, with its mane and tail flowing in the wind. The background is a vast, open landscape under a warm, orange sky. The overall tone is golden and serene.

Central Wyoming Wild Horses

Red Desert Gather Report

August 7 through 16, 2018



Wyoming Red Desert Complex - Wild Horse Gather 2018, Day 1

Lona Patton Wednesday, August 22, 2018

August 7, 2018, First day personal report of gather operations

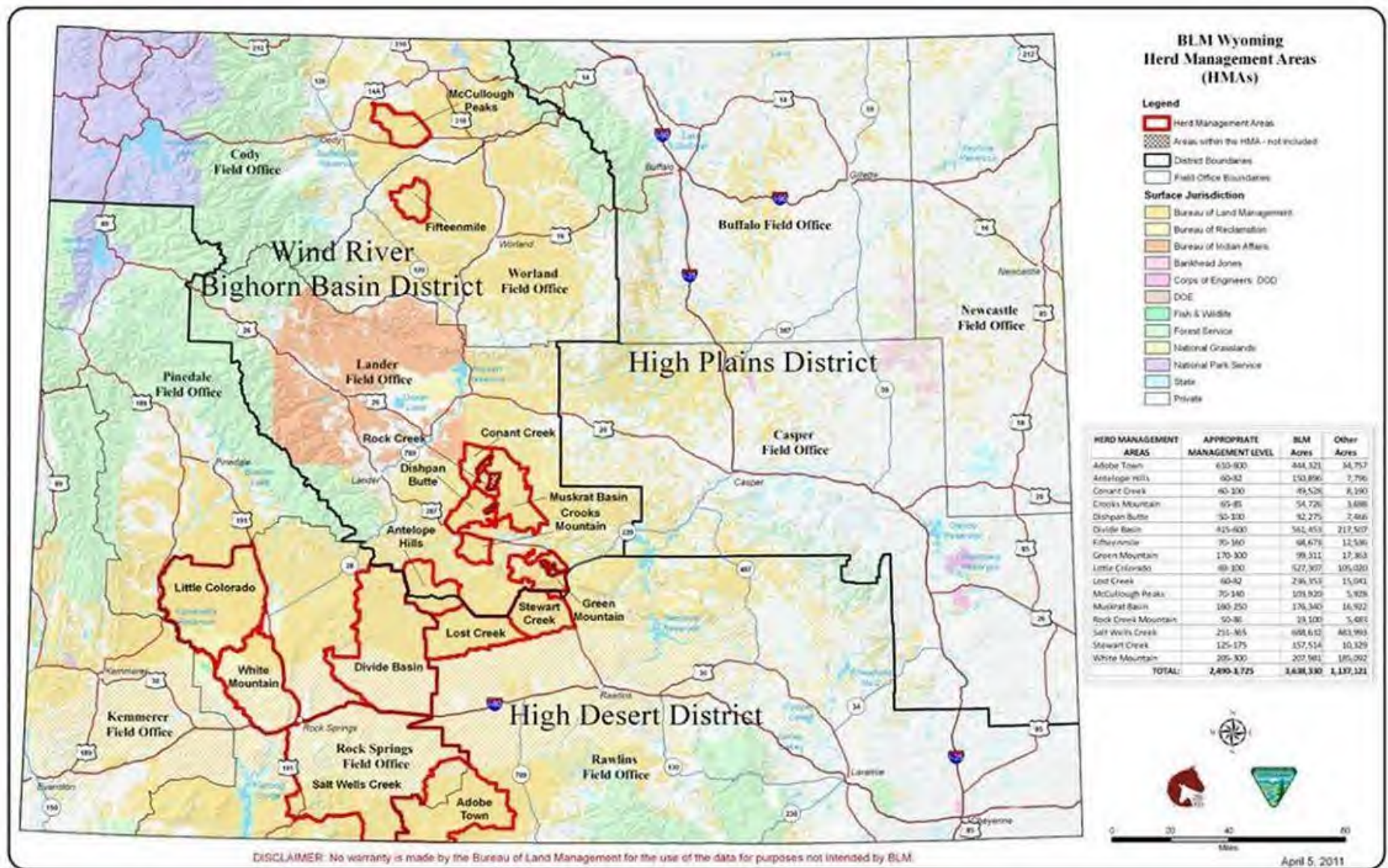
On August 7 through 16, 2018, I attended, observed and documented the Wyoming BLM wild horse gather of 2018. This report is a recount of what I watched and witnessed through my own eyes and camera lens. Although it was in all actuality very emotional for me as I have watched and documented many, if not most, of the horses gathered during this event, along with my daughter, Mariah Sharee, for the past 7 years, since 2012, and many have stolen our hearts and souls and mean a lot to us, but for the purpose of my report, I am going to attempt to keep my emotions at bay and give as honest an account without bias as I can. Please do not construe any emotional detachment in my report as heartless and uncaring as nothing could be further from the truth, but in order to share my account as unbiased and non-political as possible, I feel it is imperative to keep my personal emotions and attachments to these horses at bay. Thank you for understanding.

First, before making judgement, I would like to ask my readers to please read, in FULL, the following Laws that BLM (Bureau of Land Management) is mandated, by law, to follow and adhere to:

- **THE WILD FREE-ROAMING HORSES AND BURROS ACT OF 1971**
(PUBLIC LAW 92-195)
(PDF Document) <https://www.gpo.gov/fdsys/pkg/STATUTE-85/pdf/STATUTE-85-Pg649.pdf>
- **The Taylor Grazing Act of 1934**
(Public Law. 73-482)
(PDF Document) <https://hlrm120.community.uaf.edu/files/2013/10/The-Taylor-Grazing-Act-1934.pdf>

On August 6, 2018, I hooked up our camper and headed to Green Mountain in Wyoming to camp and prepare to observe the BLM Red Desert Complex wild horse gather that would begin early the next morning, on Aug 7 in the prairie of the Green Mountain HMA (HMA - Herd Management Area)

The Red Desert Complex is comprised of 5 HMA's, Green Mountain HMA, Stewart Creek HMA, Antelope Hills HMA, Lost Creek HMA and Crooks Mountain (Gap) HMA in Central Wyoming.



BLM map of Wyoming Herd Management Areas.

On Aug 7, we awoke early to meet up at the 3 Forks / Muddy Gap service station with BLM Personal and other observers who had signed up to observe the gathers, after a quick introduction from everyone and an explanation of the day's itinerary, we headed out to the first gather and trap location located on the east end of the Green Mountain HMA in the lower prairie. After parking our vehicles, we hiked out a few hundred yards to the observation point and waited.

Looking down towards the trap site, a wrangler's horse also waited and watched while another wrangler warmed up his mount for the day.



A wrangler's horse waits and watches at the trap site.



A wrangler warms up his mount for the day's work.

We watched as one of the 2 helicopters headed out to gather the first herd.



First helicopter heading out to begin the day's gather

It wasn't long before we heard the roar of helicopters in the far distance, coming in closer to bring in the first herd.

As the horses topped a distant hill, I was relieved to see the pilot hold back and allow the horses to rest a spell before bringing them in for the final push into the jute fence line that led into the temporary holding pens where they would be sorted by gender, and separate mares with foals into their own pen to help protect them and keep them together.

"Resting the horses before the final run"

For years, decades even, I kept hearing about how horrid and cruel gather by helicopter was, even though I already knew how cruel gather by horseback could be (from my youth, pre-WHBA of 71, back when cowboys, known as mustangers captured them on horseback, often roping them and dragging them to the ground, often killing lead stallions in order to more easily capture his herd, to either rough break, or send to be slaughtered for dog food.....something I NEVER want to witness again!!!)

But on this day, I was quite impressed with the pilots of the helicopters as they maneuvered their machines like fine prize winning cutting horses, precise, yet delicate, with care and finesse that showed their passion for not only their job at hand, but for the horses as well, resting them when needed, allowing them to catch their breath, and foals to catch up, up until the final run, when due to need to keep them together and not splitting into different directions in order to move them into the jute screen trap, a runway, if you will, they pressured them into a full run for the final stretch into the waiting pens.

Hate me if you must, but for myself, I feel more at ease after witnessing and observing, first hand, how their thankless and tedious job is performed.

All too often, the "donate button" pages and groups will portray them as heartless killers...all to pull your heartstrings to get you to donate your hard earned money.

My hat is off to those caring pilots, and to the BLM staff that was there. They have my respect.



BLM helicopter pilot holds back and allows the horses to rest a spell before the final push down the hill.



Close up, cropped photo of resting, walking horses, they continued at a walk, slow trot, across the ridge before the final push down toward the trap site.

Once the horses came down off the ridge, the final push began. In order to keep the horses together and from separating into different directions, it is important for the pilots to push them into a run for the final stretch (about a mile)

***Note: As I stated earlier, we have followed and documented the wild horses in the Red Desert Complex regularly since 2012, we have seen them run much harder and longer distances across much more difficult terrain in the wild, on their own, un-pushed or prompted by any human intervention. A 1 or 2 mile run would be nothing to them, even for young foals unless they already have a pre-existing health or physical issue.



The final push / run, towards the awaiting jute fence line.



The final run.

While the first pilot brings in the first herd (above) the 2nd pilot brings in another herd from our right. and much closer to our observation point. He is just beginning their final push and run toward the jute fence line and temporary holding pens. None of the horses appeared overly tired or even sweated up any.



2nd herd beginning their final run toward the trap site.



Close up of herd coming in. There was no visible sweat and they didn't look tired or stressed. *** We have followed the Black and White Pinto in the center ever since she was a very young filly in 2014, her name is Ziva.



2014 photo of Ziva with her mom and fellow herd mates.

We continued to watch, photograph and observe as more herds were brought in, the day and gather ended around noon before the temperature outside got hot. 187 horses were gathered on Aug 7, with zero deaths.

Day 2 to be continued.....

Footnote: Thank you for taking the time to read. You and your friends are welcome to follow our page documenting the Red Desert Complex since 2012 at Central Wyoming Wild Horses. We would also like to invite you to like, follow and support US Wild Horse and Burro Association who helped fund our trip out to document this gather.



Wyoming Red Desert Complex - Wild Horse Gather 2018, Day 2

Lona Patton Thursday, August 23, 2018

August 8, 2018, Second day personal report of gather operations

Recap from Aug 7 note:

"On August 7 through 16, 2018, I attended, observed and documented the Wyoming BLM wild horse gather of 2018. This report is a recount of what I watched and witnessed through my own eyes and camera lens. Although it was in all actuality very emotional for me as I have watched and documented many, if not most, of the horses gathered during this event, along with my daughter, Mariah Sharee, for the past 7 years, since 2012, and many have stolen our hearts and souls and mean a lot to us, but for the purpose of my report, I am going to attempt to keep my emotions at bay and give as honest an account without bias as I can. Please do not construe any emotional detachment in my report as heartless and uncaring as nothing could be further from the truth, but in order to share my account as unbiased and non-political as possible, I feel it is imperative to keep my personal emotions and attachments to these horses at bay. Thank you for understanding."

Day 2 started off with a beautiful sunrise, giving me hope for the day ahead to go smoothly for all involved, especially the horses.



8/8/2018 Sunrise from our camp on Green Mountain.

We left camp just as the sun started rising in the sky and headed to 3 Forks at Muddy Gap for the morning meeting with our BLM hostess, a few Rangers and the other observers where we once again introduced ourselves to new observers and received our daily itinerary and location destination. Once again, we would go back to the previous day's location on the far east end of Green Mountain down in the prairie where the gather would continue. Once again, we hiked a few hundred yards from our vehicles up to the observation point on a hill overlooking the path of gather to the temporary holding pens.



Gather Observers hiking up to observation point.

It wasn't long before the first group of horses came in, dust flying heavy in the air due more to the dried out earth than them running, but both together, created an dusty, surreal sight.

Hard for me to capture in photos with any crispness, but enough to help you feel it in the air, with the dust as well as the bittersweet excitement of the gather as the horses ran towards the jute fence line leading to the temporary holding pens.



Soft Jute fence line leading to temporary pens.



First group of horses coming in.



Pilot maneuvers the horses toward the jute fence line.

As they ran, they began to head straight forward toward the observation point, away from the jute fence line, so the pilots maneuvered their helicopters to thwart their progression and turn them back in the direction needed



Running toward our observation point.



Coming right toward us on the observation point.

The pilots backed off a little and allowed them a short rest before coming in and turning them back toward the pens.



Resting the horses.

I couldn't get the pilot in the next photo as he was too high out of frame, but he turned the horses back towards the direction of the jute fence line and pens.



Turning the horses.

As the pilot dropped down lower, I managed to capture a photo of him turning and moving the horses back in the correct direction toward the pens where he succeeded and completed their gather.



Pilot turning the horses back toward the pens.

While the wranglers sorted the newly gathered horses into the pens, by gender, and age, mares with foals, etc., we all took a break on observation point. During that time, 2 horses came in on their own through the valley below us, took turns rolling in the dirt before continuing on their way over a distant hill and disappearing from our view.



2 wild horses venture in for a roll in the dirt.



After shaking off the dust, they continued on their way over a distant hill out of our view

When the pilots went out for the next group of horses, the horses didn't take the same path as those previously brought in, and I don't think the pilots realized until it was too late, to keep them from taking the route they did. The pilots only get paid for live horses brought in, not dead or injured to the point of needing euthanized. Any horse they lose, is a financial loss as well. But after meeting the pilots, I honestly believe they love these horses just as much as the rest of us and do everything within their power to keep them safe.

But this particular group of horses decided to make things a bit more interesting and exciting as they jumped off a rock ledge at the top of the hill! Some of them did go further to the side and avoided the rock ledge, if you look closely, you can see them too.



Coming over a rock ledge at the top of a hill. Photo credit: Mariah S.

Once the above group of horses were safely in the pens, sorted and the loaded up in horse trailers to go to the temporary holding pens in Bairoil, the pilots headed back out for more horses, only this time, the horses came in from our right of the observation point, much closer than the previous horses had, so all observers were asked to please crouch down low and try to stay out of their sight so as not to spook and scatter them. It was quite the sight to see! None of the horses looked sweated up in the least, a testament to pilots not pushing them hard until the final run, and a testament to the endurance of the horses. Is it any wonder they excel in so many disciplines once gentled and trained, living a loving domestic life? There are many who have achieved greatness in various riding disciplines such as endurance and long distance riding (read about Janet Tipton and Lady Jasmine here: <https://www.nwhorsesource.com/janet-tipton-and-lady-jasmine-are-aerics-first-5000-mile-limited-distance-pair/>) and Dressage (JB Andrew, <https://www.classicalequestrian.com/jb-andrew>) and many, many more! They also make excellent trail horses. My own trail buddy is BLM mustang I adopted back in 1996, he is my soul'stang, and my best friend... I could turn him free on fenceless 1000, 2000 or more acres, and he would still come to me and prefers his domestic life over freedom to this day.



None of the horses looked sweated up in the least.

The pilot came up from behind the horses to urge them forward just before the final push to the holding pens, this was probably the closest I had seen him get to the horses, but yet they still never went into a full run.



The pilot came up from behind the horses to urge them forward.

Now gathered more tightly together, they were ready for the final run, at which time the pilot pushed them toward the jute fence line and on into the temporary holding pens for sorting and then trailering them out to the other temporary holding pens in Bairoil where they would be cooled down, fed, watered and rested before their final trip to short term holding pens.



Ready for final run.

Observers waited until all the horses were loaded and on the road to Bairoil before leaving the observation point.



Wranglers loading up the horses to take to temporary holding pens in Bairoil.

After the gather concluded for the day around 11:00 a.m. before the day got hot, we left and went to see the gathered horses at another temporary holding facility where they had been moved to for rest, food and water. All the horses there looked calm for the most part, happily munching on hay or just relaxing, with a few squabbles here and there between rival horses (something even domestic horses will do when penned with strange or unknown horses).



Temporary holding pens in Bairoil, WY.

There were a few hours of daylight left after we viewed the gathered horses at the temporary holding pens in Bairoil, so we headed out to photograph some wild horses still free on the range. Once there, we found a few of our longtime favorites who we had photographed and followed for 5 to 7 years, Hawk and Legend. But their past stories can be found on [Central Wyoming Wild Horses](#), instead, I want to share with you what would be their last night on the mountain. Yes, it is bittersweet for me, as they, like many others, have stolen my heart and soul over the years, but I promised to keep my emotions in check, so I only ask that you understand, and perhaps adopt a wild horse in their honor, or help promote adoptions to good, approved, loving forever homes (learn how at BLM: <https://www.blm.gov/programs/wild-horse-and-burro>).

So without further ado, here are Hawk and Legend. I pray they get adopted into loving forever homes and live long, happy & productive lives.



Hawk, 2014



Hawk 2018



Legend, 2014



Legend, 2018

Fair Thee Well, Hawk & Legend, and all others who will now begin a new journey as domestic horses, may you live long and happy lives in loving forever homes.



Summary: BLM humanely euthanized a captured horse with a pre-existing condition. Two colts were treated for capture shock during sorting at the holding corral. One colt died shortly after being treated and the other died while being transferred to the veterinary hospital in Lander.

Animals gathered: 160

Animals shipped to Rock Springs: 89

Animals shipped to Axtell: 75

Total deaths today: 3

Acute: 2

Chronic/pre-existing: 1

Sub note: Here is a good explanation of “Capture Shock”, also known as Myopathy.

<https://www.vetstream.com/treat/equis/diseases/muscle-myopathy-overview>

White muscle was specifically mentioned in the necropsy report which leads one to wonder what the selenium and possibly heavy metals amounts that these horses ingest from the grass and mineral wallows. A study that either needs to be found, or done.



A horse in the wild, pre-gather, licking the dirt for minerals. April 2018

Day 3 to be continued.....

Footnote: Thank you for taking the time to read. You and your friends are welcome to follow our page documenting the Red Desert Complex since 2012 at Central Wyoming Wild Horses. We would also like to invite you to like, follow and support US Wild Horse and Burro Association who helped fund our trip out to document this gather.



Wyoming Red Desert Complex - Wild Horse Gather 2018, Day 3

Lona Patton Thursday, August 30, 2018

August 9, 2018, Third day personal report of gather operations

Recap from Aug 7 note: *“On August 7 through 16, 2018, I attended, observed and documented the Wyoming BLM wild horse gather of 2018. This report is a recount of what I watched and witnessed through my own eyes and camera lens. Although it was in all actuality very emotional for me as I have watched and documented many, if not most, of the horses gathered during this event, along with my daughter, Mariah Sharee, for the past 7 years, since 2012, and many have stolen our hearts and souls and mean a lot to us, but for the purpose of my report, I am going to attempt to keep my emotions at bay and give as honest an account without bias as I can. Please do not construe any emotional detachment in my report as heartless and uncaring as nothing could be further from the truth, but in order to share my account as unbiased and non-political as possible, I feel it is imperative to keep my personal emotions and attachments to these horses at bay. Thank you for understanding.”*



Heading out to trap site just before sunrise.

On the morning of the 9th, we awoke early and drove to 3 Forks / Muddy Gap to again meet up with BLM, and the other observers for our morning meeting before heading out to the new trap site, still on the east end of Green Mountain HMA, in the prairie, but further than the two previous days gathers.

This time, it would be down a dirt road my daughter & I knew well, where we had documented and photographed wild horses on often. As we drove in, along with the BLM personal, Rangers, and other observers, we drove past several herds of wild horses I knew well and had photographed many times over the years. I could not stop to take any final pre-gather photos as I was driving and had to stay in line with the rest of the group.

I must admit, my heart sank as we drove by them, knowing I may never again see these beloved horses out there free on the range, several of which had stolen my heart and soul over the years. I choked back a tear and vowed to try hard to help them find loving, adoptive forever homes where they could find love, companionship, and a new life journey that would bring them happiness.

My daughter and I have documented and photographed wild horses on the Green Mountain HMA (Herd Management Area) since 2012, (the last time this area was gathered was in 2011) and have documented nearly 2000 horses on this single HMA. The AML (Appropriate Management Level) for Green Mountain HMA is 170 to 300 horses. I knew this gather was not only needed, but overdue. If not gathered, their population numbers would double in another 4 years, and the range cannot sustain that many horses along with the wildlife they must share the range with, and yes, cattle too, as mandated BY LAW (Taylor Grazing Act of 1943).



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Pre-gather, May 2018

As we drove further down the dirt road heading to the new observation point, I was able to take one quick photo looking back at the new trap site temporary holding pens and soft jute fence line after we drove past it.



Day 3 trap site pens and soft jute fence line.

After we all arrived at the new observation point, we parked our vehicles and hiked a few hundred yards to the top of a hill to observe the gathers of the day. Due to the flatness of the terrain, our observation point on a small hill was quite a bit further from where the horses would be brought into the trap site than the 2 previous days' gathers had been. Although I do understand the reason for the distance needed, to keep both the observers as well as the horses safe, and not cause more stress on the horses, it did make it more difficult to capture any decent photos with my 200x500mm lens at full zoom. Unfortunately, I was only able to get blurry long distance shots of the horses coming in. But even at that distance, I could see Legend toward the front of the group (Cremello stallion)



I was only able to get blurry long distance shots of the horses coming in.



Pre-gather photo of Legend



8-9-18a3332GM

© L. Patton Photography

Horses entering the soft jute fence line leading to the temporary holding pens.

The gather concluded around noon, before the heat of the day.

Afterward, we were invited to go view the horses at a secondary temporary holding pen in Bairoil where they had been moved to, to cool them down, fed and watered, and separated into pens by gender, stallions, age (younger horses, 1 to 2 year olds), wet mares with their foals, or dry mares.



Stallion pen in Bairoil, with Hawk looking back over his shoulder at me, and Legend to the right.



Pre-gather photo of Hawk, 2014.

I know I said I would try to keep my emotions in check for my report, however, some horses, like Hawk and Legend, stole my heart and soul long ago. I will miss seeing them free out on the range, and as I wipe away many tears, I also pray they will all find good, loving, forever homes where they will be dearly loved and never again have to worry about finding enough food and fresh water to sustain them on the range. To never again have to battle for survival.

I ask that each of you look within your own hearts and homes, to either adopt a wild horse or burro, or to promote their adoption and help them find their forever homes.

Please visit this link to learn how:

<https://www.blm.gov/programs/wild-horse-and-burro/adoption-and-sales>

The “Keeper” pen.

To finish out our day, I rejoiced when I learned that “Outlaw”, a stallion I had followed since 2014, would be returned to the range to continue to live wild and free, to pass on his genes to future wild horses on Green Mountain HMA in Wyoming.



Wild stallion, Outlaw, in the "keeper" pen.



2014 photo of "Outlaw" and his bachelor friends. This photo was also published in the book "Wyoming at 125" by Bill Sniffen, pg 168.

Summary: BLM humanely euthanized one captured horse with a pre-existing condition. One colt was also humanely euthanized after breaking its right hind leg. One orphaned foal was sent to the Wyoming Honor Farm for additional care.

Animals gathered: 87

Animals shipped to Rock Springs: 93

Animals shipped to Axtell: 36

Total deaths today: 2

Acute: 1

Chronic/pre-existing: 1

Day 4 to be continued.....

Footnote: Thank you for taking the time to read. You and your friends are welcome to follow our page documenting the Red Desert Complex since 2012 at Central Wyoming Wild Horses. We would also like to invite you to like, follow and support US Wild Horse and Burro Association, who helped fund our trip out to document this gather.



Wyoming Red Desert Complex - Wild Horse Gather 2018, Day 4

Lona Patton·Saturday, September 1, 2018

August 10, 2018, Fourth day personal report of gather operations

Recap from Aug 7 note:

“On August 7 through 16, 2018, I attended, observed and documented the Wyoming BLM wild horse gather of 2018. This report is a recount of what I watched and witnessed through my own eyes and camera lens. Although it was in all actuality very emotional for me as I have watched and documented many, if not most, of the horses gathered during this event, along with my daughter, Mariab Sharee, for the past 7 years, since 2012, and many have stolen our hearts and souls and mean a lot to us, but for the purpose of my report, I am going to attempt to keep my emotions at bay and give as honest an account without bias as I can. Please do not construe any emotional detachment in my report as heartless and uncaring as nothing could be further from the truth, but in order to share my account as unbiased and non-political as possible, I feel it is imperative to keep my personal emotions and attachments to these horses at bay. Thank you for understanding.”



Smoke from distant fires hung in the valley like a thick blanket.

On the morning of August 10, after our morning meeting at 3 Forks, we all headed back out to the same observation point of the previous day. The air was so dry, filled with smoke from distant fires, and dust from our drive down the dirt road, that I wore a bandanna over my face and my daughter wore her balaclava face shield to filter out the dust and smoke in order to breathe easier.



My daughter wearing her balaclava for dust inhalation protection.



The dust was so thick that it made it hard to see the other observer vehicles following behind me in my rear view mirror.

Once on our observation point, it wasn't long before we heard the helicopters coming in from over a hill to our right, and then the horses appeared on the far ridge of that hill.



Hazy photo of a pilot bringing in horses.

Once down off the hill, they loped across the prairie toward the temporary pens, at which time, the pilot worked them into a tighter group, I would surmise to keep them from scattering into different directions.



Horses loping across the prairie.

Photo angles can be deceiving since they are only 2 dimensional, in the next photo, it looks like the pilot is right on top of the horses, when in reality, he was behind them.



Pilot gathering horses together just before the final push to the pens.

Just as the horses enter the soft jute fence line, a wrangler turns loose a Judas horse, which is a well-trained horse that will lead the wild horses into the pens. Being herd animals, the wild horses follow the lead horse, which here, is the Judas horse, out in front of them.



Judas horse leading the wild horses to the pens.

Although I took many more gather photos, none turned out due to the distance and the smoke, making them all blurry, so I will instead, tell you about what we did after the conclusion of the day 4 gather, which finished up again around noon, before the heat of the day set in.

After the daily gather concluded, we drove up on Green Mountain to photograph wild horses there, and were not disappointed.



A small band of wild horses seek some shade under a tree.



This beautiful trio posed for a photo



A couple of stallions sparring in the trees.



Tender moment.

After photographing a few wild horses on the mountain, we went to Bairoil to view the horses that had been gathered earlier in the day. The “wet mares”, or mares with foals, pen was pretty full, but they were settling in and pairing back up with their foals. The black snow fence made it difficult to get any good photos, but is there for their protection, not to obscure our view. The snow fence helps the pen look more solid so they are less likely to run into it and possibly hurt themselves, it also serves to ease their stress from obscuring their view of humans (us observers)



Wet mare pen, with "Sheza Gypsy Soul" in front.



"Sheza Gypsy Soul" in the wild, 2017.

Sheza will be available for adoption after the first of the new year along with the other gathered mustangs. Please consider adopting, or promoting their adoption to help them all find good, loving, forever homes.

Learn how here: <https://www.blm.gov/programs/wild-horse-and-burro/adoption-and-sales>



Observers viewing and photographing the gathered wild horses.

After viewing the horses, we went back to the prairie below the mountain and photographed a few more wild horses still free on the range. They were feeling frisky in the cool evening air.



Frisky wild horses playing on the prairie.



A wild herd runs and plays across the prairie in the cool evening air.

Summary: BLM euthanized one six-year-old stallion who was injured and blinded by another stallion on a trailer.

Animals gathered: 140

Animals shipped to Rock Springs: 45

Animals shipped to Axtell: 78

Total deaths today: 1

Acute: 1

Chronic/pre-existing: 0

Day 5 to be continued.....

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Wyoming Red Desert Complex - Wild Horse Gather 2018, Day 5

Lona Patton·Saturday, September 1, 2018

August 11, 2018, Fifth day personal report of gather operations

Recap from Aug 7 note: *“On August 7 through 16, 2018, I attended, observed and documented the Wyoming BLM wild horse gather of 2018. This report is a recount of what I watched and witnessed through my own eyes and camera lens. Although it was in all actuality very emotional for me as I have watched and documented many, if not most, of the horses gathered during this event, along with my daughter, Mariah Sharee, for the past 7 years, since 2012, and many have stolen our hearts and souls and mean a lot to us, but for the purpose of my report, I am going to attempt to keep my emotions at bay and give as honest an account without bias as I can. Please do not construe any emotional detachment in my report as heartless and uncaring as nothing could be further from the truth, but in order to share my account as unbiased and non-political as possible, I feel it is imperative to keep my personal emotions and attachments to these horses at bay. Thank you for understanding.”*



8-11-18c0906GM

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Day 5 observation point.

The day started out like the previous days, with observers all meeting with BLM staff at 3 Forks for our daily introduction to new observers, and our daily itinerary.

We drove out to our location, which was the same as the two previous days, and hiked out to the observation point with cameras and gear in hand.

Looking out over the prairie where the gather would soon begin, it was quiet and smoky, much like the previous day, and I knew then that capturing any decent photos would prove difficult and I knew then that they'd again be blurry.



Smoke filled valley where the gather would soon begin.

The first horses to be brought in came in off a hill to our right, where they would enter the valley after being rested at the top of the hill before their final run.



Horses coming in at the top of the hill to our right.



The pilot (out of frame) backed off and allowed the horses some rest before continuing their gather.

Once the horses were down off the hill and entered the valley in front of us, they began their run toward the temporary holding pens.



Pilot guiding the horses in the direction of the temporary holding pens.

Once the horses get to the soft jute fence line, the Judas horse is released to lead them in the rest of the way.



Trained Judas horse leading the wild horses to the pens.

After several more herds were gathered and brought in to the pens, a new group of horses were brought in in the far distance in front of us. A mare and her foal lagged behind, so the pilots backed off, letting them rest while they continued getting the rest of the herd in the pens while the mare and foal rested.



Resting the mare and foal.

Once the mare and foal were rested some, and the rest of that herd was contained, two wranglers headed out to bring them in “the old fashioned way”, on horseback. It’s not glamorous to watch by any means, and did pull my heartstrings pretty bad, but I understood the need to do so, whether or not I liked it or even agreed. Perhaps they could have left her and the foal alone, and continued gathering other horses...but then, she and her foal might have been in even more danger, danger of injury by other incoming horses that could run them over. I won’t pretend to know why, I can only surmise.



Two wranglers head out to bring in the mare and foal.



8-11-18a6019GM

© L. Patton Photography

Roping the mare, while letting the foal rest.

After the mare was roped, she fought and reared a few times but settled down quickly and then quietly led the wranglers toward the pens while they quietly urged her on from behind.



Mare calmly leading the wranglers toward the pens.

Once at the pens, they placed the mare in a separate pen by herself to wait for her foal as a wrangler headed back out to walk back with and guide the foal in the lead to reunite it with its mom.



Wrangler guiding foal back to its mom waiting in the pen.

Some of you may have seen the video put out by AWHC of the mare that had to be roped during the Red Desert Complex gather on Aug 11, 2018.

Their video is cut, before and after, not showing the full truth.

Here is a full video from start to finish - Videographer: Mariah Sharee

<https://www.facebook.com/CentralWyomingWildHorses/videos/262232401079268/>

On the day in question when this mare and foal were gathered, it was around 80°F out with little to no breeze. We sat on a hill roughly 3/4 of a mile away. Tempers of most everyone there were tense, though no debates broke out, I could feel it in the air. Visibility for us wasn't as good as it had been the previous day, and the hike from where we had to park our vehicles was about twice as far as the two previous days as well. AWHC was there too, as well as the videographer of Wild Horse Renegade. I do not know if they affected the moods of other observers or not, or if it was just "something in the air" that day. I am not pointing fingers at anyone.

The gather appeared to be going ok in my eyes, however, I did not witness the many resting periods during gather afforded the horses that I had seen the two previous days.

Onto the mare and foal....

They came over the hill into our view at a slow pace, lagging far behind, to me, it appeared the mare was going slower so that her very young foal could keep up, she did not look overheated or sweated, but then again, we were about 3/4 a mile away, and I was watching and photographing with a 500mm lens on a crop sensor camera (Nikon D7100)

I cannot pretend to know why the contractors didn't just allow the mare and foal to go free, except that they may have been left in an area that could prove dangerous if another herd was brought in, they could possibly be over run. I don't know the answer and won't pretend to.

After the daily gather concluded, observers were invited to come view the horses at the temporary holding pens, located on private property. Once again, there was a feeling of tension in the air. On the 2 previous days, contractors seemed friendly and willing to answer questions, and didn't rush us, although, we were requested to keep a minimum distance of 10-12 feet from the pens in order to not upset the horses.

All the horses appeared fairly calm, munching hay or just relaxing, with a few pecking order squabbles here and there (very normal behavior when non herd mate horses are placed together, regardless if wild or domestic)

When we got to the "wet mare" pen (mares with foals) they all appeared fine, and the very tiny black foal was lying down resting, it did not look traumatized.

We were rushed through...not because they were trying to hide anything from anyone though, but merely to not stress the horses further.



Tiny black foal resting quietly.

Sadly, that tiny black foal did not survive the night.

I will not pretend to know why, nor will I defend one side or the other in this matter. I, like many, am heartbroken over this. But I refuse to get into any debates over it.

After we left from viewing the gathered horses from the day, my daughter, a friend, and myself headed back to our camp on Green Mountain, and to take a few more photos of horses still free and wild on the mountain.

We were blessed to see one of our favorite stallions, “Remington” and his family, hiding in the trees. We snapped a few, possibly last photos of them, and told them to stay hidden, not yet knowing if they might be gathered tomorrow. We relished in their beautiful sight and presence before heading to camp and calling it a night.



Remington hiding in the trees, still wild and free.

Renegade, Remington's son, like his sire, is a beauty to behold.



Renegade, Remington's colt.



8-11-18a6590GM
Remington with part of his herd hiding in the trees

We bid them good night, and told them to stay hidden, not knowing if they could possibly even understand. And not knowing if we'd ever even know as this was to be our last night on the mountain. Responsibilities awaited us at home, and we could not be here for the next 2 days' gathers.

Summary: *No significant issues arose.*

Animals gathered: 134

Animals shipped to Rock Springs: 90

Animals shipped to Axtell: 37

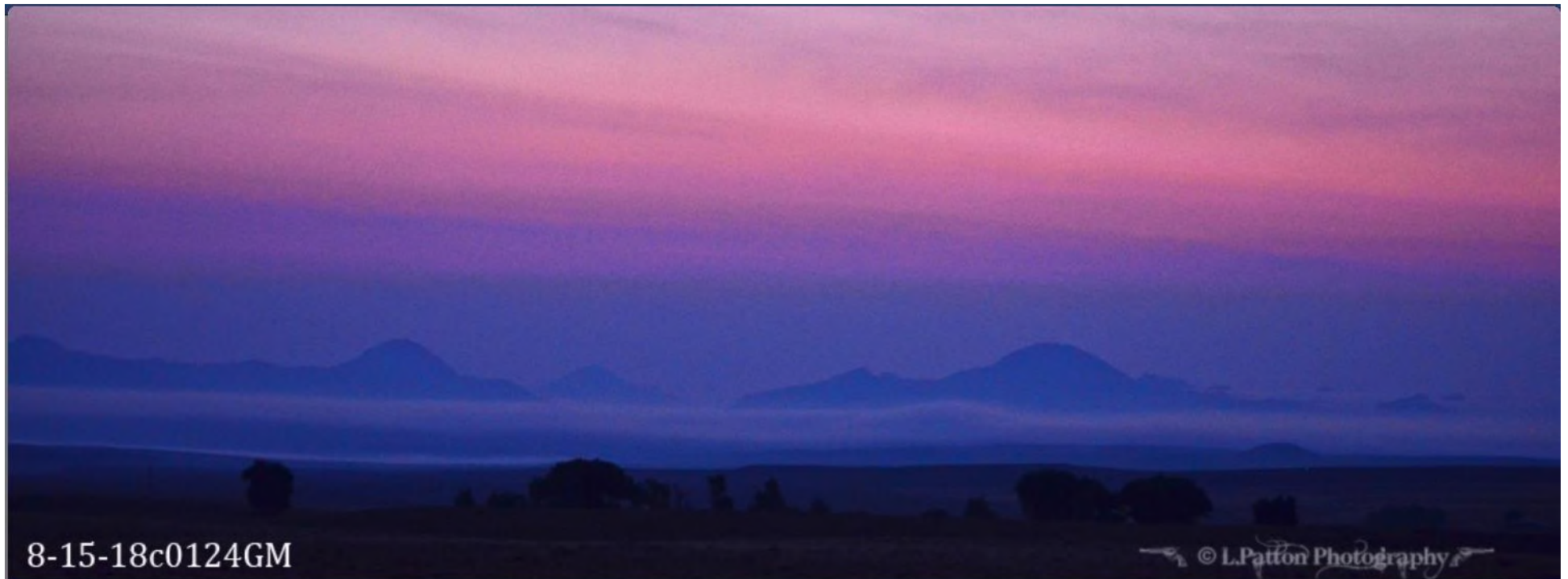
Total deaths today: 0

Acute: 0

Chronic/pre-existing: 0

Day 6 to be continued.....

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Wyoming Red Desert Complex - Wild Horse Gather 2018, Day 9

Lona Patton Thursday, September 6, 2018

August 15, 2018, Ninth day personal report of gather operations

Recap from Aug 7 note: *"On August 7 through 16, 2018, I attended, observed and documented the Wyoming BLM wild horse gather of 2018. This report is a recount of what I watched and witnessed through my own eyes and camera lens. Although it was in all actuality very emotional for me as I have watched and documented many, if not most, of the horses gathered during this event, along with my daughter, Mariah Sharee, for the past 7 years, since 2012, and many have stolen our hearts and souls and mean a lot to us, but for the purpose of my report, I am going to attempt to keep my emotions at bay and give as honest an account without bias as I can. Please do not construe any emotional detachment in my report as heartless and uncaring as nothing could be further from the truth, but in order to share my account as unbiased and non-political as possible, I feel it is imperative to keep my personal emotions and attachments to these horses at bay. Thank you for understanding."*

My last note left off after the conclusion of day 5, on August 11. We did stay another night camped on the mountain, and although we wanted badly to stay and observe the next few days' gathers, we were unable to as we had responsibilities back home that needed our attention. Sadly, we would miss the very location of gathers we wanted most to see, the horses we had documented and photographed the most over our 7 years of documenting them. Perhaps it was for the best that we were unable to observe their gather as it would have been extremely emotional, at least for me anyway.

With a little financial help from US Wild Horse and Burro Association to help cover trip expenses, we were able to go back for 2 more days, and want to extend our gratitude to them!

We arrived back on the mountain in the evening on the 14th of August, then drove around to try to locate any un-gathered horses BLM may have missed, and were excited to find Remington and his harem still free on the mountain, still hiding in the trees where we had last seen them! They will remain free on the mountain they call home! By the time we left them it was getting dark and too late to try to put up a tent, so we slept in the front seat of my Dodge Ram.



Wild stallion, Remington.



8-14-18b6909GM

Part of Remington's harem, the rest stayed hidden in the trees.

We awoke to a beautiful sunrise on August 15, which would be the last day of gather from the Green Mountain HMA, and would take place on the back side of the mountain, in the prairie.



August 15 sunrise.

It took nearly an hour to drive to the observation location after our morning meet up with everyone at 3 Forks, and anyone without 4-wheel drive would not be able to make the trip across the 2 track road that took us out to the observation point.



Jeffery City / Wamsutter road.

We drove past Jeffery City just as the sun was rising above the smoke cloud that had settled in during the night. The violet pink sky and red sun highlighted the beauty of the little town's church.



Jeffery City Church.

By the time we got to our destination, hiked out, and set up for the day at our observation point, smoke from distant fires already started filling the air, once again making getting any crisp good photos nearly impossible for me, but I did the best I could.



Pilot in smoke filled air.

It wasn't long before the first group of horses came in from our right, moseying along at a slow a trot, seemingly barely concerned about the helicopter above them.



First group of horses, coming in at a trot.

The second group of horses came in in the distance in front of us, again, not even moving fast enough to kick up any dust.



Lots of color in the second group.

When the third group came in at a slow run, it was evident just how dry this Red Desert prairie is, they weren't even running hard, but the dry earth left clouds of dust behind them. At first glance, it looks like there is plenty of forage, but when one looks closer, you see a lot of sage, rabbit brush, and very little actual grass. I recently spoke with a gentleman who works out on the prairie, and he told me there is so little actual grass, it would take an acre or more to acquire the equivalent of just one bale of hay. Looking around, and having driven and hiked many miles out there, I believe him.



Dust clouds arise from horses trotting, or barely running over the dry earth.

A lone horses stands watching over its shoulder and waiting while the herd moves on ahead.



8-15-18b7018GM

© L. Patton Photography

Standing in wait.

After the herd had moved on, the lone horse still remained, watchful over its shoulder.



The Watcher.

Once the lone horse realized it was now alone, it raced off to catch up with the herd heading toward the temporary holding pens.



Racing to catch up with the herd.

We watched a few more herds come in, again, moving mostly at a trot, none looked tired or sweated. The jute fence line and temporary pens were not in view for us as a hill blocked it from our view, so what we saw instead of the final run, were mostly calm horses being brought in, as the pilots don't push or run them until the final moments going into the jute fence line and pens, which they do in order to keep the horses together. It was nice to get to witness and observe the gather pre-run.



Horses being brought in at a slow trot heading toward the temporary pens.

Just as the pilots brought in the last horses of the day, one lone horse managed to escape the final run into the pens and headed back to the range it came from.



One lone horse managed to escape the final run into the pens and headed back to the range it came from. BLM nor the pilots pursued the escapee, and allowed it to return to its home range.

I know my photos of it are blurry, but he was already so far away, too far for my lens, but even with my bad photo, it was cool to see it turn and look back, as if to say thank you for allowing it to remain free.



Lone escapee looking back before continuing back to its home range.

As we drove past the pens after the gather was done, I was able to capture two quick photos, one of the helicopter after it landed, and another looking back at the pens.



Rear view of parked helicopter sitting on the ground.



Temporary holding pen with a few mares and foals awaiting transport to Bairoil.

The gather concluded before noon, and we needed to wait until around 2 p.m. before we'd be allowed to go to Bairoil to view the day's gathered horses, we had to give them time to transport all of the horses there and time for them to settle in and relax.

So we headed to 3 Forks to top off our gas tank, where we got to see one of the transport trailers leaving 3 Forks after getting gas for their truck.



Transport trailer hauling freshly gathered horses to Bairoil.

We then drove into the little town of Bairoil to search for some shade trees to park under and to eat some lunch, but found some local wildlife had the same idea.



Pronghorn Buck peaking at us from behind a tree.

It was evident that these Pronghorn Antelope were local town “goats” aka “speed goats”, as they had very little fear of humans. For being the fastest land mammal in the USA, they sure weren’t in any hurry to leave their shade, lol. Trees on the Red Desert are a rare, sacred and valued commodity!



Well hello there, pretty buck!

Even the doe with twin fawns were unconcerned, momma even nursed her twins right there next to us. It was a real honor and blessing to eat lunch with these beautiful animals!



Lunch time for Pronghorn twins.

After lunch, we drove over to the temporary pens in Bairoil to view the horses that had been gathered that day, and to see which horses were in the keeper pens. The keeper pens are for horses to be returned to the range after mares received fertility control, and strands of tail hair pulled from all 25 keeper horses for DNA testing to determine what type of breed they have most traits in common with.



Temporary holding pens in Bairoil.



Observation guests and BLM viewing some of the horses.

The stallion keeper pen. I can't even begin to tell you how happy and excited I was to see these boys in the keeper pen!!! My daughter and I have documented these boys for years, and hold each and every one of them dear to our hearts! Be sure to stay tuned to my next note where we get to document their release! I will reveal most of them, who they are, and how long we followed them in the wild, pre-gather.



Stallion keeper pen.

Summary: *No notable incidents today.*

Animals gathered: 92

Animals shipped to Rock Springs: 0

Animals shipped to Axtell: 41

Total deaths today: 0

Animals shipped to Wyoming Honor Farm: 1

Acute: 0

Chronic/pre-existing: 0

Day 10 to be continued.....

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Wyoming Red Desert Complex - Wild Horse Release 2018, Day 10

Lona Patton Sunday, September 9, 2018

August 16, 2018, Tenth day personal report of gather operations (previous RDC gather reports can be found on my personal page in my notes)

After sleeping in my truck the night of the 14th, quite uncomfortably I might add, we decided to drive home the night of the 15th after viewing the horses gathered earlier that day, which was the final gather off of Green Mountain HMA.

On August 16, we weren't able to leave home as early as we would have liked, and there-for, would miss the first day gather of Stewart Creek HMA, but we did make it in time to get to observe the release of 25 wild horses back to Green Mountain HMA. 13 Green Mountain stallions and 12 Green Mountain mares that had been gathered during the previous week.

All 12 mares had been treated with a temporary fertility control that would relieve them of foaling for the first year or two back on the mountain.

We arrived just in the nick of time to follow one of three trailers transporting the horses out to their release sites. The other two trailers had already left before them, each to a different area (all previous capture locations) in the prairie at the base of Green Mountain.



Cane and LeDoux, plus 5 other horses, ready to be released.



Cane was the first to come out, followed closely by LeDoux.

Cane was the first to come out of the trailer, followed closely by LeDoux. I do not know when or how Cane was injured, but praying he heals up fast and has no problems from his injury.

We've seen a lot worse injuries in the wild on other horses, and they usually overcome them with little to no problems. We have known Cane ever since he was a youngster under a year old, he is now age 7. Cane has been one of our favorites ever since we first saw him.



LeDoux, showing his glee of being released.

Next to come out of the trailer was LeDoux, a well-built beautiful boy and one of our favorites ever since we first saw him in 2014. He is now an 8 year old. In the 4 years we followed LeDoux, he never had a mare, perhaps now, free again with less competition, he will win some over. LeDoux is a fun loving, curious boy with a loving heart and gentle soul.

After Cane and LeDoux were off and running, 8 year old red roan stallion named Gladiator shot out of the trailer and quickly caught up with Cane and LeDoux.



Gladiator.

Two pretty Pinto mares quickly join them after exiting the transport trailer.



Free again!

Last off the trailer was 6 year old Timber, a Black stallion we've watched grow up from a tiny tike still nursing on his Dam on the mountain. He has grown into a gorgeous big boy!

On his heels are two mares who we'll introduce later on our Central Wyoming Wild Horses page of Facebook.



Timber followed by 2 mares, Scout and an older mare.

Together, they all headed off into the prairie at the base of the mountain, free again.



7 happy mustangs returning to freedom.

After the first trailer was unloaded and running free back on the range, we raced to the 3rd trailer location to watch their release as well. We did not get to watch the release of the 2nd trailer, when Outlaw and Dreams In Color were released along with other mustangs, but this is a video of it courtesy of the Bureau of Land Management - Wyoming Facebook page. (I do not own any rights to this video):

<https://www.facebook.com/BLMWyoming/videos/2066603310269856/>

Release of the 3rd trailer. After racing to catch up with the 3rd trailer, we arrived just in the nick of time as they were already parked and preparing to open the trailer door to let the horses out, we were not expected and showed up unannounced and uninvited, we were met by a Ranger, ready to send us on our way, but after we informed him that another BLM employee had told us at the release of the first trailer, that if we hurried, we might catch up with the 3rd, they decided to let us stay, and we were extremely grateful!

On this trailer was the magnificent Buckskin Roan stallion, Talon! We have followed and photographed Talon since 2014, and anyone that has followed me, or our page on Facebook, for any length of time, know him.



Talon in 2014.

Talon was the 3rd horse to come off of the trailer, but the first one I want to share with you.

Before the gather, Talon was a mighty stallion with a large harem of his own, and has sired many Buckskin offspring over the years. We had no idea how old he was, but knew he was mature...BLM aged him at around 22 years of age after he was gathered. BLM also took hair samples of all the release horses for DNA testing to determine the breed type they most closely resemble. At least one other release horse, 6 year old stallion, Delgado, is Talon's prodigy.

Release horses were chosen based on conformation, build, and possible gene type to improve the future generation on the HMA (herd management area).



Talon, 2018 release.



Talon with his son, Delgado in front, and an older mare behind.



Delgado on the left, looking at his sire, Talon, already wooing a mare.

Another release stallion, Whitaker, following a pretty Pinto mare.



Whitaker and pretty Pinto mare.



Freshly released wild horses heading back to their home range on the mountain.

As we watched them disappear over a hill, I could only think of how happy I was for them, and how happy they must all be. But life on the mountain can be very harsh, especially in our Wyoming winters, where temperatures often drop way below 0 degrees Fahrenheit, even below 20, 30 or 40 below 0! With wind chills that make it feel even colder, blowing at 30, 40, even up to 60 mph, sometimes more.

So I pray for their safety and survival on the mountain as I bid them farewell.



Bidding them farewell as they disappear over a hill.

I cannot even begin to describe my elation over their release! We have documented and photographed most of them, named them and followed their lives in the wild for many years and feel a special attachment to them. You can see and learn about each one on our facebook page, Central Wyoming Wild Horses, where my daughter, Mariah, has done and is doing an outstanding job introducing them and telling their stories.

We look forward to continuing our documentation of the horses on Green Mountain HMA, as well as the rest of the Red Desert Complex, Stewart Creek, Lost Creek, Antelope Hills, and Crooks Mountain HMA's. Stay tuned for a few follow up notes showcasing 3 trips back out to the mountain to document remaining horses that were not gathered, and how the release horses are doing.

This concludes my documentation of the 2018 Red Desert Complex wild horse gather and release. I hope you have enjoyed it. I have tried hard to keep it as unbiased and non-political as possible. I have been called names, and been accused of being an BLM hugger...so what. Yes, it hurt me...but I feel the BLM "EMPLOYEES" are only doing what they are MANDATED, BY LAW, to do. and those I have met in person were very nice, and their love for the wild horses was very evident. No, the program is not perfect, and could surely use workable and legal solutions, but in the 40+ years I have been around and passionate about wild horses, ever since we (my parents and I) adopted our first two wild horses when I was 15, I have learned there are no easy answers. I have been on both sides of the fence, if you will, learned and continue learning, as much as I can. And if there is one single thing for me to say, it would be that hating on each other will help no one, especially not the horses.

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