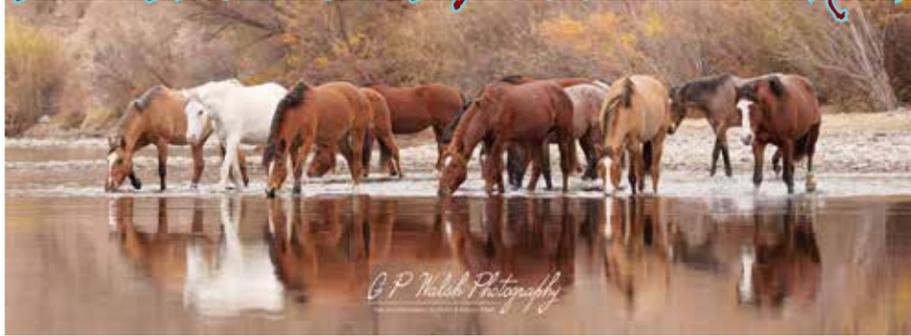


Ride For the Salt River Wild Horses

The 9th annual Ride For the Salt River Wild Horses took place on Saturday January 27, 2024. Sign-in was hosted by American Legion Post #58 in Fountain Hills. It is a fundraiser for the Salt River Wild Horses Management Group {SRWHMG}.



Protecting these beautiful souls is what this event is all about.

My thanks to event founder & organizer Skeeter Peak, for her help with this article.

There were over 750 sign-ins for this self-paced ride. The route is a scenic run through the Lower Salt River area. Each year, photographers await the riders along the route; including at mile marker 36 on Bush Highway and at the 4-way stop at Bush Highway & Usery Pass Road. They captured some great pictures, which can be seen on the Ride for the Salt River Wild Horses facebook page.

While the ride has no required check points, as for a dice or card game; riders had the option to stop at Goldfield Recreational site - located off of Usery Pass Road. Skeeter shared, "that is a good area to see the wild horses."

The ride's destination was Superstition Harley-Davidson, located at 2910 W Apache Trail in Apache Junction. Here, there were food trucks, vendor booths ~ including sponsor Law Tigers, and music by Poppy Harpman and The Storm. Additional vendors included More Shade, Twisted Treasures jewelry, Blades & Shades, and SRWHMG merchandise.

Raffle tables held a variety of items to win. There were collectibles, a helmet, adult beverages, artwork, home décor, specialty coffees & teas, a big gift basket

from Superstition HD, & more.

There was a special auction this year. An artist, Nicole Luttrell, repainted a couple of Breyer miniature horses in memory of two wild foals, Mirabelle and Coriander, that were killed by a mountain lion in late 2023. She donated these Breyer re-paints to the event to raise funds for the Salt River Wild Horses of the Tonto National Forest. The auction raised \$500 toward the support of the Salties.

An additional fundraiser took place for the Salties that day as well. On The Green Sports Grill in Mesa was holding their 5th anniversary party and called it "The Ride After Party". They had a 50/50 and raised \$323 that was donated to SRWHMG, plus donated an additional \$250 for a total of \$573.

This event takes a lot of people to make it work. Skeeter sent along a Thank You message, "to American Legion Post 58 in Fountain Hills; Simone Netherlands founder of the SRWHMG, for her continuous dedication to support the humane management for the Salt River wild horses; the SRWHMG mascot Salty; the AZ Rangers of the East Valley; Poppy Harpman and The Storm band; all the SRWHMG volunteers; the merchandise and food vendors; our sponsors Superstition HD, Law Tigers, and Len Novin from The Bull/The Rattler radio; All the American Legion Riders representing Posts 2,

5, 27, 35, 39, 58, 117, 138; and ALL the Riders who came out to support the wild horses."

SRWHMG programs are noteworthy in their ability to efficiently manage this herd of horses which has, thanks to 'progress', had their territory completely hemmed in.

Natural resources to support the herd are limited. That is why one of the critical SRWHMG programs is population management. Monies raised go toward humane birth control, plus habitat improvement such as removal of barbed wire & other man-made safety hazards, fence maintenance to keep the horses off the roadways, emergency feed programs for during extreme drought, tracking & data collection regarding the health & well-being of the herd, public education, & much more. This organization is proving that it is possible to humanely manage these representatives of living history; whereas, in other areas of our state and nationwide, wild horses are rounded up and sold to slaughter auctions in hope of exterminating them from public lands.

SRWHMG operates solely on donations, with no government grants. Donations are tax deductible & can be made via their website at <https://saltriverwildhorsemanagementgroup.org/> You can make a donation, purchase support merchandise, sponsor a specific horse, & read about other options.

This day raised \$16,488, which Skeeter says is this event's best year ever. Congratulations on such a successful day and Thank You to all who helped make it happen!

Betsy

