

ISPMB
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NEWSLETTER

International Society for the Protection of Mustangs & Burros



Spirit of the Ancients

WILD HORSE & BURRO DIARY

A Publication of the International Society for the Protection of Mustangs and Burros
The Oldest Wild Horse and Burro Organization in the United States

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What We Treasure, We Must Protect

As the International Society for the Protection of Mustangs and Burros (ISPMB), our message is: "Wild horses do not need birth control and do not need to be rounded up every four years because these two actions are destroying these magnificent animals."

Ignoring the true nature of wild horses is not working. Administering birth control does not stop roundups. Roundups break up horse family bands, destroy their social structures, and lead to the decline of wild horses on our public lands at an alarming and disturbing rate.

The Heber Herd in Arizona has kept its population in check in significant part because they have been allowed to self-regulate. They have not been rounded up or given birth control in 20 years. No other wild herd in the US holds this distinction. No other herd has been free to determine its own behavior. The Heber horses are a treasure that must be protected. For the good of the whole, they must be studied as is. ■

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These two young Heber bachelors were getting a drink at the dirt water tank alongside a band stallion in the Apache-Sitgreaves National Forest. When the band stallion splashed the water, the two young bachelors were startled and raced out of the water to get away from him.

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Cover: This family band is one of many bands within the Heber herd that roam on over 300,000 acres in the Apache-Sitgreaves National Forest. *Photo by Betty Nixon*

An Icon in the Wild Horse Movement

David R. Belding, pictured in Las Vegas where he worked and lived for many years, was a hero in the wild horse protection movement.



It is with a sad heart that we announce the passing of David R. Belding

David Belding had a long history in the wild horse movement. He started out working with Wild Horse Annie (Velma Johnston) in the early 1970s, practicing law from 1972 to 1987 in Nevada. He was a law clerk to the Nevada Supreme Court from 1971 to 1972. As a new graduate from Georgetown University Law Center, he and his fellow graduate, William Althen, wrote the Amicus Brief for the landmark Supreme Court case known as *Kleppe v. New Mexico*.

The case was heard in the Supreme Court on March 23, 1976. The unanimous decision in favor of wild horses and burros – ensuring their protections would stand and be enforced nationwide – was rendered on June 17, 1976. Thurgood Marshall wrote the majority opinion.

Mr. Belding continued his work with Annie and was executor of her will. Annie passed on June 27, 1977, one year after the Supreme Court case.

In 2014, ISPMB's president, Karen Sussman, met David by phone and continued a friendship. In 2023 David honored ISPMB and became a Director on our Council Circle until his death. He was always very helpful and supportive of America's wild horses and ISPMB's rare Spanish Gila herd.

He will be dearly missed by all of us here at ISPMB.

We send the Belding family our deepest condolences and thank them immensely for naming ISPMB as the benefactor of any donations given in memory and honor of David R. Belding, our hero. ■



David Belding (left), Wild Horse Annie (center) and William Althen (right) stand on the steps of the Supreme Court in 1976. ISPMB first published this photo in our Wild Horse & Burro Diary in 1976.

A trusting wild Gila horse gently nuzzles
ISPMB President Karen Sussman

President's REPORT

*What we know to be
true about wild horse
herd behavior*

By Karen A. Sussman

© MELISSA FARLOW

***It's been a long and winding road to understanding and protecting wild horses.
We hear an urgent call to pick up the pace. Won't you join us?***

In the many years of writing these reports, I cannot begin to tell you how ecstatic I am in producing this most exhilarating report for our readers. ISPMB's history is rich because of our work over the years in understanding and protecting wild horses and burros. First, we look at our first president, Wild Horse Annie, and how she stopped the slaughter of wild horses and burros with the passage of the 1971 Wild Free-Roaming Horses and Burros Act! It sailed through Congress without one dissenting vote.

As the third president of ISPMB, I am proud of the many accomplishments that have been achieved. These include raising fines for killing wild horses and burros from \$2,000 to \$100,000 per offense; managing a highly successful rescue program in Arizona for wild horses and burros, saving more than 150 animals and being the first state with no wild horses or burros being sold for slaughter; being called by the governor of New Mexico to mediate a resolution for the state that prevented wild horses from White Sands Missile Range from going to slaughter – a decade-long effort but successful; launching the first education program for adopters in Arizona; and conducting the first-ever compliance checks on wild horses and burros in Arizona that resulted in the signing of a national Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with the Bureau of Land Management to do compliance checks nationwide; and the triumphs continued from there.

All of these experiences eventually led to an effort to understand the behaviors of intact wild herds that were presented to ISPMB starting in 1999. Despite years of previous successes, what wasn't happening was stopping massive roundups of wild horses and burros from their protected lands by the Agencies. At first, ISPMB's acceptance of two herds marked the beginning of protecting herds that were eliminated from their federal lands, but it soon morphed into something deeper—understanding how to best protect and manage them. That meant that their behaviors MUST be understood! This also took me out of the political realm with the Agencies because of the intensity of this project.

ISPMB had two herds literally untouched by humankind for decades. And we had two herds that had multiple roundups and were in threat of their elimination on federal lands. It was these two herds with multiple roundups that were given birth control. At that time, it was the accepted practice, and we went along with it. However, over the eight years or so that our two herds had birth control, our understanding was illuminated when we quit using this drug which is classified as a pesticide with the Environment Protection Agency (EPA). Comparing the birth control herd to our herd that hadn't been disturbed in decades became an eye-opening experience. When you read the account of Ina Ohitika (Lakota for courageous mother) you will begin to see what we saw in our herd given birth control. Understand that when you read this article, there are many, many more accounts of how birth control destroys wild horses.

“Comparing the birth control herd to our herd that hadn't been disturbed in decades became an eye-opening experience.”

Then came many years of watching stable growth in our two stable herds. It took a while to put together a complete understanding of our herds. By 2014, we contacted the BLM to notify them that no disruptions in family band structures actually stabilizes wild herds. We also notified several humane groups to no avail since the missions of their organizations revolved around using birth control—and potential Agency funding for these programs created an incentive for them to keep moving in that direction with birth control.

“It took a while to put together a complete understanding of our herds.”

Nothing has deterred our quest for the real answers on “how to manage” effectively and in the *best interest* of the horses. Today, we have made it there and we have the answers which you will read in this magazine.

We still have a lot of work to accomplish, and the journey has been long and arduous. But now, with the facts and evidence in hand, we are confident of our success. We understand aspects of wild horse behavior that have not been understood by the Agencies or groups supporting wild horses. Our information will transform how wild horses are managed in the future.

This understanding has been a magical journey in my life, and I feel so honored to have been given this wonderful opportunity that has produced this extremely important information featured in this magazine—information that could transform how wild horses are managed in our country.

May we stop the roundup of the Heber Herd and may they be the herd to be studied over the next 5-7 years or longer to prove our point!

We appreciate, so much, your support of ISPMB and our efforts over all these many years! Now more than ever, your financial backing is crucial to our success. ■



Karen A. Sussman
President, ISPMB



A Heber mare waits in the Apache-Sitgreaves National Forest for her stallion to come back for her. Another stallion had just stolen her, along with another mare and a young filly, from their long-time stallion. He was just one forest road away, looking exactly in the direction she was looking.

Critical Update: Fate of the Heber Wild Horses

US Forest Service Plans to Destroy These Legendary Horses

After 20 years of waiting for the United States Forest Service (USFS or FS) to develop a Territory Plan to manage the legendary Heber Wild Horse Herd protected under the 1971 Wild Free-Roaming Horses and Burros Act, the USFS finally released a draft. The Territory Plan, known as the Draft Management Plan and Environmental Assessment (EA), was issued on the Friday just before Labor Day weekend. This plan will have devastating consequences on this unique herd by cutting its stable population from 400-plus horses to as few as 50 to 104 horses, and by giving a majority of the mares birth control which has been shown to effectively sterilize mares with frequent use.

In retrospect, we are thrilled that it took 20 years to write this plan because the horses show that their growth rate is near 3 percent, and the herd has great stability because they have not been rounded up in all this time. This herd represents the last herd on public lands that has NOT been disturbed from massive roundups every four years, either to remove or give unnecessary birth control. They are a stable population. In fact, they are what should be the model for all wild horse management in our country.

The FS and the Bureau of Land Management (the Agencies) have a program called *WinEquus* which purports that by the year 2040 there will be 2.8 million wild horses. ISPMB believes that these projects are not supported by the best available information and that the Heber horses, together with ISPMB's data from our own herds, strongly call these assumptions

The Heber Herd is the only hope for change. It is our very last chance!



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Young filly runs to join her band in the Apache Sitgreaves National Forest.

MEET BETTY NIXON

Betty is a retired Army Military Intelligence Officer. She moved to Heber-Overgaard in 2018 and immediately began advocating for the Heber Wild Horses, spending typically 25 to 30 hours every week for the past seven and a half years observing and documenting the horses, as well as looking out for their safety and welfare. Betty has had a lifelong love of horses and the outdoors. Advocating for the Heber Wild Horses is something she enjoys and pursues with great passion and determination. She describes the forest as her sanctuary.



into question. This program claims that horses double every four years and grow at a near 20 percent growth rate. If this were the case for the Heber Herd, there now would be 10,782 wild horses in the forest this year. The last count in 2021 was approximately 416. (See "WinEquus - Disruptions with roundups destroy healthy wild horse behaviors" in this issue.)

Why does ISPMB believe that the Agencies' understanding of wild horses is so far from what we have observed in intact herds? The answer is simple from our standpoint. Wild horses have often been managed more like domestic horses than as a wildlife species with their own natural social structures and behaviors. In the early 1980s, the National Academy of Sciences recommended that the Agencies study wild horses to develop a model for management. In 1983, the Agencies ignored these crucial recommendations for long-term scientific research of wild horses – basically stating it wasn't worth the money.

Help us fight this critical battle by donating to ISPMB.

The Agencies were given the responsibility of protecting these icons for the American people. The 1971 law passed WITHOUT one dissenting vote in Congress. It was ISPMB and our first president, Wild Horse Annie, who spearheaded this movement. Yet, the comprehensive scientific study of wild herds that was recommended more than 40 years ago has never been fully carried out.

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Barbed-wire fences stretch for miles across the Apache-Sitgreaves National Forest to contain cattle, but the Heber wild horses and other wildlife sometimes become entangled. It was just getting dark when long-time herd advocate Betty Nixon (pictured) recently found a filly caught in the wire. After cutting her free, Betty gently encouraged the filly to stand. Aside from some scratches, the young horse was unharmed, but it could have been tragic had she not been found in time.

A young filly, with her Heber family band, looks at the photographer, who has watched her since she was a young foal as seen in the photo taken in the snow almost a year ago.



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When one looks at a wolf, it is not a domestic dog. It is a wild animal. In the same way, a wild horse looks like a domestic horse, but it is not one. Wild horses should have been understood and managed based on their wild behaviors and characteristics, but that has not occurred to the extent that ISPMB believes is necessary. In our view, this failure to understand wild herd dynamics risks contributing to the gradual disappearance of wild horses on public land.

Your donation truly makes a huge difference!

ISPMB believes that current management approaches have created an unnecessary burden on taxpayers, with millions of dollars spent on repeated roundups to permanently remove horses or to administer birth control. ISPMB regards many of these roundups as unnecessary and harmful, both physically and behaviorally, for the horses involved (see our story about Ina Ohitika).

ISPMB is the only organization that has studied two healthy intact herds of horses that hadn't been rounded up in 25 (White Sands Herd) and 50 (Gila Herd) years. At the time we began this project in 1999 and 2000, we knew very little about herd



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This young filly was napping as her family band moved some distance away as they grazed in the Apache-Sitgreaves National Forest. When the filly awoke and saw they were gone, she jumped up and ran to rejoin her band.

This Heber band stallion, named Northstar, walks over to confront a band of bachelors that had gotten too close to his family band in the Apache-Sitgreaves National Forest in Arizona.



Heber stallion Brute was at the dirt water tank with his band when Billy brought his band in for a drink. The two stallions greeted one another in a brief show of strength before they parted ways.

behaviors. We had just spent the last 10 years rescuing wild horses and burros that failed adoptions or those that were slated to be sold for slaughter. We had a lot of information about damaged psyches of wild animals. Intact herds were new to us but over time we have learned a great deal and we continue to learn from our famous Gila horses, who continually provide important data. There is no purer horse than a wild horse that has experienced only trust in its interactions with humans. We can say that about our Gila herd.

Now, after more than 50 years since the Act's passage, ISPMB believes it does understand wild herd behaviors because we have been observing them continuously for all these years. Having access to undisturbed herds has been truly an extraordinary gift for ISPMB. We have seen what we consider to be "healthy behaviors." (*Please see our article on Reproductive Compensation—we believe we now have the answers.*)

The future of all wild horses now depends upon ISPMB stopping the FS from dismantling the most stable herd left on public lands. This herd must be studied. It must be the herd that the National Academy of Sciences encouraged the Agencies to understand before managing them.

ISPMB remains deeply grateful for the dedicated legal support it has received throughout this long process. Our legal team has consistently ensured that ISPMB's views are clearly and thoughtfully represented in our submissions to the Forest Service, and we sincerely appreciate their ongoing commitment to this important work.

We now await the FS final decision to be rendered in February.

Help us transform how wild horses are managed on our public lands.

History of the Heber Herd

Since 2005, ISPMB has been involved in saving the Heber wild horses of northern Arizona, located in the Apache-Sitgreaves National Forests (ASNF), together with several other groups. At that time, the United States Forest Service (USFS or FS) was preparing to round up 300 wild horses. Working together with the groups, legal action was taken.

Our attorneys were extraordinary in their efforts to save these legendary horses. In 2007, a stipulation was entered into by all parties requiring the FS to develop a Territory Plan. In the meantime, all horses in the Territory, including the Black Mesa and Lakeside Ranger Districts, were to be protected from any removals until this plan was approved. The Forest Service further agreed that, by law, wild horses are an integral part and component of the natural system of public lands, as expressed by Congress in the 1971 Wild Free-Roaming Horses and Burros Act.

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By 2014, there was *still no Territory plan*, but an ASN Range Management Plan was executed by the FS. ISPMB, with the assistance of legal counsel, appealed the plan on the grounds that it did not comply with the Act. ISPMB and counsel met with the USFS in New Mexico, and the Forest Service agreed to amend the Range Management Plan to address ISPMB's points. Because of that resolution, further court proceedings were not required. ISPMB eventually became the sole wild horse organization actively engaged in protecting these horses.

On April 22, 2021, ISPMB and its legal team submitted a detailed response to the first draft Management Plan and Environmental Assessment (EA) that was finally produced by the FS.

Help us spread the TRUTH about the Heber Herd far and wide!

In August 2025, after 20 years of peace and harmony for the horses, free from disastrous roundups, the Forest Service finally issued its *draft final* Territory Management Plan with its environmental assessment. The final EA makes it clear that the agency had not meaningfully addressed ISPMB's comments submitted in 2021.

The FS has continued to propose to downsize this stable herd from an approximate 416 (2021) animals to 50-104. In ISPMB's view, this number does not represent a genetically viable herd, even under the Forest Service's own handbook. To make matters worse, the agency plans to administer birth control to a majority of the mares, despite the herd's relatively low natural growth rate and long history without roundups. ISPMB is concerned that this approach could significantly reduce the herd and threaten its continued existence, despite historical accounts indicating that these horses have been present in the forest since before ranching settlements, prior to 1860. (This point of history was noted in testimony by a FS employee in the Alpine court case on the eastern side of the forest.)

Please use the link below to access the FS Reading Room, where all comments regarding the Heber Wild Horse Territory Management Plan are available for review, including those from ISPMB.

https://cara.fs2c.usda.gov/Public/ReadingRoom?project=18916&utm_source=MarketingCloud&utm_medium=email ■



A filly pauses in Black Canyon on the proposed Heber Wild Horse Territory.



The Real Story Behind the WinEquus Data Program

- *Disruptions with roundups destroy healthy wild horse behaviors.*
- *WinEquus measures disrupted wild herds with data from injurious roundups.*

The current information obtained from the study of our own Gila Herd gives a clear understanding of the WinEquus program, designed by the Agencies (US Forest Service/FS and Bureau of Land Management/BLM) in 1996 to simulate population dynamics of wild equids over a period, typically up to 20 years. This model projects growth of wild horses at a near 20 percent yearly growth with herds doubling every four years. It also projects that by the year 2040, there will be 2.8 million wild horses.

Based on ISPMB's long-term observations, roundups cause major disruptions to stable band structures and can produce short-term spikes in growth states that might appear consistent with a 20 percent increase and doubling in four years. However, ISPMB's data shows that when herds are left alone, they tend to stabilize and growth rates decline. ISPMB believes that because roundups have often been repeated every four years, herds have not been given the opportunity to recover and re-establish stable social structures. This repeated disturbance may be one reason why some data sets show higher growth rates.

ISPMB notes that by 1996 when this data program was instituted, there were little to no wild herds left that hadn't been rounded up every four years since 1974. At first there were gate cuts, meaning that the entire bands in the herd were removed which may have allowed groups of band structures to be left intact that weren't rounded up.

However, around 1992, the Agencies began selective removals. This meant they rounded up entire herds, separating mares from stallions, removing younger animals under the age of five for adoption, and leaving the older and wiser animals six and older to return to their habitat. It also made it possible to inject the mares with birth control because they had to wait 30 days before they could administer the second shot. This birth control only lasted one year. These wild horses were contained for more than 30 days to do this. This caused massive disruptions of the band structures, injuring these herds, not only from giving birth control but also from separating the wiser old band stallions forever from their mares that they protected. This allowed juvenile stallions from the ages of 6 to 9 to take mares and impregnate fillies at ages 2 and 3, a behavior not seen in stable band structures prior to these disastrous disruptions.

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The 1971 Act demands that wild horses “shall be managed at minimal feasible level.” Current Agency management massively violates this part of the Act.

In stable band structures, fillies were protected by older wiser stallions that were often the ages of 10 and older. Fillies were not impregnated by outside stallions until the ages of four and five.

It was because of the Agencies’ mismanagement that growth rates boomed. And with roundups every four years, *they had no chance of recovering*. The Agencies did not understand how to manage these horses that had been wild in our country for hundreds of years prior to the 1971 Act being passed. And they had no incentive to learn about them since they were never in favor of having wild horses on public lands. ISPMB’s current data now proves this, as we will show.

To prove our point: Before we ever knew what was happening, Fred Wyatt, who was head of BLM’s Palomino facility, the first and largest facility for preparing wild horses for adoption, noted early-age pregnancies in 1992. He was raising the red flag back then telling us that 2-year-old fillies were pregnant upon arrival to the facility. This was a relatively new observation he was seeing in wild herds being rounded up and he was extremely disturbed. He brought it to the attention of ISPMB’s president, Karen Sussman, and Mary Ann Simonds, both serving on the BLM’s National Wild Horse and Burro Advisory Board at that time.

Further revelations were related to Karen Sussman by the BLM contractor, Dave Cattoor, who rounded up horses in the Pryor Mountains after their first selective removal around 1992. When he returned the horses to their habitat areas, he witnessed the massive raping of mares by stallions and such chaos that even he was very deeply disturbed. ISPMB believes that these accounts, taken together with later observations, show that repeated roundups and extended holding can significantly alter the natural, healthy behaviors that once characterized truly undisturbed wild herds.

ISPMB began to study herd behavior in 2000 with the acquisition of two intact wild herds not disturbed for 25 and 50 years with the exception of their removal to ISPMB where they were allowed to be wild and free. For the past 25 years, ISPMB has been committed to studying and observing behaviors in these herds. To our knowledge, ISPMB is the only organization that has managed entire intact herds that were essentially untouched by humankind for a half century, giving ISPMB extraordinary insight in understanding what we view as extremely healthy behaviors.

The *last herd* now on public lands that shows these healthy behaviors, in ISPMB’s view, is the Heber Herd in northern Arizona in the Apache-Sitgreaves National Forest. We must save them, and they must be studied. Not only are they living proof of ISPMB’s decades-long work, they must be used as a model to manage the future of our wild horses and burros. This would be the study that the Agencies never conducted in 1980 as the National Academy of Sciences requested them to do. After 50-plus years, it is time to finally understand wild horses as the wildlife species they really are. ■



Determining the Length of Time for a Wild Herd to Stabilize after Roundups

ISPMB Monitors its Gila Herd in Conservation, Comparing Disturbed and Undisturbed Growth Rate and Behavior

ISPMB is currently working on determining how long it takes for its disrupted Gila herd to develop stability, as once experienced by their predecessors. We are noting the following: behaviors, band structures, ages of band stallions, birth rates, death rates, ratio of colts to fillies born yearly, ages of mares or fillies with their first birth, foaling seasons, foaling rates of mares, respectful behaviors by members of the band, and ability to work together for the good of the entire herd.

After eight years of data, ISPMB has noted that the growth rate of this disturbed herd is averaged at 14.38 percent yearly for the past eight years, already lower than the projected 20 percent by WinEquus. They are no longer doubling in population in four years and we expect this to continue as they recover, free from roundups.

We are also noting that as of 2023, several 2-year-old mares were pregnant, delivering foals for the first time at age three. This was noted when younger stallions matured and took mares. In 2023, all family bands had band stallions younger than 10 years, which are considered juveniles. These juvenile stallions were five or six years old.

Out of the four older original band stallions, only one stallion remains with one mare who has never become pregnant. Two of the band stallions were removed as early as the end of 2022 due to their injuries sustained by younger stallions. One older stallion is missing and has never been found in the rugged landscapes they inhabit now.

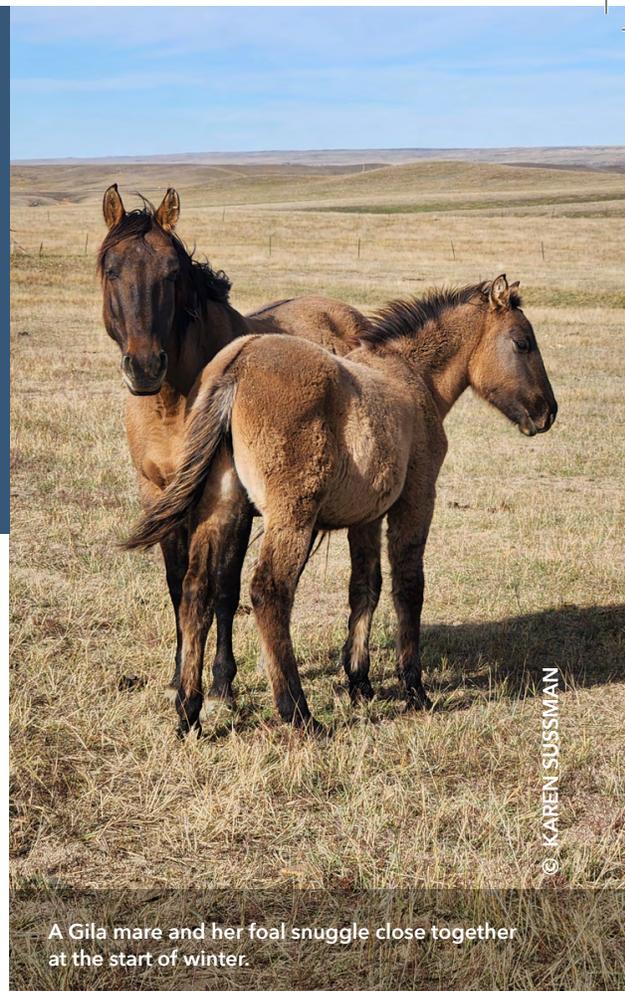
Colt-to-filly births vary from year to year but average nearly 50-50.

It has taken six years for mares to stabilize and stop foaling out of season (late March through July is their usual foaling times).

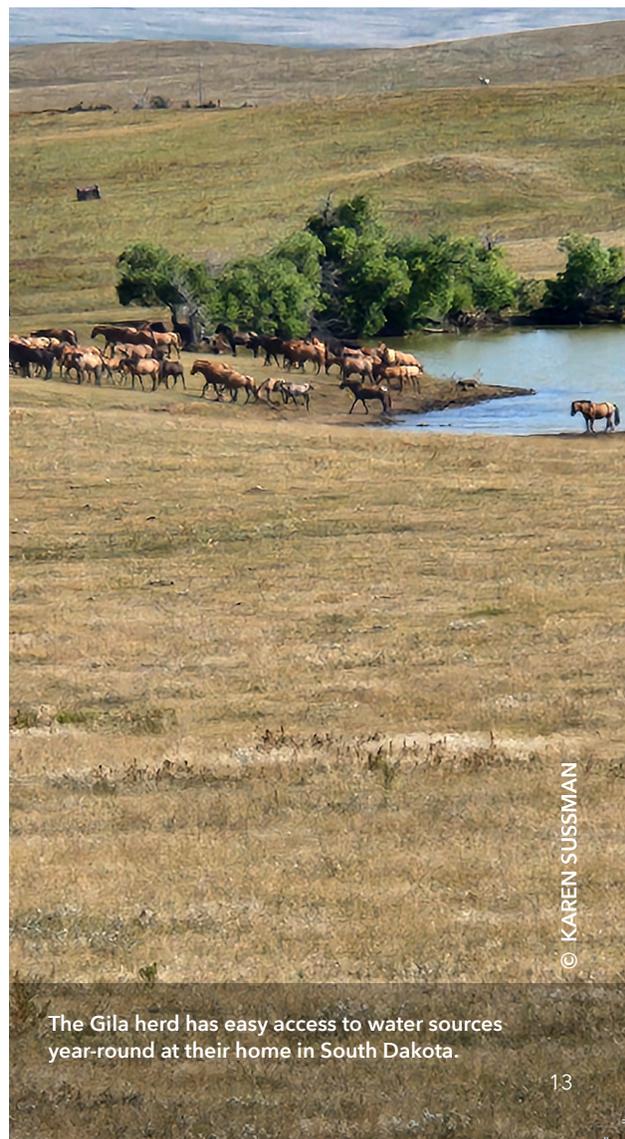
Most importantly, ISPMB believes that, with no further disruptions, the herd's numbers will continue to stabilize and will no longer double every four years, contrary to WinEquus assumptions.

ISPMB's conclusion is that allowing wild herds to stabilize leads to more stable, moderate growth rates over time. In our view, it is the constant disruption of herds, and the lack of opportunity to recover, that leads to elevated growth rates.

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A Gila mare and her foal snuggle close together at the start of winter.



The Gila herd has easy access to water sources year-round at their home in South Dakota.

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ISPMB GROWTH CHART OF DISTURBED GILA HERD

YEAR	HERD NUMBER	PERCENTAGE GROWTH
2017	20	Starting point
2018	24	20%
2019	30	25%
2020	33	10%
2021	39	18.89%
2022	44	12.82%
2023	48	9.09%
2024	51	6.25%
2025	58	13,73%

Average yearly growth rate: 14.38%

ISPMB COMPARISON TO WINEQUUS CHARTS OF DISTURBED HERD GROWTH

YEAR	ACTUAL NUMBER	WINEQUUS PROPOSED NUMBER DOUBLING EVERY FOUR YEARS
2017	20	0
2021	39	40
2025	58	80
2029		160
2033		320

If we look at the above charts and note the first four years of growth with ISPMB's disturbed Gila herd, we could agree with WinEquus that growth rates are 20 percent and they double every four years. But by allowing the herd to recover without roundups, keeping band structures intact with their first and only move in 2018, we are seeing stabilization happening even with younger stallions at the helm. This confirms our understanding that roundups of healthy wild herds cause destruction of the band structures and the natural healthy behaviors of the herds, thus leading to the increase in numbers.

It should be noted that ISPMB's original herd was comprised of 31 horses in 2000. In 2016, the final count was 137 wild horses representing 16 years of growth averaging 9.73 percent yearly. They were an extremely stable herd. And the most important part of this once-stable herd is that *they worked together for the good of the whole herd*.

Finally, since the passage of the Act in 1971, the Agencies have created chaos on public lands for wild horses and are destroying the very natural behaviors of these protected animals that are so prized by the majority of Americans in our country. All based on not understanding wild horses as the wildlife they really are and managing them as public lands cattle or domestic horses.

With the possibility of permanent infertility after the second shot of GonaCon and permanent infertility in as short as three consecutive years with the use of PZP, and the complete mismanagement of wild horses through massive roundups, we know these animals are on the road to extinction unless they can be left alone to recover over time or are not disrupted in the first place, such as with the Heber Herd. ■

Wild horses evolved on the North American continent 60 million years ago.



Chica of the Gila herd

© KAREN SUSSMAN



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These foals are the future of ISPMB's Gila Herd.

Compensatory Reproduction – What it is & Why it is Important

The term “compensatory reproduction” refers to a biological phenomenon where certain species increase their reproductive rate in response to population declines or environmental pressures. According to several scientific articles, compensatory reproduction is a *hypothesis*, and those articles do not determine what causes the increases in populations when certain species’ populations are disrupted, causing declines.

As to wild horses, it is now obvious. ISPMB has looked at herd disruptions and has followed this now for eight years with our Gila Herd.

Simply put, when a population has been stable without disruptions, especially roundups, the natural behaviors are able to flourish. Those natural behaviors are seen in family band stallions that are often 10 years or older before taking a family. There is great respect by the bachelors because of the abilities of the elder family band stallion that achieved his position because of his strength and commitment to his family of mares. Mares need protected by these mighty stallions.

ISPMB has observed this strength in our Gila Herd before disruption in 2017. *These family band stallions exhibited the following phenomenon that university professors have not seen. It is the herd working together for the good of the entire herd.* It was a team approach by all the band stallions in protecting young fillies.

A noted observation was a yearling filly in her first estrus approaching a band of bachelors atop a hill. The bachelors were very interested in her and were excited. A family band stallion, also on top of the hill, observing these interactions, immediately left his family to discipline this filly. She galloped down the hill and stopped, not going back to her natal band. At the bottom of the hill another band stallion left his band and chased the filly back to her family band where she stayed. This filly never became pregnant until she was four years old. Consequently, in this herd, the fillies did not foal until they were four and five years of age-five being a fully physically mature horse.

When populations of wild horses are disrupted by roundups every four years, the stability of the band structures is literally destroyed allowing “teenager” stallions to take mares. These teenagers are aged 5 through 9 in the horse world. When given the opportunity, young stallions will prey upon young mares and impregnate them. As many of our previous articles have articulated, disrupted herds show this distressing behavior of teenagers impregnating fillies at 2 years of age. A phenomenon rarely, if ever, seen in stable populations that have not been rounded up.

So compensatory reproduction in wild horses is nothing more than mismanagement by the Agencies because they don’t understand these animals as the wildlife that they are. ISPMB has been observing our herds since 2000. That is 25 years of experience that no scientist can claim. ■

Why the Heber Herd of Northern Arizona Must Remain Intact

Study Needed to Understand How Stable Populations Limit Their Own Growth



A Heber wild horse family stands together in their snowy forest home.



A band of sure-footed Heber wild horses makes their way up the hillside.



This bachelor family band of four withstands the snowstorm together in the Forest.

The Heber herd has been free of roundups since 2005 representing 20 years. More than likely, they have not been disrupted years before 2005. However, in 2007 an agreed-upon stipulation by the Forest Service and the International Society for the Protection of Mustangs and Burros (ISPMB) stated there would be no removals of wild horses in the areas they were presently found until a Territory plan was completed.

The Heber herd represents a growth rate far under the WinEquus calculations. Using those calculations by year 2024 when they would have doubled again, there should have been 9,600 horses in the forest and by 2025 there would have been 10,782 horses with a 20% increase. Instead, their growth rate is approximately 3%.

The Heber herd completely *destroys the credibility of the WinEquus program due to its stability from roundups over all this time*. Most importantly, the Heber herd shows how healthy, natural behaviors remain intact because *they are free from constant roundups and disruptions of healthy band structures*. The future protection of America's wild horses depends upon this unique Heber herd; otherwise, current management by the Agencies are on a trajectory that could show eventual extermination.

The Agencies (Forest Service and Bureau of Land Management) never studied wild horse herds in 1980 when advised to do so by the National Academy of Sciences (NAS).

While the Agencies, the Department of the Interior (BLM) and the Department of Agriculture (FS) were charged with the management of America's wild horses and burros, the Act, as amended, was specific about the management of these wild animals. The Public Rangelands

Improvement Act of 1978 directed in part that the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) and the National Academy of Sciences (NAS) contract for performance of a research study on wild horses and burros. The report was in partial compliance with the Act and represented the final report on Phase I containing current knowledge and recommended research on wild horses and burros. (1980 "Wild and Free Roaming Horses and Burros: Current Knowledge and Recommended Research" published by the U.S. Department of Commerce, National Technical Information Service.)

Phase I recommended 18 research projects, some of which would require 7 to 10 years of study for valid results. Phase II was published in October 1982 and synthesized the results of completed research on wild horses and burros.

With the final report to Congress due on January 1, 1983, the NAS committee identified five of the 18 projects as having priority for immediate study. Further the NAS final report called for a "long-term equid research program" and an "expanded in-house scientific staff" to provide a solid foundation of scientific data on which to base management decisions. However, the Agencies (Dept. of Agriculture and the Interior Department) felt that no further research would be needed partly due to financial constraints. Quoting the Report to Congress June 1984, *"the most pressing question concerning further research for the Agencies is whether the benefits of increased knowledge and efficiency will justify the cost."*

Actually, this is no surprise as the general attitude of the FS and the BLM was never supportive of wild horses and burros on public lands. Unfortunately, this attitude has been displayed at various times since then. For example, in 1981, Mary Ann Simonds had an interaction with then Director of

the Bureau of Land Management, Robert Burford. She was working on several projects for wild horses and wanted to share her ideas with the Director. He said the following, "Don't waste your time little miss, there won't be any wild horses left in ten years."

Now in the 54th year since the Wild Free-Roaming Horses and Burros Act was signed into law (1971), one glaring study of the 18 proposed research projects has never been completed. This is study No. 16, titled "Conceptual Development of Public Rangeland Management Models." This study was to be the final study after compilation of the other 17 studies and was to serve as the "model" in which to manage wild horses and burros. Had this study been completed, management of wild horses and burros would have been at the "minimal feasible level" as required in the Wild Free-Roaming Horses and Burros Act and far fewer animals would be in holding pastures today. Habitat monitoring to determine excess wild horses and burros, as required by the Act, would have created a healthier ecosystem and finally, the actual costs to complete these studies in 1983 would have been millions upon millions of dollars cheaper than the costs incurred through the program today.

Yet, the Heber Herd may offer the opportunity to do justice for America's wild horses if studied over the next 5-7 years and could truly transform how the Agencies manage these wildlife species. In the long run, millions and millions of dollars will be saved by the American taxpayers by reducing roundups, ceasing storing wild horses (that often have been illegally removed from their rightful lands) in holding pastures. But most importantly, *the true nature of wild horses will finally be preserved for future generations of Americans to enjoy.* ■

Dreamcatcher, pictured in February 2023 with his first band consisting of one mare and her weanling.



Heber band stallion Razor stands watch over one of his foals as it rests in the tall grass.



Knowledge or Lack Thereof Regarding Wild Horses in 1980, Per the National Academy of Sciences (NAS)

Here are some quotes of interest from the NAS Final Report:

“Population increase rates calculated from the BLM and the U.S. Forest Service (USFS) census data average 15 to 20 percent annually for western U.S. horse herds, rates similar to those quoted by these agencies and cited in a number of earlier publications. In some cases, these may be magnified by (a) increasing commitment and proficiency at censusing, (b) increasing visibility as herd sizes increase, and (c) change from fixed-wing to helicopter censuses in the 1970s.”

“In contrast, two authors have projected increase rates with population models that incorporate birth and death rates similar to those published for several herds, and concluded that annual herd increase rates well below 10 percent are probable. Similar calculations with life tables in this report indicate that 15 to 20 percent increase rates can only occur in populations with geometric age distributions with (a) very high reproductive rates, and (b) virtually no mortality.”

“The question of increase rates is central to horse management, and the disagreement cannot be resolved with presently available information. **Research is needed to settle the question.**” *Emphasis added by ISPMB by bolding.*

“Preliminary analysis of the BLM and USFS census data showed: (a) a failure to standardize the season of census, which raised the problem of a seasonal change in numbers due to foaling; (b) an abrupt 88 percent mean increase in horse numbers in the years when helicopter census replaced fixed-wing aircraft census: and (c) less variability in the helicopter counts.”

“The ‘Soil Vegetation Inventory Method’ is commonly used in contemporary range-survey work and for a number of other purposes, including compliance with the wild horse and burro mandates of recent legislation. The Committee reviewed 10 BLM and joint BLM/USFS wild horse capture plans with their accompanying environmental analysis reports (EARS.) Eight reductions were proposed because of problems perceived on range conditions. However, few provided much information on range condition and techniques used to determine it, or on which herbivores (horses, cattle, wildlife) caused the problem.”

In speaking of wild horses’ reintroduction to the North American continent perceived at that time of 11,000 years ago, they stated the following: “A long period of coevolution between their evolutionary predecessors and the vegetation was broken for 11,000 years, which is a brief interval in geologic time.” (*Current information shows horse remains found showing existence of wild horses 5,000 years ago putting them in our Holocene period.*) They continued, “But to our knowledge, no one has produced any evidence that native plant species have lost adaptations to grazing and /or growing pressures.” ■

The only people who are mad at you for speaking the truth are those people who are living the lie.

KEEP SPEAKING THE TRUTH.



Scarlet stands faithfully next to Ina Ohitika. One would think it is her mother.

The Story of Ina Ohitika

This narrative is true, told from the perspective of a wild mare crying out for help

By Karen Sussman

My name is Ina (e-na) Ohitika, (O-he- ta-ka), Lakota for “courageous mother.” I have earned that title ever since the birth of my first foal many years ago. When you finish reading my story you will truly understand the honor in which I carry this name.

The essence of my being, that who I am, will never again exist because I have received a drug, PZP, against my will that has prevented me from ever having a foal again.

Let me start my story from those wonderful days with my family band where, almost yearly, I had a foal to nurture and love, becoming the wonderful “mother mentor” that I am, or should say, was. I was free to make the most important decision in my life, and that was when I wanted to become pregnant again. After all, I followed generations upon generations of mothers before me that knew how important it was to keep our species safe so we could continue our years on earth. My mother told me those past years were beyond my comprehension as we evolved from the times of the Saber-Toothed Tigers and the Woolly Mammoths, long before these two-legged creatures appeared on earth. With this ancient knowledge, my mother assured me that we were designed to continue to survive over eons of time. Part of that survival is having foals, knowing that they will carry on our species. You know, we don’t live as long as elephants or the two-leggeds. Actually, our lives are very short on this earth, but we live a wonderful life of freedom and we, ourselves, limit our numbers when we are left alone and our families remain intact.

“...our lives are very short on this earth, but we live a wonderful life of freedom and we, ourselves, limit our numbers when we are left alone and our families remain intact.”

I’ve been told that giving us this drug will allow us to grow older and with much more weight than if we were carrying our children into our elderly age. To begin with, my mother would be first to tell you that many mares often don’t have foals in their older age. Unless you walked this earth in my “hoof” steps, you would never know how I really feel. Today I am going to share my story. It is a very important story that needs to be told and understood.

MENTORING HELPED ME BE A GOOD MOTHER

I loved spring because the weather was warming and the days were longer. It was a beautiful time too as we mares were preparing to have our foals. We always managed to have our foals in the warmer weather so they could have the best chance at survival. Our stallions protected us from harm and were respectful as to when we wanted to be bred. My mother

continued on p20

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told me of the days when there was no one chasing us to capture us and destroy our family structures. She said under those conditions our population increased at 4 percent. She also cautioned me to stay with her until I was five years old and then I could venture out in the world. By that time, I had enough knowledge from my father and mother which made me a brilliant young mare. When I would go out in the world, I would again begin the most important part of my life, procreation, so that our species would survive over eons of time.

I remember my last foal. She was energetic and kept me moving constantly for the next two weeks while she gained her balance and strength. Although I was tired from childbirth, I have learned over time that these would be the most exhilarating and tiring two weeks of my life. You see, I have been taught to never let my foals out of my sight. But these were also dangerous times for foals, when they are so vulnerable to predators and are so new to the learning process of survival. Thank goodness that my foal also slept a lot during those times, as all newborn foals do, but I never took my eyes off of her. When she was up frolicking about, I was always within feet of her. If anyone tried to approach her, I laid my ears back and let them

know to stay away. She loved this game of "follow the leader" that she thought she made up. She would soon learn that this was no game but an important part of survival.

After two weeks, she would blend into our band and begin playing with other foals. This is when the "game" of chase would slow down and I could concentrate on grazing more, allowing her to explore on her own but always with my watchful eye. The older she became, the more she would explore with the members of our herd but always returned to our family. Under the best of conditions, she would remain with our family until she turned five years of age. I, being the good mother, will nurse her for 11 months or longer, depending when I foaled again. Being my last foal, which I did not realize would be my destiny, she nursed from me for nearly four years.

I could not understand why I couldn't get pregnant again but I was told I received the drug, PZP, which made me permanently infertile after five straight years of use. My friends have told me it took them just four years of use and they no longer could foal. Some mothers, after injected for four years, told me that their foals died on the first day of birth for no apparent reason.

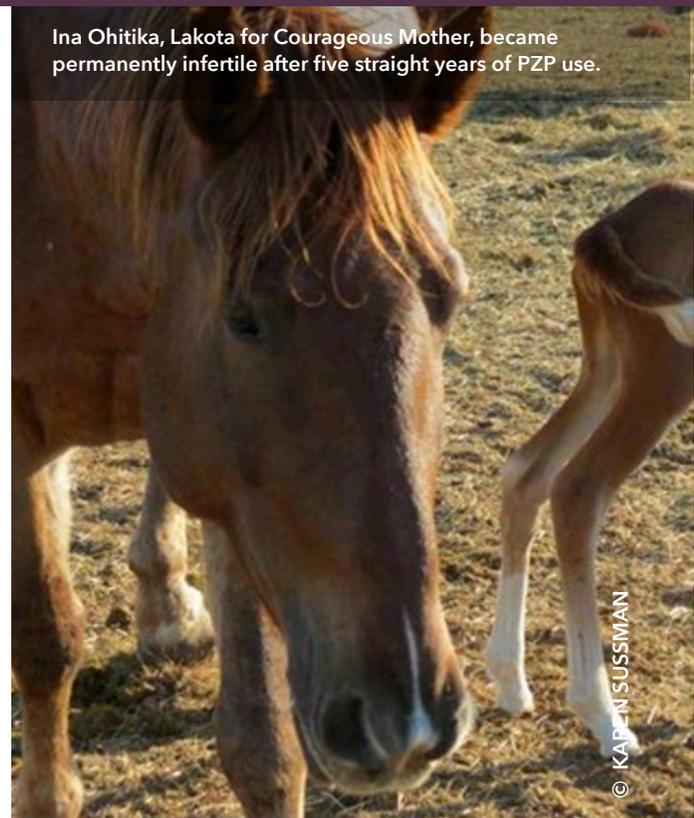
Still not understanding this concept of not becoming pregnant, I now had to take things into my own "hooves" or as the two-leggeds say, "hands." All the young mares, including my daughter, were having foals. I watched with such envy as those little beings came into the world. I was frustrated that I couldn't have a foal.

STEALING A SPRING FOAL

Then early one spring morning, I plotted to take a foal from a young first-time mother. The young mare knew her role but would not defend herself against me because I had stature and was an older mare and commanded respect from her. I swooped in and took the foal with little fight from the unsuspecting mare. Her foal loped off to the tree line where I kept him. He tried to nurse off of me and I encouraged him by nuzzling my nose into his rear and pushing him to my teats. That feeling of having a foal at my side was so exhilarating again. I did my best to have him nurse but I had no milk. For moments, I was in my glory and feeling sublime. Yes, at last, I had a foal again. My life was fulfilled once more.

Then out of nowhere came the two-legged who watched over all of us whom we call Wild Horse Medicine Woman. She knew this was not my foal and we were in a chase together for the next hour. I dodged behind the trees, keeping the foal on the

Ina Ohitika, Lakota for Courageous Mother, became permanently infertile after five straight years of PZP use.



“ Being my last foal, which I did not realize would be my destiny, she nursed from me for nearly four years. ”

There is NO overpopulation of wild horses and burros today.

opposite side of me, away from her. I tried to defend myself by kicking out at her and even charging her, but the two-legged was not afraid, she just kept coming after me. The foal finally tired out. It was at this time that the two-legged came in and swooped up the foal, while he was lying on the ground, and herded him back to his real mother. The two-legged stood there until the foal began to nurse from his real mother. In fact, she stood there until I finally stopped watching and moved away with my family. Although what the two-legged didn't know was that I would someday do this again. My heart was breaking in that I did not have a foal at my side. Didn't the two-legged know that? I guess I made my mark because, after that, every day a two-legged would come and watch me.

We are at a crossroads in the history of America's wild horses and burros. Organizations that promote PZP and wild horse and burro reductions—and receive the public's support—could spell the literal end of the beauty, resilience and future of our herds.

About two weeks later, it happened again. I had a brilliant opportunity to take another foal from an unsuspecting young mare. I was good at stealing now and I made sure that no one was there to see me. Again, I was so nurturing and loving to this foal. I nuzzled her behind and pushed her to nurse from me. Even though I didn't have milk, it felt good.

By early afternoon, the two-legged came out to monitor our herd. When she spied me with another foal, she knew it wasn't mine. She didn't come right away to take the foal but walked around the herd to determine who was without a foal. The foal's real mother was not too far away and easy to detect with milk dripping from her teats.

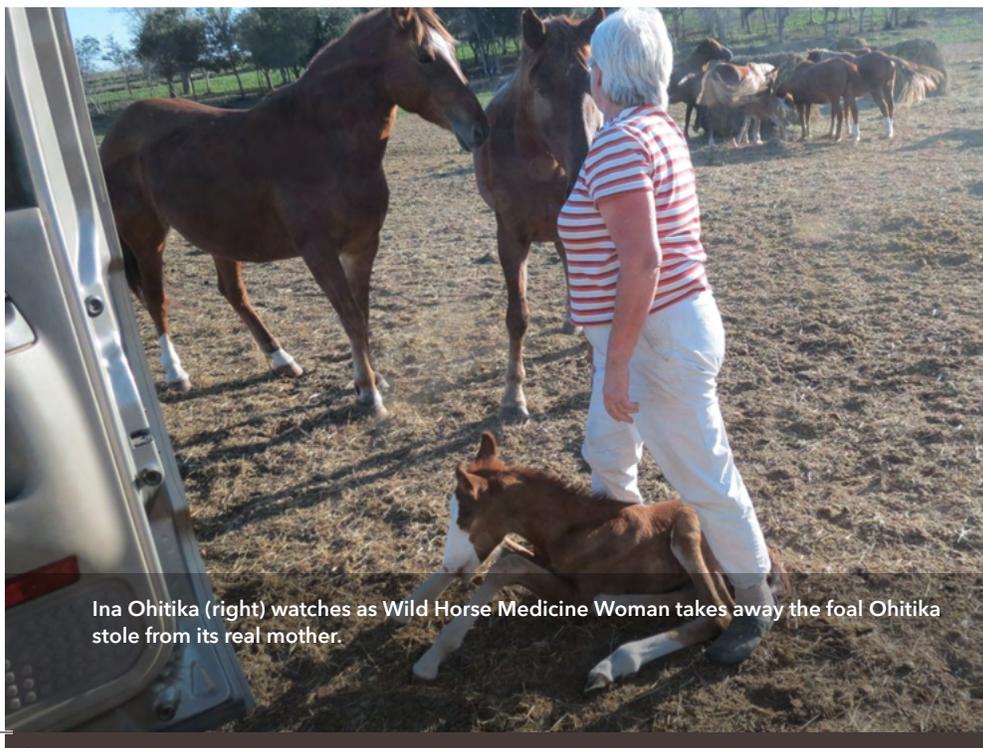
We did another dance again. I was pushing the foal away and trying to escape once again. I would run one way and then quickly turn and go in the opposite direction. There seemed to be no maneuver that I could use to evade the two-legged. I tried fighting again but the two-legged told me that if I kept the foal, the foal would die. It was imperative that I give this foal up. The opportunity came and the two-legged grabbed the foal and pushed it back to its real mother. Again I slinked back into the tree line and watched at a distance. My fighting spirit shrank and my sadness overcame me. I was depressed. I decided to be by myself all day long.

TAKING ANOTHER CHANCE

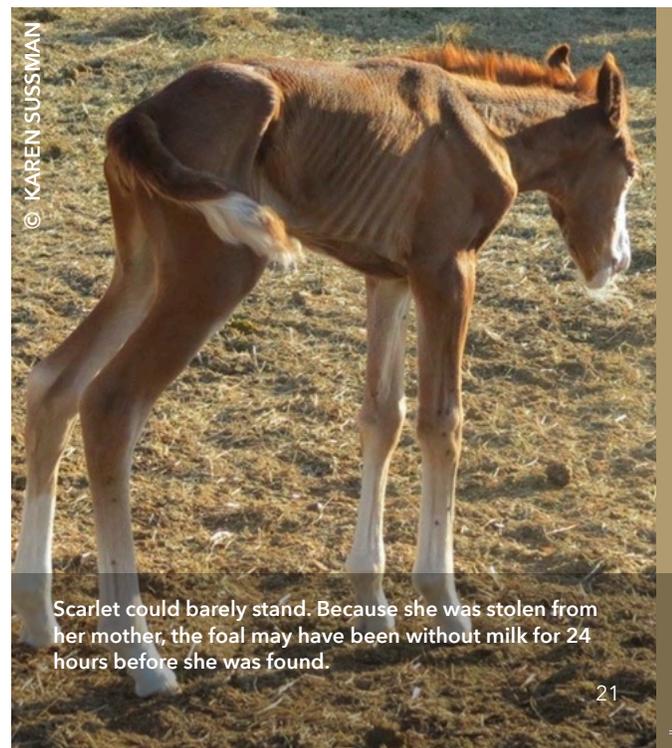
As we moved into the early summer month of June, I decided to take my chances again. I couldn't tolerate seeing all the beautiful foals and their mothers, knowing I was barren.

This time it was early, early morning just before the sun came up. Again, I was successful on my mission. There I was strutting about with a newborn foal at my side. My tail was flying high in the breeze of the morning and the sunlight was creating a sparkle on my coat. I was overcome with the feeling of elation. My life was complete now. The foal was nursing from me

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Ina Ohitika (right) watches as Wild Horse Medicine Woman takes away the foal Ohitika stole from its real mother.



Scarlet could barely stand. Because she was stolen from her mother, the foal may have been without milk for 24 hours before she was found.

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or least trying to nurse even though there was no milk. As the sun rose out of the East, I was grazing but watching carefully so this foal did not stray from me. Yes, I exhibited my greatest mothering techniques only to be dashed once again by this two-legged. This time I did not try to kick or fight as much but I did move away so she couldn't catch "my" foal. It wasn't long before help arrived and a pen was built to put the real mother and foal together to keep them from me. Even with my best skills exhibited trying to keep this foal, the two-legged always seemed to win.



On her way to intensive care in the ranch house, Scarlet rests in the front seat of the truck - too tired and weak to move.

© KAREN SUSSMAN

By July, I decided to take a different tact. I took another foal but his mother stayed right by my side and the foal became confused and began to nurse from both of us. I kept this position for a good part of the day. Yes, there she was again! She noted that there were two of us with one foal. She walked up to me and again tried to explain that this behavior could not continue or there would be plenty of foal deaths which to account for. Her demeanor was that of "understanding" my plight but also being firm. After all, this was foal number four this year. She remained until she was sure the foal's mother would keep her. Of course, I moved away from the foal during this time and pretended to mind my own business. My head hung low and I just stood far away. I think she thought that I would finally give up.

Not so, it was a very hot early September day. The climate was changing and September now had days that were in the high 90s unlike the frosty days of years past. It seemed the two-legged was not doing her daily visits like before. She probably thought foaling season was over! It was still a great day to have a foal and this new mother did just that. There was a beautiful sorrel filly with a bald face. Of course, she didn't look anything like me because I was solid colored and much darker. Yet, I spied this little foal and took her for most of the day. I was the greatest Mom to her. I loved her, nuzzled her, and pushed her to find milk. By the end of the day, this little filly was down and became too weak to stand. I nudged her withers with my hoof but she wouldn't stand. She could barely lift her head. All day without milk at these temperatures was just too much for this foal.

FOAL CARRIED AWAY

Then the two-legged appeared and quickly left again only to bring in the farm truck. She walked right up to me with her hands on her hips and for the first time, I didn't fight. I stood there watching with more sadness than anyone could ever

know - not only the sadness of losing another foal but knowing that this foal may never get up. I watched as the two-leggeds lifted the foal into the truck and carried her away. This filly would not be reunited with her mother but ended up in the living room of the ranch house where she received intensive care.

When the two-legged came out again to see me many weeks later, she sat with me and poured her heart out to me. She wanted me to know that the little filly survived and was named Scarlet. The two-legged began to cry as she told me this story. Scarlet will never know what a horse family will be like except for those other orphaned foals that she grew up with. She will never experience having a foal or understand how important survival of the species is. She would never have that mentoring by powerful mares, like me, that was so

In 1974, there were nearly 60,000 wild horses and burros on public lands when the Wild-Free Roaming Horses and Burros Act passed. The law stated that they "were fast disappearing from the American scene." Why, then, does the BLM consider there to be an overpopulation today when fewer than 60,000 wild horses and burros remain on public lands?

We are the oldest and most knowledgeable advocacy group in the United States.

important for her continuing existence and important for species protection for the next eons of years. She admired my wisdom and my strength and fortitude. She wished things could be different for me. She said that my glorious wisdom learned from ages past, destroyed by this drug, will never again be passed onto future generations. She said that humans could not, in any way, make sound decisions on who should and should not breed like my herd did. She acknowledged that my wisdom, honed over the ages, was the perfect acumen in making those determinations.

As her tears were flowing down her face, she promised me that this would never happen again to another mare. That my story will be told and changes will come before it is too late. She told me that she has witnessed what my mother told me in my early years about population growth; *when we are left alone and our families are kept intact*, our population is stable and grows at a rate in the single percentage digits, not the 20 percent that the BLM touts.

She said there is **no overpopulation** of wild horses. She said long before I was born, in 1974, there were nearly 60,000 wild horses and burros on public lands. These counts were visual counts and could be underestimated by 50 percent. She alluded to the fact that there could really have been far more than 60,000 wild horses and burros at that time. She reiterated the importance of the 1971 law which said “wild horses and burros were fast disappearing from the American landscape.” After all, at the turn of the 20th century, there were at least 2 million wild horses roaming in 17 states west of the Mississippi. She said, why would two-leggeds want to limit our population when our gene pool almost disappeared? Especially when there were 60,000 wild horses and burros which were considered threatened and endangered at that time in 1971. She told me that the domestic horse industry does not have the beautiful genetic diversity that we in the wild have. *She said this is because the two-leggeds are in charge of breeding.* She was adamant that using this drug decreases the genetic diversity of the wild horses and requires horses from other areas to be transplanted into these areas. This disrupts and changes the beautiful horse cultures of the different herd areas. **She said, only we should make the decision who breeds and who does not...**

As she wiped her tears dry, she made a promise to me that the TRUTH will be told! She assured me that changes will come from speaking this TRUTH.

Please help ISPMB with a donation to bring the truth forward. Please share my story so others do not have to ever endure pain and suffering as I do daily. Please tell everyone, there is NO OVERPOPULATION. Remind them that when our herds are left alone and our families are left intact, we grow at very slow rates!

Yours in truth,
Ina Ohitika ■



Scarlet, now vibrant, with Auntie Clare Miles, who helped with her rescue in 2015.

ISPMB is fighting for the survival of America's wild horses and burros.



Native American Words of Wisdom

By Paul Crane Tohlakai

I marvel at the tenacity and resilience of the horses, particularly the free-roaming. Fall and winter have come once again. The month of November was designated as American Indian Heritage Month to “celebrate and honor the rich cultures, traditions, and histories of Native American tribes, their accomplishments, and contributions to the United States.” It was also the Month of Military Family. Both are about human beings.

Native tradition is to acknowledge other life forms that contribute to ongoing survival of the fittest. Horses have proven that resilience for millions of years—to not just survive but to contribute and impact human history by building nations in warfare, transportation, agriculture, trade, and cultural development. They, including dogs, birds and other animals, are the unsung heroes. If not for them, progress as we know would not be.

Our continued failure to resonate with animal rights may mean our failure as Caretakers of Mother Earth and inhabitants.

During this seasonal time of the year, ceremonies are done to celebrate life with the horse in gratitude. They are honored with prayer blessings and good care for the oncoming winter months. They do teach us survival skills, much like other wildlife. Their songs are sung in rituals for their great connection to the powers of nature.

More than ever now, there’s a great need to reconnect to what once was with horses. A time may come when we need them to survive. We must listen for they do speak in admonishment, the wild ones. ■

Paul Crane Tohlakai is a member of ISPMB’s Council Circle. In his column, he brings the Native American perspective to each issue of our magazine. Paul is a full-blooded Diné (Navajo) from Pinon, Arizona. Among his many accomplishments, Paul is an Indigenous spokesperson for saving North American bison, mustangs, and sacred sites. His major causes include cultural preservation, protection of the environment and redemptive movements. He is an advisor to ISPMB about the Native perspective.



University of South Dakota Awards Marketing Grant to ISPMB

ISPMB was so pleasantly surprised to be awarded a grant this fall from the University of South Dakota (USD), located in Vermillion, South Dakota, to assist with marketing. The grant came through the Coyote Business Consulting Group, a student-centered initiative at the USD Beacom School of Business.

The program helps South Dakota businesses stay competitive by connecting student teams and faculty advisors with companies to solve their key challenges. ISPMB requested assistance with competitive analysis, strategic planning, social media and marketing, and fundraising. "It was a stimulating experience," said ISPMB President Karen Sussman. "We are so grateful for the students' and faculty's participation in assisting our organization. They did an outstanding job!"

ISPMB hosted the students and faculty on November 4, providing an exhilarating and intimate experience interacting with our Gila Herd. It was a day to remember as the entire event was videotaped and will be used to create a marketing video to help ISPMB promote our organization and our efforts.

We thank the following for a job well done:

Emily Quinn – Faculty Advisor and Instructor of Marketing, USD Beacom School of Business

Chelsea Limoges – Wayfinding/Coyote Business School Director, Industry Engagement Coordinator, and USD Chaperone

Gabriel Wolff – Student and Producer

Sabun Dhital – Student and Production Assistant, and Logistics/Technical Expert

Kara Mass – Student, Art Director, and Graphic Designer

Eric Douglas – Videographer and Photographer.

On Nov. 12, 2025, the team delivered a poster presentation and exhibit showing the video at the Holiday Inn in Sioux Falls, South Dakota, culminating the team's two months of dedicated and productive work.

On behalf of ISPMB, we thank everyone and are most grateful for your wonderful support! ■



USD team prepares to meet ISPMB horses. Pictured (L-R) are Chelsea Limoges, Gabriel Wolff, Sabun Dhital, Kara Mass with photographer Eric Douglas in background. *Karen Sussman photos*



Pictured (L-R) Gabriel Wolff, Eric Douglas, Karen Sussman, Sabun Dhital, Kara Mass and Chelsea Limoges. *Eric Douglas photo*

Brady ‘The Wonder Horse’ Celebrates 35th Birthday

Another ISPMB Adoption Success

In 1999, a wonderful couple from Waddell, Arizona adopted another mustang named Brady. Rob Puckett and Anita Bruner were known to save animals in need. They already had adopted mustangs Rio, Desi and Cissy – and then came Brady! He was gelded and hailed from Nevada.

In the years 1995 through 2000 no wild horse or burro went to slaughter in Arizona because of ISPMB’s efforts to save them and find homes for them. We are thrilled to report this special horse named Brady is celebrating his 35th birthday. According to his vet, he is as fit as a fiddle!

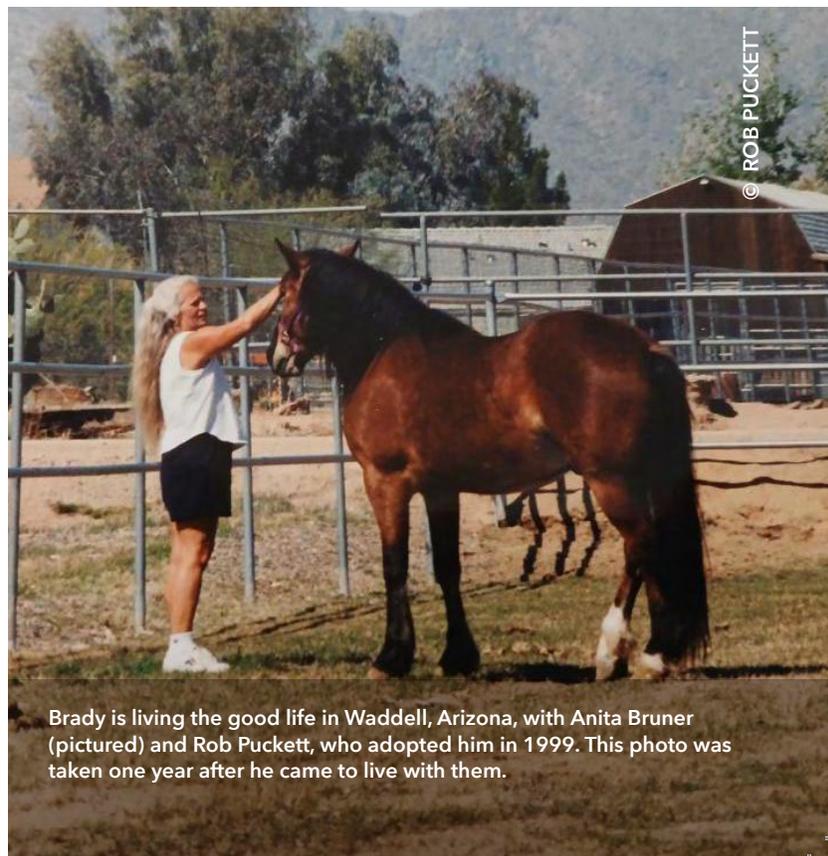
You can imagine why when you know his caretakers Anita and Rob. They not only caretake for mustangs but they do their fair share in saving feral dogs and cats.

Brady has a life of leisure and a green pasture in the arid deserts of Arizona. According to Rob and Anita, Brady determines his own lifestyle. He has lost his partners over the years and has been a solo horse for two years now.

It is such a great feeling to know the great success ISPMB’s “Operation Rescue” has been. We started the program in 1990 and ended it in 2000 with our move to South Dakota. We thank Rob and Anita for giving Brady and all their mustangs a great home. ■



Brady, who turned 35 in 2025, enjoys fresh green grass at his home in the Arizona desert.



Brady is living the good life in Waddell, Arizona, with Anita Bruner (pictured) and Rob Puckett, who adopted him in 1999. This photo was taken one year after he came to live with them.



Safeguarding their Future

A gift to the wild horses and burros in your will or trust will help ensure the safeguarding of their future. Your name will be inscribed on our donor wall at the "Garden of Hope" at our Heritage CENTER.

We are extremely grateful to all of our members who have notified us of their intent to remember our wild horses and burros. This Lasting Legacy will be forever remembered as visitors tour our up-and-coming CENTER.

© KAREN SUSSMAN

We remember our members who have passed.

David R. Belding

ISPMB's esteemed Council member

Glen Savage

His memory honored by his wife, Beryl Cole

Jane Searight

ISPMB's long-standing monthly donor

John Skurat

ISPMB's long-standing monthly donor



© WALLY JARRATT

GIFT AN ACRE OF LAND \$2,500

Giftng an Acre of Land assures that our wild horses will be running free and assures your name will be inscribed on our donor wall as a founding member of the International Wild Horse and Burro Heritage CENTER.

Spirit of the ANCIENTS

SPONSORSHIP PROGRAM



Spirit of the Ancients

**ISPMB manages an extremely rare Spanish herd of wild horses.
Your sponsorship will help us keep them running free!**

Become a part of the sponsorship program with the International Society for the Protection of Mustangs and Burros (ISPMB), the oldest wild horse and burro organization in the United States.
Your sponsorship helps with the care of our Gila herd and supports ISPMB's conservation goals.

Sponsor a wild horse \$150/year



Sponsor a harem stallion, mare, foal, bachelor or stallion and receive a certificate with a photo of your horse and the history of the gila Herd.

Sponsor a Mare and Foal \$500/year



Sponsor this beautiful mare and her foal showing their close bond and follow them as the foal grows. Receive a certificate with their photo. This makes a wonderful gift that someone you love is sure to cherish.

Sponsor a Wild Horse Band \$1,000/year



Receive a certificate featuring a unique band from the Gila Herd. You'll also receive an 8x10" colored photo along with the herd's history.

Sponsor a Herd \$5,000/year



Receive a certificate, an 8x10" colored photo and a three-day vacation viewing, photographing and interacting with the herds. Your name will be inscribed on our donor wall as a founding member of our International Wild Horse and Burro Heritage Center.

Join our Spirit of the Ancients sponsorship program. To donate:

VISIT OUR SPONSORSHIP PAGE:
<https://ispmb.org/sponsor-a-horse/>

MAIL DONATION TO:
International Society for the Protection
of Mustangs and Burros
P.O. Box 435, Rapid City, SD 57709-0435

Ways You Can Help

ISPMB's Gila Herd – Keep Them Running Free

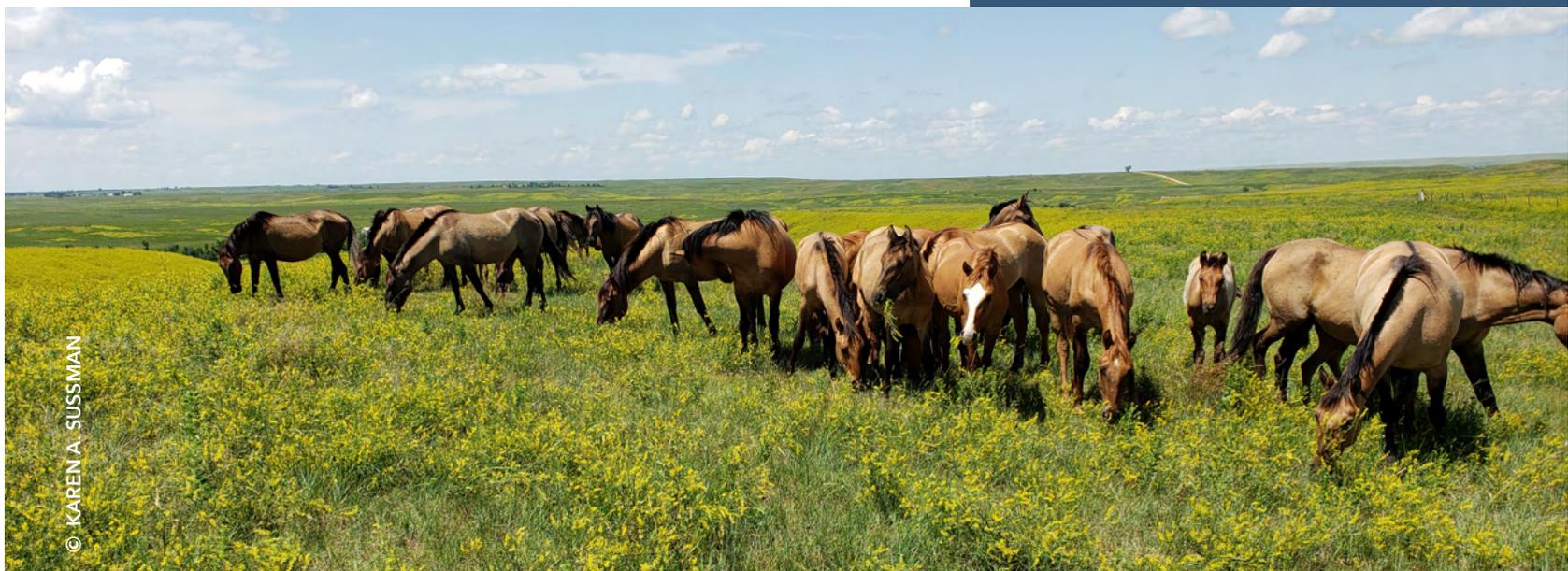
Supporting ISPMB is so very important. We are the only major wild horse organization that is adamantly opposed to the use of birth control on wild horses and burros. We know that with continued use it causes permanent sterility in horses and burros in as short as three consecutive years of dosing.

We are the only organization that has studied wild herd behaviors of horses that haven't been captured in up to 50 years before coming to ISPMB.

We know what is needed to transform how wild horses are managed on public lands thus protecting these animals and guaranteeing their survival.

Ways to donate:

- Visit our "Spirit of the Ancients" page and sponsor a horse, mare and foal, band or herd.
- Become a sustaining member and donate monthly.
- Gift an Acre of land.
- Visit our back cover and see the areas of giving from \$5 to \$50,000.
- Most importantly, please remember us in your will. Your lasting legacy and name will be remembered on the wall of donors at our interpretive site. We hope to secure property within the next year.



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How to Save Public Lands Wild Horses and Burros

Understanding the plight of our wild horses and burros is the best defense. We encourage you to read our magazine and share our magazine with your neighbors and friends. Knowledge is the key to their freedom so share your wisdom with as many people as you can.

Be prepared to contact your members of Congress if we ask you. Email is the fastest and most reliable option, though postcards and letters are also effective. ■

“ Understanding the issues is key to the preservation of our wild horses and burros. ”



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Make a Difference & Give Today to Save Our Wild Horses and Burros

ARE YOU PUTTING YOUR DOLLARS TO THE BEST USE? 25 YEARS OF UNDERSTANDING WILD HERD BEHAVIORS HAS LED ISPMB TO KNOW HOW BEST TO MANAGE WILD HORSES.

YOUR DONATION TODAY WILL HELP US TO BRING THIS MESSAGE FORWARD!



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Your support is critical

to the future of all wild horses
and burros in our country. Please
help us in our fight to bring the
truth forward that there is no
overpopulation of wild horses
and transform how these animals are
managed on public lands.

**We are so grateful
for your support.**



We Protect Your Privacy

We do not sell or trade your name to anyone. This has been ISPMB's practice since our inception.

Your Generosity Helps the Horses!

WE CAN PUT ANY SIZE DONATION TO WORK:

- \$5 Carrots for one horse*
- \$18 Small bale of alfalfa for one horse*
- \$30 Senior feed for our elders*
- \$150 Large bale of hay**
- \$150 Sponsor a horse for a year*
- \$500 Sponsor a mare and foal for a year*
- \$1,000 Sponsor a band for a year*
- \$5,000 Sponsor a herd for a year*
- \$50,000 ... Feed Gila herd for a year***

**Feeds an average horse for approximately a month*

***Become a lifetime member of ISPMB*



ISPMB's Gila herd

Layout | Design | Print



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