

7-24-93

Dedicated to:

Protection & Preservation
of America's Wild Equine,

Service to adopters,

Public and adopter education

WILD HORSE SURVEY
SURPRISE RESOURCE AREA
July 21-24, 1993

BOARD OF DIRECTORS

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For the four day period indicated above, four members of the American Mustang and Burro Association, Inc., Robin Hayes, Ann Dickson, Jason Randall and George Berrier, participated in a survey of wild horse herds and habitat in the Surprise Resource Area. The survey was limited to four Herd Management Areas, Bitner HMA, Nut Mountain HMA, Wall Canyon HMA and High Rock East of Canyon Home Range.

Our objectives were to determine as nearly as possible the actual numbers of horses in each HMA, their condition, the condition of forage and the availability of water.

George W. Berrier Jr.
Chief Executive Officer

On July 21, 1993, accompanied by Bill Dragt of the BLM, George Berrier and Jason Randall surveyed all four HMA's from the air in a fixed wing Cessna 210 provided by the BLM. We left from the Cedarville airstrip and flew ESE to High Rock Canyon, where we then flew a quartering pattern over High Rock East of Canyon Home Range, followed by Wall Canyon HMA, Nut Mountain HMA and finally Bitner HMA. We aborted the flight after only a few minutes examination of Bitner, due to Bill Dragt's airsickness.

Advisory Panel

Michael Martin Murphey
National Honorary Spokesperson

Kevin O'Neal, DVM

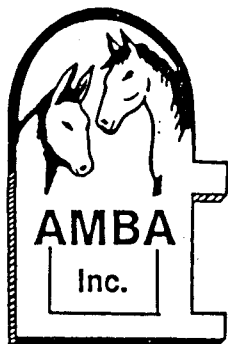
Thomas Buckle, Atty.

Visibility was excellent and we were able to locate wild horse bands with relative ease. It is possible that we may have missed a few horses, but with four observers it is likely that we saw a very high percentage of the horses in the area.

Our counts from the air are as follows:

- High Rock E of Canyon - 58
- Wall Canyon - 35
- Nut Mountain - 28
- Bitner - 6

It is pertinent to note that the six horses we saw in Bitner HMA do not represent any kind of total for this HMA. They are simply the number we saw in the five minutes or so before we aborted the flight and headed back to Cedarville. The topography of the Bitner HMA is such that one would expect horse numbers to be fairly low, however.



American Mustang
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Wild Horse Survey
Surprise Resource Area

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On July 22, 1993, accompanied by Denny Ellerman, BLM range rider, and Bill Dragt, our group, Robin Hayes, Ann Dickson, Jason Randall and George Berrier, on horseback, traversed about 1/3 of the Wall Canyon HMA. We saw several small bands of 3 and 4 horses and one group of 21, for a total of 46 horses. We also saw 3 antelope and 3 mule deer.

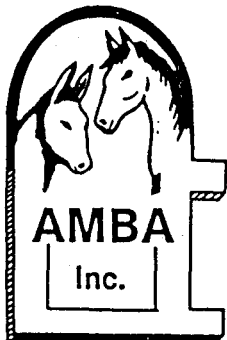
The reader will note that our observation on the ground produced sightings of 11 more horses in this area than we had seen from the air the day before. There are several possible explanations, including the relatively remote likelihood that we missed that many from the air. More realistic probabilities are related to the mobility of the horses and the likely migration of some horses back and forth between High Rock East of Canyon and Wall Canyon. Migration between Wall Canyon and Nut Mountain is also possible.

On July 23, 1993, the same group toured the high ground by horseback on the northwestern slopes of Nut Mountain. This is the same area in which we had spotted horses by air. On the ground we observed 26 horses, 2 fewer than we had seen from the air in this HMA.

On July 24, 1993, Robin Hayes, Ann Dickson, Jason Randall and George Berrier trailered horses to Stevens Camp and from there went by horseback down Grassy Canyon to its juncture with High Rock Canyon and then down High Rock Canyon to Mahogany Creek. On the return to Stevens Camp Robin Hayes climbed up the west slope to the upper plateau, while the rest of us returned the way we had come until we reached Grassy Canyon. We then went up to the western high ground and joined up with Robin.

On this day we saw a band of 6 horses drinking from the stream at the bottom of Grassy Canyon just before it joins High Rock Canyon. Those horses ran up the slope to the western high ground, which is the Little High Rock Home Range. Later, on the return trip we spotted two more horses on a slope in Little High Rock Home Range. We saw one deer that day.

All the horses we saw were in excellent condition, with good weight and shiny coats. We saw only four foals altogether, 3 in Wall Canyon HMA and 1 in Nut Mountain HMA. There were a few yearlings and several apparent two year olds, but the preponderance of horses were adults.



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Condition and quantity of forage is good. Water is everywhere, that is for an area which is essentially high desert. In many places springs produce streams which feed into catch basins and then flow on beyond that tank to another $\frac{1}{4}$ mile down the slope. There is considerable evidence of deer and antelope activity at most water holes in Wall Canyon HMA and Nut Mountain HMA, as well as along the creeks in Grassy Canyon and High Rock Canyon.

George W. Berrier Jr.
Chief Executive Officer

It would be presumptuous in the extreme to purport that in the space of four days one has become sufficiently expert to pass judgment on the management of resources in this area without fear of contradiction. I do, however, have some prior knowledge of the area as the wild horse representative on the Modoc/Washoe Environmental Stewardship Steering Committee.

Advisory Panel

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National Honorary Spokesperson

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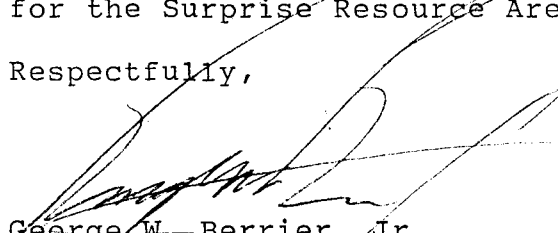
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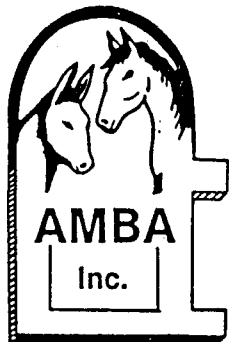
This very up close and personal little trip, which included about 65 miles on horseback, has served to reinforce my opinion that the BLM office in Cedarville, which has responsibility for the Surprise Resource Area, has done and can be expected to continue to do a very good job of managing its resources properly, and specifically to the benefit of the wild horse population. Although the numbers we saw were somewhat fewer than the BLM's 1993 projections, it is significant that we found no evidence of severe winter kill, which, of course, has been a very real problem in some other areas.

With the condition of the horses, the quantity and condition of the forage and the availability of water, it can be anticipated that these horses will winter well and will probably produce a pretty good foal crop in the spring.

I see no reason to object to removal of sufficient numbers of horses to reach appropriate management levels for each herd area, although I doubt that the number thus to be removed will approach the numbers anticipated by the BLM as expressed in its Environmental Assessment for the Surprise Resource Area, dated June 22, 1993.

Respectfully,


George W. Berrier, Jr.
GWB/ar



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