

FOAL Newsletter

Gather Recap

The McCullough Peaks bait trap gather concluded on March 9, 2024. A total of 39 horses were gathered and relocated to the Rock Springs Wild Horse holding facility. More information about adoption will be released as soon as it is available.

FOAL understands that the BLM is mandated to keep the wild horse population within established appropriate management levels (AML's). It is also our considered opinion that the best way to maintain AML in the McCullough Peaks Wild Horse Herd Management Area (HMA) is to maintain consistent adherence to a strict, recommended schedule for administering PZP to the mares in the HMA. Unfortunately, in 2022 due to a variety of reasons, several mares were not inoculated with PZP in a timely fashion. As a result, more foals were born in 2023 (12).

FOAL continues to be committed to assist the BLM with their use of PZP in any possible and practical way that we are able. It is our strong recommendation that the PZP program be given full-scale priority moving forward.

FOAL also understands that by the BLM definition of "adult horse", any foal that remains within the herd on January 1 automatically is classified as an "adult horse". Like it or not, that is the current BLM system, and the wild horse managers are mandated to operate within the system.

The bait trap gather, as administered this year, did not go as planned. It proved to be expensive, labor-consuming, and emotionally stressful for the managers. It raised the ire of wild horse advocates. And, it tragically resulted in the death of one horse. It is FOAL's sincere hope that improved bait trap management will be observed moving forward.

An accurate assessment of the horse population this coming Spring will likely reveal a clearer picture of the population count. We understand that the EA stipulates that the goal is to bring the herd count to 140 adult horses. Accordingly, another, smaller gather may be needed to bring the herd to AML during next fall and winter.

As always, we thank you for your continued support. Feel free to reach out to the executive director: foal2005@outlook.com.

Heather Green, FOAL Executive Director

A Perfect Animal

Working as an outfitter, Sam Kesler has had plenty of opportunity to get to know horses. His outfit has 90 head of horses, including mustangs. Sam first had a chance to train a mustang when he was working on the 7D ranch. They wanted him to make a trip to the Honor Farm in Riverton to adopt a couple of mustangs for the ranch. Sam trained one of the two mustangs and fell in love. It wasn't long after, and he decided he wanted one of his own.

When asked what he loved about mustangs, Sam had a lot to say. "I would stress that they are actually physically superior to a domestic horse because of natural selection." He went on to explain about training mustangs. First, he "established trust...gave them a gentle touch, as light as he can be but as firm as he needs to

be.” Once trust is established, Sam says mustangs are very good animals to work with. In his current job as an outfitter, Sam runs horses and mules in the mountains, almost exclusively. Sam thinks one of the best attributes of the mustangs is their physical prowess. In his experience, mustangs are more sure-footed, require a little less food and water, and per body size, they are 10-15% stronger than a domestic horse, and they are less easily spooked in the wild. Sam says you have to pay a little more attention when training them as they can be a little stubborn. However, they don’t get sick nearly as often as domestic horses. He also says mustangs’ feet, the hoof wall itself, is infinitely stronger than a domestic horse; it’s much closer to a mule’s foot. Additionally, Sam says mustangs are less susceptible to diseases, and their joints are stronger. They are perfect animals for mountain use.



Pictured here is Sam’s employee and best friend, Austin Kennedy, riding Sadie with 3-year-old mustang and pack horse, Apache. Photo by Sam Kesler.

Sadie, Sam’s mustang, was first acquired by a gal directly from the BLM. After owning her for a year, she sent Sadie to work with Spencer Dominick, an accomplished horse trainer. Sam first met Sadie after she had been training with Spencer for about a month. Sam took Sadie for a ride, fell in love, and communicated with the owner, to establish that he was genuine about wanting to work with Sadie, and give her a good life. When Sam adopted Sadie, her brand indicated that she was 7 years old, but after vet checking, her age was determined to be closer to 3. Sadie is now 11 years old, and “she’s absolutely incredible,” according to Sam.

Adopting a mustang has many rewards. For Sam, it’s “a feel-good thing. There can be a stigma in the horse community with mustangs perceived as being lesser animals for some reason. The feel-good thing happens when taking one of those [lesser animals], and having it perform for you as well as or better than a domestic horse, knowing that many other people in the horse community think less of them. In my opinion, they are better.”

Story by Heather Green

Topa: An Ambassador for the Wild Horses

Born in the beautiful high desert of Wyoming’s McCullough Peaks, Topa was gathered in late 2009, put up for adoption, and became part of my equine family soon afterward. I consider her the mustang ambassador of our ranch.



In 2014, she was scheduled to make her television debut on a Billings, Montana news station, starting with an obstacle course demonstration. With the film rolling, I quickly learned that Topa had no interest in showing off all the marvelous tricks she had learned. She refused to be haltered. As my mind raced over what to do next, Topa came forward and stood at my shoulder, with eyes fixed directly on the camera. It suddenly became clear what she had in mind. I felt the overwhelming need to talk about Friends of a Legacy, whose mission is to preserve and protect the mustangs still living in the wild. This was Topa’s intent all along! She was finally able to fulfill her ambassador role of educating the public about the

wild horses’ plight in front of thousands of viewers.

Story and photo by Michaele Dimock

Kiamichi – Along the Road Oft Travelled

One day while visiting the northern side of the McCulloch Peaks HMA (Herd Management Area), I spotted a lone horse. I was quite surprised because horses had not been in this particular area for a number of years, even though at one time numerous harems roamed the area. But, with drought years and reservoirs drying, they'd all left and are presently living in the southern grazing areas of the HMA where water sources are available.



Kiamichi is one of the 39 horses who was removed from the McCullough Peaks during the 2023/2024 bait trap gather. Photo of Kiamichi taken by his favorite watering hole.

As I moved in for a closer look to see if the horse was domestic or actually one of the areas mustangs, I discovered it was “Kiamichi”, a young mustang stallion of approximately 7 years. Of course, I told myself, he was probably just out looking for mares. It was time that he found a girl for himself. So, finding him there was not that surprising, as finding him at that particular waterhole. So, I decided to mark down Kiamichi’s travels. He made the trip many times closely following the same route to and fro.

The watering hole, that definitely seemed to be his destination, held interesting family history for him. Of course, he didn’t know that, but the area just happened to be his maternal and paternal great- grandparents’ home range. He wasn’t born there, nor did he frolic there as a foal. Thus, it made me question...do horses also possess the innate behavior about home ranges, as other animal species do, which help them find their way along their ever-so-long migratory routes from summer to winter range? He certainly was traveling religiously the same routes as his great-grandparents traveled.

We all know that horses move about in their grazing areas to catch the best forages for the seasons and also available water sources, but maybe, just maybe, their instincts do go a bit ‘deeper’. They certainly did for Kiamichi!

Story and photo by Phyllis Preator

Wild Horses at the Park County Library



Photos by Heather Green, from left to right: Bettye and Marshall Dominick with mustangs, Chinook and Fremont; Michaelae teaches the kids; Bobby Holder lends an assist to make sure all the kids get to see the photos.

In February, the Cody Conservation District invited FOAL to give a youth presentation about wild horses. Around 30 kids signed up to listen to our own Michaelae Dimmock teach about horse behavior. Marshall and Bettye Dominick were also able to bring a couple of mustangs to the library for the kids to see in real life. If you or someone you know would like FOAL to do a presentation, please send your request to foal2005@outlook.com.

FOAL Welcomes Two New Board Members

After serving 7 years and 4 years respectively, Mary Scuffham (former board President) and Buzzy Hassrick (former board Secretary) retired from the FOAL board. In January, Friends of a Legacy welcomed new members Ron Blanchard and Scott Moore to the board. Additionally, Hap Ridgway and Ally McIver stepped into new roles as board President and Secretary respectively.



Scott Moore was born and raised in Cody, Wyoming. After graduating from Cody high school in 1974, Scott went on to attend the University of Wyoming for his undergraduate work in animal science, and later to Kansas State University Veterinary School where he graduated in 1983 with a DMV. After school, Scott returned to Wyoming, where he has practiced veterinary medicine for the past 40 years. Scott is married to his first-grade sweetheart, has two grown children, and four grandchildren. In his spare time, Scott enjoys hunting and fishing in the great outdoors.

Ron Blanchard, born and raised in Port Arthur, Texas, came to Wyoming in the mid 1970's as a rodeo cowboy after practicing his trade as a pipeline welder. As a member of the Professional Rodeo Cowboy Association, he rode bareback horses for fifteen years. In 1975, he worked on the Alaskan pipeline on the North Slope. The beauty and wildness of Wyoming called him to settle in Cody. Ron, his brother Rick and another friend started Wyoming River Trips in 1978. Ron has also worked for the Wyoming Game and Fish Wolf Program tracking, monitoring and collaring Northwest Wyoming wolves. He is married to Cathy and has a grown son, Jake, and two grandsons. His family enjoys horseback riding, snowshoeing, backcountry hiking and searching for desert rock art.



Interested in Adopting a McCullough Peaks Mustang?

Here's a basic breakdown of the steps to take to adopt a wild horse:

- Review the criteria and complete an application for adoption. Both can be found at: <https://www.blm.gov/programs/wild-horse-and-burro/adoptions-and-sales/adoption-program> After your application is submitted, expect about a week for processing time before receiving your notification of approval. Once approved, your application is valid for one year.
- Keep an eye on the "Bureau of Land Management – Wyoming" Facebook page. That is where the online corral adoption dates will be published.
- Once the online corral opens for the McCullough Peaks horses, people with approved adoption applications will be able to place bids for horses they are interested in adopting. Minimum bids start at \$125. The highest bidder will win, and if they choose not to adopt the horse, then the offer goes to the next highest bidder.
- After winning the bid, you will be asked to pick up your horse. Expect that within 6 months of adopting the animal, you will receive a site visit to inspect your accommodations for the adopted horse. If anything is found to be incompatible with expectations, the horse may be removed from your care, or you may be offered an opportunity to correct the situation.
- After a year of caring for the horse, the BLM or an approved vet will need to sign off on the release of title for the horse.

A comprehensive explanation of the process, and guidelines can be found on the BLM website listed above. The McCullough Peaks horses do not have a set adoption date yet, but the earliest they may become available for adoption through the online corral is May of 2024.