



A wild free-roaming horse or burro, as defined by Federal law, is an unbranded, unclaimed, free-roaming horse or burro found on Western public range lands administered by the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) and the U.S. Forest Service (USFS). Wild horses and burros are descendants of animals released by or escaped from Spanish explorers, ranchers, miners, U.S. Cavalry, or Native Americans. The Wild Free-Roaming Horses and Burros Act of 1971 gave the Department of the Interior's BLM and the Department of Agriculture's USFS the authority to manage, protect, and control wild horses and burros on the nation's public range lands to ensure healthy herds and healthy range lands.

When I saw those horses, it had been just more than a decade since the institution of the Wild Free-Roaming Horses and Burros Act and it was not uncommon to see such a scene in the wild deserts of California and Nevada. The good news is there are places where you can still behold such a vision. One pretty sure bet for seeing wild horses is the Buckhorn Back Country Highway, according to Jeff Fontana, of the USDA Bureau of Land Management (BLM) Public Affairs. He took me on a tour through the wild horse facility in Litchfield, CA near Susanville, where hundreds of horses are available for adoption and viewing. The Buckhorn Back Country Byway is a good dirt road, accessible in good weather out in the high desert area between Ravendale and Nevada. Fontana says you have a really good chance of viewing horses there and if you stop by their Eagle Lake District office on Riverside Drive in Susanville, they can offer you a map, or you can call them at 530 257-0456 for directions.

There is also a herd which can be seen along Highway 395 just north of Ravendale. Looking off to the west with binoculars, you may find them. Binoculars are always good for viewing wild horses. according to Fontana, as they are wary animals.

Before the Wild Horse and Burro act of 1971, wild horses were gathered up commercially and sold off to glue factories. That was until one little gal got involved known as 'Wild Horse Annie.' Velma Johnson (her real name) was tired of seeing such a magnificent breed of animals being poorly treated and ultimately slaughtered, she worked hard for decades to see the Wild Free-Roaming Horses and Burros Act become a reality in 1971. She was recently inducted into the National Cowgirl Hall of Fame.

#### Adopting Horses or Burros of Your Own

Governed by the USDA Bureau of Land Management, over 230,000 horses and burros have been adopted out since 1971. The problem today is the lack of adopters as opposed to the growing population of horses they capture on public lands. According to a recent release by the GAO (Government Accountability Office) a report correctly depicts the difficult

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