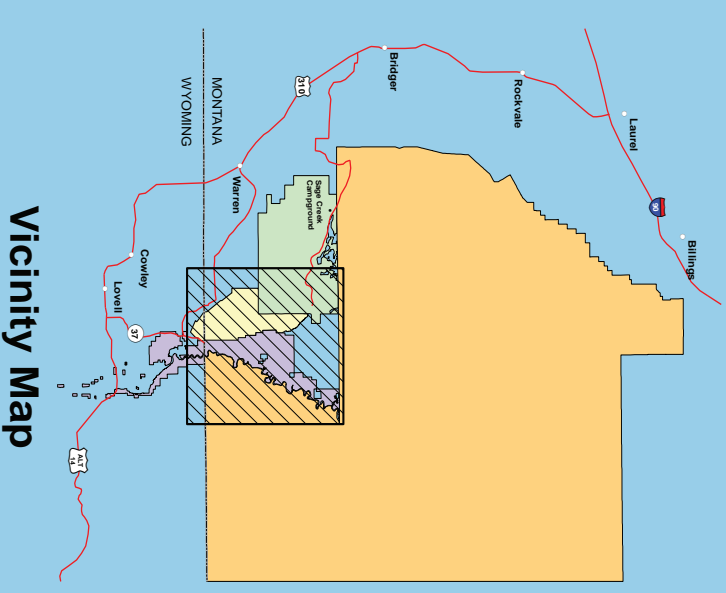


FOR MORE INFORMATION CONTACT:

Bureau of Land Management
 Billings Field Office
 5001 Southgate Drive
 Billings, MT 59101
 (406) 896-5013

Forest Service
 Beartooth Ranger District
 HC49 Box 3420
 Red Lodge, MT 59068
 (406) 446-2103

Bighorn Canyon National
 Recreation Area
 Visitor Center
 20 Highway 14A East
 Lovell, WY 82431
 (307) 548-2251



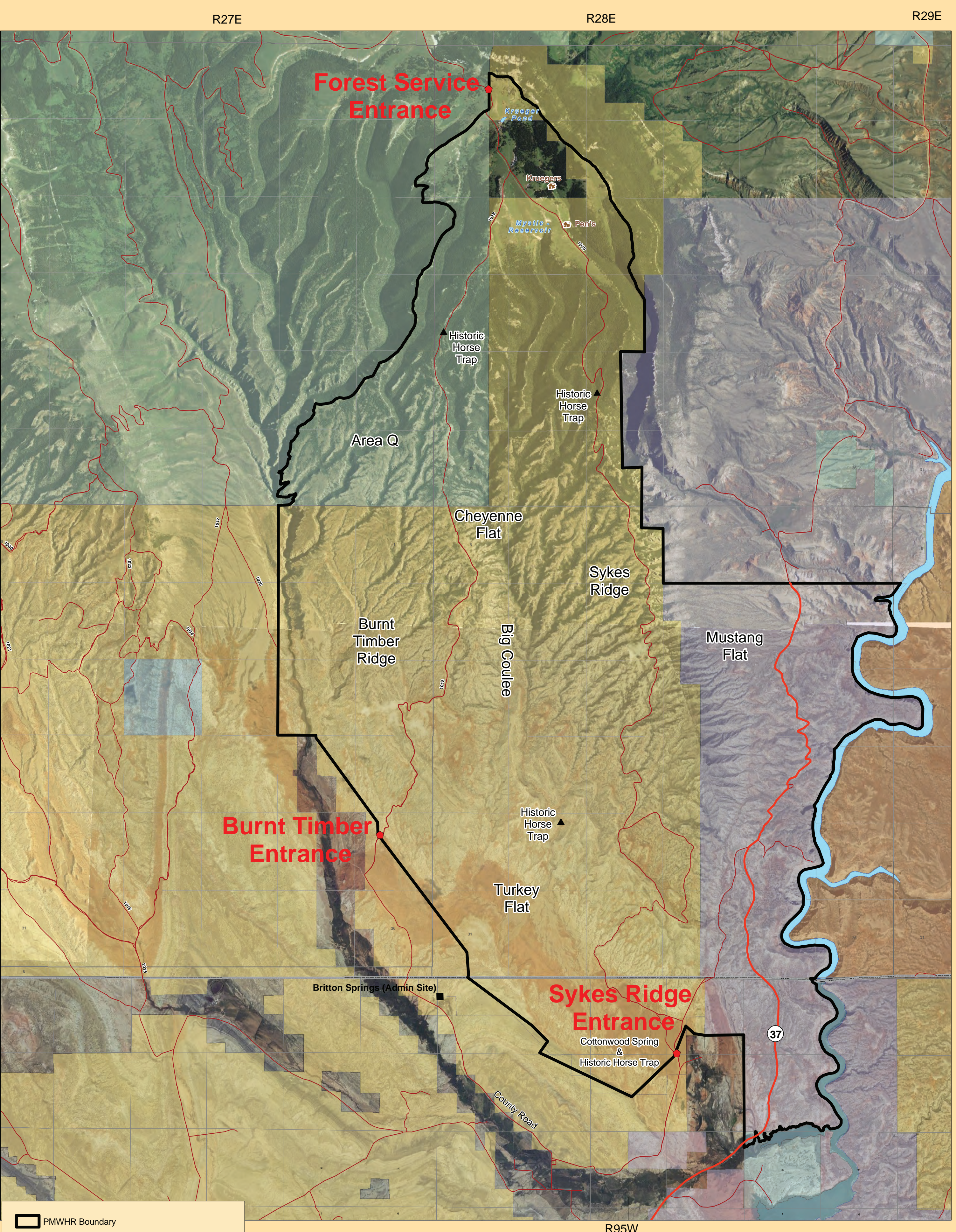
**PRYOR MOUNTAIN
 WILD HORSE
 RANGE**

BLM

United States Department of the Interior
 Bureau of Land Management
 Billings Field Office
 5001 Southgate Drive
 Billings, Montana 59101

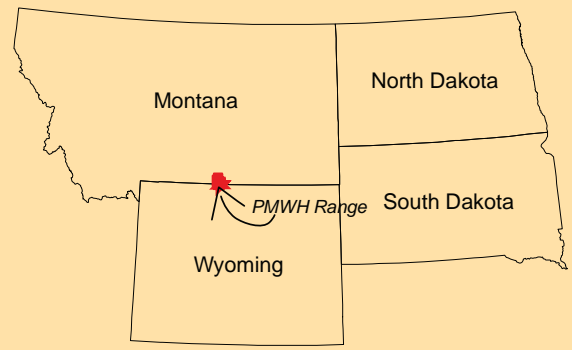


Billings Field Office



- PMWHR Boundary
- Historic Traps
- PMWHR Entrance
- Cabins
- Township/Range Lines
- State Boundary
- Bureau of Land Management (BLM)
- Custer National Forest (USFS)
- Bighorn Canyon National Recreation Area (NPS)
- Crow Reservation
- State Land

**Pryor Mountain
 Wild Horse
 Range**



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 May 2011

PRYOR MOUNTAIN WILD HORSE RANGE

The Pryor Mountain Wild Horse Range (PMWHR) straddles the Montana/Wyoming border on the far southeast side of the Pryor Mountains. It was established after a two-year grassroots effort by citizens concerned about the long-term welfare of the wild horses in the Pryor Mountains. In 1968, Secretary of the Interior Stewart L. Udall set aside about 32,000 acres of Bureau of Land Management (BLM) and National Park Service (NPS) Bighorn Canyon National Recreation Area lands for protection and management of wild horses, wildlife, watershed, recreation, archeological, and scenic values. In 1969, the Secretary added about 6,000 acres in Wyoming to the PMWHR through an additional order.

The Wild and Free-Roaming Horse and Burro Act of 1971 directed the Secretaries of the Interior and Agriculture to manage wild horses “where presently found.” Additional BLM lands and United States Forest Service (USFS) lands (Management Area Q) were added to the wild horse range due to the presence of wild horses at the passage of the act. Today, the PMWHR encompasses approximately 39,000 acres of BLM, NPS, USFS, and private lands.



Pen's Meadow Photo by BLM

Much of the wild horse range is considered northern cold desert. As you move from the southern desert areas to the upper sub-alpine areas of the Pryor Mountains, you can see the transition from cold desert shrubs

GEOLOGIC FORMATIONS TELL AN INTERESTING STORY

The geology of the Pryor Mountains reads like a good biography. The rocks themselves tell a story that spans from 550 million years to around 100 million years ago.

The first chapters describe an ancient sea filled with aquatic animals and plants. Through time, the extent and depth of the sea changed. Occasionally, uplift of the land eliminated the sea, causing erosion of the rocks and sediments. Layers of different rock types and their fossils provide evidence of how the environment changed.



Stalactites in a typical limestone cave. Photo by BLM, Wyoming

About 200 million years ago, during the Middle Triassic era, southern Montana was covered by a shallow sea. Fossils of animals such as coral, clams, oysters, and fish are evidence of this shallow sea.

During the Middle Jurassic era, about 150 million years ago, slow-moving streams flowed into the inland sea, and large dinosaurs roamed the western states. Rocks of the Lower Cretaceous Cloverly Formation have abundant remains of crocodiles, turtles, and dinosaurs,



Pryor Mountain wild horse Photo by Gary Leppart

and bunchgrasses to subalpine fir trees and meadows. Between these zones is a gradation of plant species dominated by sagebrush, juniper, and inland Douglas fir.

THE PRYOR MOUNTAINS

The Pryor Mountains are a limestone formation mountain range named after Sergeant Nathaniel Pryor of the Lewis and Clark Expedition, which traversed the nearby Yellowstone River Valley in 1806. The Pryor Mountain Range is actually an extension of the Bighorn Mountains but is separated from rest of the Bighorns by the Bighorn Canyon.



Sykes Entrance Photo by Gary Leppart

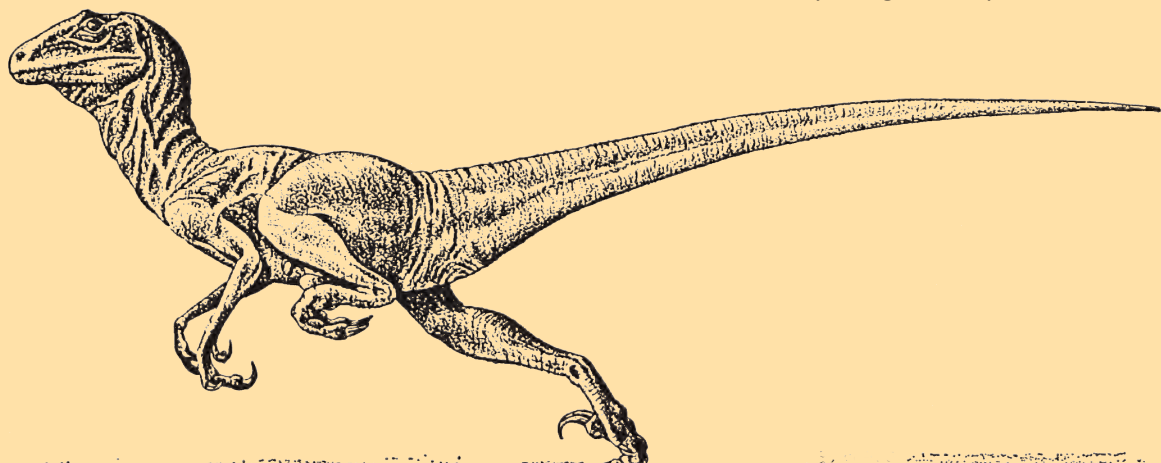
including the infamous “velociraptor” with its slashing hind claws. These animals provide evidence of life along the shores of the inland sea and the rivers that fed it. Vertebrate paleontological resources are protected by federal law on public lands and should be left as found for scientific investigation and enjoyment by future visitors.

CAVERNS FOUND THROUGHOUT THE PRYORS

The limestone of the Pryor Mountains contains a number of caves, some of which are large enough to explore. These caves developed as ground water moved slowly through cracks and fissures in the rock, dissolving the limestone. The cracks gradually widened to form larger and larger passageways.

When the level of the ground water decreased after a cavern formed, cave features called stalagmites, stalactites, soda straws, or flowstone developed. The formations were produced when minerals dissolved in the water flowing through the cave were redeposited. Please be careful not to break them.

Caves can be very difficult to access and are often very dangerous to navigate. There are no improved cave sites on the wild horse range. For information on necessary caving equipment, permits, and accessibility, contact the BLM or the Forest Service.



Velociraptor

The Pryor Mountains are unique in many ways. Some of the more notable aspects are the precipitation zones and related vegetation from the south end in the Bighorn Basin to the highest elevations in the mountain range. The mountain range divides the Great Plains from the Bighorn Basin. Annual rainfall varies from less than six inches in the lowest elevations to more than 20 inches in the high country. This results in a confluence of ecotypes in a small area. Because of this, many species of locally rare and sensitive plants occur in the Pryor Mountains, especially at the lower elevations.



Turkey Flat Photo by BLM

The Crow Tribe considers many sites within the Pryors sacred. Hard stone deposits, called chert, are common in the Pryors. Native Americans used nodules from these deposits to make projectile points and scraping tools. Cultural resources are protected by federal law on public lands and should be left as found for scientific investigation and enjoyment by future visitors.

WILD HORSES & THEIR MANAGEMENT

Where did the horses come from? The exact origins are unclear, but a common belief is that the horses escaped or were lost or turned loose from local Native American



Rocky Mountain bighorn sheep Photo by Gary Leppart

WILDERNESS STUDY AREAS

Five areas within the wild horse range are under wilderness review. Three are BLM wilderness study areas: Burnt Timber Canyon, Pryor Mountain, and Big Horn Tack-On. One is an NPS wilderness study area and one is a USFS recommended area for wilderness designation. Congress will eventually either designate these as wilderness or release them from consideration. Until Congress makes this determination, these areas are managed so as not to impair their wilderness values. Recreational activities such as hiking, primitive camping, and hunting are allowed within the wilderness study areas. Motorized vehicle travel is restricted to designated open roads. Sykes Ridge and Burnt Timber roads run the length of the Pryor Mountain Wild Horse Range and are the only designated open roads on the range.

Indian herds, and eventually found a safe haven in the broken country of the east Pryors. Genetic testing has confirmed that some of these horses carry a rare gene variant that traces their ancestry back to colonial Spanish breeds. Overall, the genetic tests indicate the horses are a mix of breeds closely related to light racing and riding breeds.

Testing has shown that the genetic diversity of these horses is high and the current level of inbreeding within the population is low. In some populations, inbreeding can be a problem if the numbers of horses in the herd are too low for too long without periodic introductions of outside blood. The population is rather confined to this range by both natural and manmade barriers; the only source of new horses since the late 1980s when introductions from other herds ceased are the foals born each year.



Pen's Meadow Photo by Gary Leppart

Like other wild horse populations, the Pryor horses live in bands. As you travel throughout the range, you will observe numerous bands and assorted “bachelor” stallions. Most bands average five or six animals, with a dominant stallion, a lead mare, and a variety of other mares and young animals. Horses have a natural tendency to follow the leader, and the daily routine is often dictated by the lead mares.

OTHER RECREATIONAL OPPORTUNITIES

There are many excellent recreational opportunities in the PMWHR besides viewing horses, but there are no maintained trails or facilities. Many popular activities include hiking, camping, upland bird and big game hunting, photography, and vehicle touring on designated open roads. Be sure to take the necessary precautions as you venture into the hills. Domestic horse use is allowed; however, be sure your animal has all current health certifications and inspections. Remember to be respectful of other people’s recreational experience.



Rugged Pryor Mountain terrain Photo by Gary Leppart

BE SAFE

The PMWHR is a relatively remote, rugged area where weather conditions can change rapidly at any time of the year. Four-wheel drive vehicles are needed to travel the backcountry open roads, particularly Sykes Ridge and Burnt Timber roads. A high clearance, short wheel base vehicle is recommended. Roads are difficult in all conditions and nearly impassable during inclement weather (see map). Roads are not suitable for two- or four-wheel drive passenger vehicles.

There are no visitor amenities on the range. Travel light and take only what you need (food, water, flashlight, matches, first aid kit, GPS, etc.). It’s easy to get lost so be aware of your location when hiking and be aware of steep drop-offs. Cellular phones often will not transmit

The BLM is mandated to “protect the [wild horse] range from deterioration” and maintain multiple-use relationships. In order to do this, the BLM periodically gathers and removes excess animals and uses fertility control in an attempt to maintain a population of wild horses in balance with range resources. The area has an appropriate management level of 90-120 wild horses, which is maintained at 120 when fertility control is applied. On average, 25-30 acres are required to produce enough forage for each wild horse for one month throughout most of the wild horse range.

WHERE CAN I VIEW WILD HORSES?

The answer varies depending on the time of year. See the wild horses year-round along the Bad Pass Highway (State Route 37) within the Bighorn Canyon National Recreation Area. Small bands of horses are often visible from this paved road. Look for wild horses near the entrance by Crooked Creek Bay and north of the Mustang Flat interpretive sign.

During the summer, you will find many of the wild horses in the higher mountain meadows on the far north end of the range. In late spring and early fall, wild horses can be viewed along the mid-ridge areas of Burnt Timber and Sykes Ridge close to the unimproved roads. Wild horses can be difficult to locate in the late fall and winter due to their dispersal to more remote areas.



Bighorn Canyon National Recreation Area Photo by BLM

in some of the more rugged areas of the Pryor Mountains. Bring appropriate clothing for rapidly changing weather conditions in the high country. This is rattlesnake country, so use caution when walking in brushy areas and around rocks. And always be bear aware.

OTHER AREA ATTRACTIONS

Pen's Cabin

Pen's cabin is located near the top of East Pryor Mountain. It was constructed by Perrin Leander Cummins (1899-1927), nicknamed Pen, probably in 1925 when he applied for a homestead patent. Pen was a poet and musician and, according to family records, spent at least one winter on the mountain writing poetry. The cabin fell into disrepair, and the BLM rebuilt it in 1969 and again in 2002. Pen was killed while working a horse on his family ranch near what is now the Sage Creek Campground.



Pen's Cabin Photo by BLM

Krueger Lease

The BLM leases 640 acres of private land in the northern portion of the PMWHR for the benefit of the wild horses. The property has the only reliable water source for wild horses in the high country of the PMWHR. This pond is a good place to see wild horses coming to drink and cool off in the summer. Two privately owned cabins are located on this property; please be respectful of private property.



Mustang Flat Photo by Gary Leppart

OBSERVING WILD HORSES and TOURS

Opportunities for viewing, photographing, and filming the horses are excellent at certain times of year. All visitors, photographers, and filmers are cautioned to respect the comfort zone around wild horses at all times and not to disrupt the horses’ natural behavior in any way. A good rule of thumb is not to get between band members and just stop and stay still if wild horses start to move away from you.

Casual use activities such as a day out with your friends or family, noncommercial still photography, or recreational videotaping do not require a permit or fees. However, if you are paying someone to take you for a tour, make sure that person has a permit. If you plan to sell your product, certain categories of commercial filming and photography do require a permit and fees. For further information, please contact the BLM Billings Field Office, Forest Service Beartooth Ranger District, or Bighorn Canyon National Recreation Area, depending on where you plan to be on the range.



Krueger Pond Photo by Gary Leppart

Guzzlers

A guzzler is a small water capturing system developed to utilize rain and snow fall that otherwise would soak into the ground or evaporate. The captured water is stored in a half-buried tank and is available for wildlife and wild horses during dryer times of the year or in areas with little surface water. Numerous guzzlers have been installed within the wild horse range. If hiking, you may come across one of these guzzlers, especially in the mid-slope areas of the wild horse range. A guzzler is also known as a rain catchment or trick tank.



Guzzler Photo by BLM

WILDLIFE SHARE THE RANGE WITH WILD HORSES

The wild horse range has diverse habitat types and associated wildlife species both common and locally uncommon. A wide array of mammals, birds, and reptiles can be observed.

Larger mammal species that might be encountered include mule deer, bighorn sheep, black bears, and the elusive mountain lion.

The bighorn sheep found in the Pryors are originally from a small herd that was reintroduced into Wyoming’s northern Bighorn Mountains. During the mid-1970s, the bighorns migrated across the ice of Bighorn Lake and remained on the west side of the Bighorn Canyon where their population increased. These sheep have persisted when several other deliberate attempts at reintroduction failed.



Rocky Mountain bighorn sheep Photo by Gary Leppart

Peregrine falcons, recovered from being an endangered species, have been nesting in the area since they were reintroduced in the early 1990s. Other sensitive species in the area include the rare spotted bat and Yellowstone cutthroat trout.

Numerous nongame species inhabit the area, including about 200 bird species. Blue grouse occupy the high elevation forests and meadow areas and are popular with hunters in the fall.

Bighorn Canyon National Recreation Area

The Bighorn Canyon National Recreation Area Visitor Center is located one-half mile east of Lovell, Wyo., and provides an excellent introduction to the Pryor Mountains through audio-visual presentations. Highway signs direct travelers to the national recreation area some 12 miles north of Lovell.

Pryor Mountain Wild Mustang Center

The Pryor Mountain Wild Mustang Center is a non-profit organization dedicated to the education about and preservation of the Pryor wild horses. Past and present members of this organization were instrumental in establishing the PMWHR in 1968. The center is located next door to the Bighorn Canyon National Recreation Area Visitor Center in Lovell, Wyo.



Mare and foal Photo by Gary Leppart