

# Editor's Note

**A**s I write this, it is nearly Chinese New Year—and this is the year of the horse. That's not why horses are featured in this issue, but it's a nice bit of synchronicity.

The relationship between humans and horses is a long one, and that is reflected in the feature article, which tells of the many ways we interact with these animals. The Classroom Activities section also relates to horses; an activity called “Horse Play” teaches common horse idioms. If we imagine the origin of those phrases, we can see how integral horses must have been to daily life in the past.

It's not always easy to pinpoint the origin of an idiom. I searched the Internet for the derivation of the idiom “wild horses couldn't drag me away.” The first thing I noticed in the search results was variation in wording. Wild horses “couldn't/wouldn't keep me away/drag me away/stop me [from ...].” But all iterations retained the same sense of determination on the part of the

persons who could not be deterred, even by wild beasts, from doing what they were doing.

Now let me drag you away from pondering the origin of an idiom about wild horses to looking into the origins of some real ones—those roaming the western United States. Although most people refer to these horses as “wild,” they are actually feral, meaning their ancestors were once domesticated. Take the mustang. This word comes from the Spanish *mestengo*, which means “wild” or “stray.” Ancestors of the mustang were horses brought to North America by Spanish explorers in the 1500s. Some of those horses were released or escaped, and their offspring began the long line of mustangs in the region.

One herd of mustangs roams the Pryor Mountain Wild Horse Range in Montana and Wyoming, where land was set aside to preserve these horse populations. To achieve that goal, the Bureau of Land Management works with the Pryor Mountain Wild Mustang Center, a nonprofit educational institution dedicated to preserving the local mustang herd and educating the public about it.

The work of the center falls into two categories—research and education. The research involves monitoring the current herd to observe births, deaths, and locations and studying herds of the past to better understand the genetics of these horses. Educational activities include assisting teachers taking their students on field trips to the center, giving classroom presentations about the horses, and operating a museum.

And if you're too far away to benefit from any of that, you can follow the center on Facebook.

—MK



Mustangs in the Pryor Mountain Wild Horse Range