

Run Wild. Run Free.

Text and photos by Thomas F. Wagner
*MCA and The Wisconsin Early
Mustangers member*
Owner of a '93 GT, and an '05 V6

In our fast-paced world filled with computers, cell phones, and flat screen TVs, there is a place I know of where life is much simpler and much harder.

About a year ago while surfing the internet, I ran across a place called the Black Hills Wild Horse Sanctuary. As I read the information contained on their web site I gained a real sense of despair for the American Mustang, but at the same time I also gained a sense of hope. The refuge was founded in the 1980's by Dayton O. Hyde, a retired cattle rancher, conservationist, and published author. The sanctuary is home to roughly 500 Mustangs. They have about 13,000 acres of land.



At the Black Hills Wild Horse Sanctuary, these horses run free. Their lives and daily existence is protected from man but "interfered with" by man as little as possible. In my reading on that day, I also learned of the Institute of Range and the American Mustang. IRAM is an organization also created by Dayton Hyde to help with fund raising and the tax man. I decided to take my family to see this place first hand. We just had to see if this was for real.

When I talked with my wife, Cathy, we decided to surprise our 13-year-old daughter with the trip. She knew we were going to South Dakota, she did not know that the focus was going to be the Wild Horse Sanctuary. They have a small



two-bedroom cabin on the property for guests to rent.

We arrived at the sanctuary late afternoon. I had been told the cabin would be open and to make ourselves at home. The next day, we took an all-day private adventure tour of the Sanctuary, guided and escorted by Susan Watt, IRAM's program director and site manager. She spent all day with us taking us across the property showing us the various herds and the babies. Several mares were still carrying and one foal looked as though it had been born the night before! It was so exciting, so hopeful. Susan had packed a basket lunch, which we ate at the top of a cliff overlooking a canyon. It was just beautiful and wonderful. The reality is public lands cannot support horses. The pressure from ranchers, residents, and progress is more than the wild Mustangs can stand. They are being hunted down and captured for sale or adoption. Those that can't be sold are destroyed. That's where IRAM comes in. IRAM and the Black Hills Wild Horse Sanctuary have saved many horses and found homes for many more. The babies are sold each year through a program called Horses Helping Horses. There are many ways we all can help. Many sponsorship programs and ways to volunteer exist.

We spent a total of three nights at the sanctuary and used its location as a base for visiting other South Dakota attractions.

The Wild Horse Sanctuary has several tours. You can ride an old school bus and tour by group or a small family (3 or less) can take a private Adventure Tour

(what I surprised my family with!). The Adventure Tour is a little expensive but well worth it, in my opinion. Remember all monies generated at the Sanctuary go directly (or indirectly) to support the horses and keep them running FREE.

The wild American Mustang played a vital role and important part in this nation's history. This Sanctuary and these people are dedicated to ensuring that the Mustang will not entirely disappear from the Earth. We need a place like this where these noble beasts can be free to run and live as they have for centuries. This country OWES IT TO THEM. If it had not been for the wild horses, people would not have been able to settle the west.

I have become a "Winter Friend" and my daughter has sponsored a horse. The more people who know about this, the more possibilities for help exist.

Please join me and the folks of the Black Hills Wild Horse Sanctuary in helping to keep the American Mustang wild and running FREE! **MT**



SOURCES

The Black Hills Wild Horse Sanctuary
New Berlin, Wisconsin

Institute of Range and the
American Mustang
P. O. Box 998
Hot Springs, SD 57747
www.wildmustangs.com
800.252.6652