

PRESS RELEASE of December 4th, 2019 for:

The Mustang Man, Craig C. Downer, Exonerating Wild Horses & Burros, Fighting to Keep Them Free

Link to Film: <https://youtu.be/sM3VEdGrfAM>

For screenings and talks and other information, please contact: Craig Downer at 775-901-2094, cdowner@aol.com or Tom Porter at 818-237-7875, thomasdporter@yahoo.com

A new 24-minute video documentary features the many positive contributions that wild horses and burros make to ecosystems and effectively disproves many of the lies made by their biased enemies. As an ecologist who cares about the future of the naturally living horses and burros, Craig is fighting to protect them from elimination on the lands that are legally theirs according to the unanimously passed Wild Free-Roaming Horses and Burros Act of 1971 (WFHBA). Many people unfairly blame horses for water and forage scarcity, when in truth they take only a minor fraction of the forage and water resources on the public lands compared to that taken by privately owned cattle and sheep as well as the gargantuan mining and energy industries, among other nature exploiters. Also it is important to recognize that these national heritage species are only being allocated a small fraction of forage, water and appropriate habitat even within their legal areas on BLM and US Forest Service lands. These are areas where they should be the principal resource recipients according to the true intent of the WFHBA.

Biologists classify horses and burros as Keystone Species that restore and maintain native biodiversity, benefiting many interrelated plants and animals. They greatly mitigate and often even prevent catastrophic wildfires by consuming significant amounts of vegetation that become fire-enabling tinder during the dry season and also consume much greater amounts of this drier, coarser vegetation that their specialized digestive systems are better able to handle compared with those of cattle and other herbivores.

Horses and burros rebuild soils by contributing more organically intact droppings. These act as long-lasting fertilizers, contributing more humus to the earth. Their single-stomach fermentative digestive system differs from the multi-stomach, ruminant digestive systems of cattle, sheep, deer and other herbivores that are favored by our society. Also for this reason, horses and burros spread more intact seeds in their droppings whose richer nutrients help a greater variety and abundance of seeds to germinate in the widespread places where horses and burros roam, all the while practicing natural rest rotation. Both the droppings and the seeds are food for many diverse animals, including many birds and mammals. In drier regions they detect water underground and dig wells that help many species of animals and plants to survive, as proven in the film. Also shown: they blaze trails in heavy brush which help weaker animals to access forage and water and in winter, they break ice with their powerful legs and hooves, allowing smaller or less capable animals to access forage and water – often making the difference between life or death. Ruminant populations, including deer, often increase in health and abundance when horses are present.

The Mustang Man is a timely wake-up call that communicates the greater truth concerning America's wild horses and burros. Its timely and burning message will defeat the current mean-spirited and scientifically unfounded drive to discredit and eliminate them. This need is an urgent one, as these highly evolved returned North American natives must be allowed the natural freedom and space they need to restore balance and harmony both in the West and many similar regions of our precious planet. Here they will rebuild soils, restore aquifers and disperse and help diverse plant species germinate and bloom. And we mustn't forget the critically needed service they will provide by mitigating and even preventing catastrophic, life-destroying wildfires that now loom so ominously upon the future's horizon due to human-engendered Global Warming. Surely we mustn't forget all that they have done for our

species over the centuries and our debt of gratitude to them as special beings existing in their own right. They lend a special uplifting energy and beauty – and what could be more important than this?!

Host Craig Downer, wildlife ecologist, is the author of *The Wild Horse Conspiracy*, *Wild Horses: Living Symbols of Freedom* as well as many popular and scientific articles and chapters. In this film, he takes us into the field to discover the ecological importance of horses and burros and to discover that North America is their evolutionary cradle and place of long-standing evolution. A pioneer-descended Nevadan, as a boy Craig fell in love with the natural world, oft while riding his best friend Poco. This passion led him to pursue a career in wildlife ecology and to earn an A.B. in Biology with specialization in Ecology from the University of California-Berkeley, an M.S. from the University of Nevada-Reno, and to attain Ph.D. candidature at Durham University-UK. His studies and observations of wild horses led him to work with Wild Horse Annie in insisting that the true intent of the Wild Free-Roaming Horses and Burros Act be implemented throughout America. He served as a Peace Corps wildlife ecologist in Colombia and is the first biologist to have successfully captured, radio-collared and tracked the endangered Mountain, or Andean, Tapir as part of his doctorate studies. His organization, the Andean Tapir Fund, continues to successfully defend and protect this dwindling species, along with its diminishing cloud forest and paramo habitats. He is a member of the IUCN Species Survival Commission and his organization works to save all members of the Horse, Tapir and Rhino families (Order Perissodactyla) in their natural habitats.

Tom Porter is the director and videographer of *The Mustang Man*. He is a former U.C.L.A. marine science professor and has collaborated with Craig Downer to produce the film *Maverick Mustangs of the Salt River* that greatly helped to save this precious Spanish mustang herd from total removal by the Tonto National Forest. Tom produces the TV series *Animal Consciousness, People Helping Animals and People Helping the Planet*, which has featured programs on the Coachella Valley Horse Rescue sanctuary, whales dolphins, chimpanzees, desert tortoises, California condors, bird rescues, and wetland preservation. In earlier years, he worked for Marineland of the Pacific. He asks us to reconsider our attitudes toward and treatment of animals and urges us to learn how to share this wonderful planet Earth with them. Tom advocates for a plant-based diet that will optimize health, reduce pollution and ultimately save life on Earth. He is also known for his caring rescues of animals in danger.

Tags: wild horses, wild burros, equid evolution, equid ecology, North America, Wild Free-Roaming Horses and Burros Act, Bureau of Land Management, U.S. Forest Service, Herd Areas, Herd Management Areas, Territories, Reserve Design, Craig Downer, Tom Porter, The Wild Horse Conspiracy
