

Brushy Mountain Wild Horse Territory

The Brushy Mountain Wild Horse Territory (WHT) is administered by the Almanor Ranger District, Lassen National Forest.

Location/Habitat

The Brushy Mountain WHT is located in California approximately 40 miles southwest of Chester. The territory consists of 3,285 acres of non-contiguous Forest Service land. Seven hundred of those acres are within the Ishi Wilderness Area.

The topography is predominantly rugged. Geologically the area is of volcanic origin, and the volcanic substrate has eroded to form a branching network of steep ravines separated by sharp ridges. Elevation varies from 1,120 feet on the western border to 3,760 feet on the eastern margin. Typically winter rains begin in November and last through March. A dry period occurs during summer-fall-early winter.

The territory can best be described as belonging to the foothill-woodland community. Several distinct floral associations occur within the community: 1) Blue Oak Woodland consists of scattered to dense blue oak stands with an understory of annual grasses. 2) Black Oak Association consists of an overstory of medium aged black oak with an understory of annual grasses, forbs, and Oregon grape. 3) Mixed Forest Type consists of Ponderosa pine, Douglas fir, black oak, and digger pine with an intermediate canopy of deer brush, poison oak, and redbud. Chaparral is interspersed throughout the entire area.

Common wildlife present in the territory include blacktail deer, coyote, bobcat, pocket gopher, beechey ground squirrel, grey squirrel, California quail, Coopers hawk, red-tail hawk, golden eagle, kestrels, turkey vulture, mourning dove, scrub jay, western whiptail lizard, alligator lizard, and western rattlesnake.

Livestock grazing is permitted in the territory.

History

The population evolved from domestic ranch stock that escaped or were abandoned from 1922 through 1966. The horses were mostly bays with a scattering of sorrels and fewer dark brown and black individuals.

The population of horses within the territory was 37 in 1973. The population peaked at almost 80 animals during the early 1980's but has been declining gradually ever since. It is unknown why the population has declined: skewed sex ratio, inbreeding, illegal shooting, mountain lion predation? The question may never be answered. In 2003, only two horses were seen in the territory, and both were studs.

Herd Description

The Brushy Mountain herd has naturally declined with only 2 studs remaining in 2003. Due to the limited amount of contiguous federal land within this territory, the territory is not able to sustain a viable population of wild horses.

For More Information

Contact the Almanor Ranger District at 530-258-2141.