

-ARIZONA-

Tassi-Gold Butte Herd Management Area

LOCATION

The Tassi-Gold Butte Management (HMA) lies in southeast Nevada and northwest Arizona between the Overton Arm of Lake Mead and the west boundary of Grand Canyon National Park in Mohave County, Arizona and Clark County, Nevada. It sits 70 miles southwest of St. George, Utah and 50 miles south of Mesquite, Nevada. Major geographical features include the Gold Butte Mountains, Hiller Mountains and Temple Bay in Nevada and the lower Grand Wash Cliffs, Grand Wash Bay and Tassi Spring.

SIZE

The herd area is roughly 30 square miles in size, or about 101,000 acres. The boundary was established through observation of seasonal burro activities. Burros occupy the Gold Butte Mountains and Grand Wash Cliffs during relatively moist and cool months, and use the critical area near Lake Mead and Grand Wash Springs during the hot or dry months.

HABITAT

The topography of the HMA consists primarily of large alluvial plains (bajadas) dissected by numerous gullies and washes. The Gold Butte Mountains lie in the center of the HMA and consist of rocky, steep peaks and ridges. Elevation extremes range from 5,763 feet on top of Jumbo Peak to 1,200 feet along Lake Mead. Washes primarily drain south into the Colorado River (Lake Mead). The climate of the HMA is typical for the Mohave desert, lower Sonoran life zone. Winter precipitation occurs as low-intensity rain or snow storms of long duration. Summer precipitation occurs as localized high intensity, short-duration convectional storms. Average annual precipitation ranges from eight to nine inches at lower elevations and 10 to 14 inches at higher elevations. Wild burros share this habitat with Desert Big Horn Sheep and Desert Mule Deer. Other animals that can be found in the area include small mammals, desert tortoises, several species of rattle snakes, a variety of birds, including the southwestern willow flycatcher, lizards, and amphibians.

HISTORY

Livestock grazing began in the late 1800s, by the early settlers who used the Tassi-Gold Butte area as early winter-spring range. Mineral prospecting began around the same time period. Burros escaping captivity, or released by cattlemen, sheepmen and miners, contributed greatly to the establishment of the wild burro herd. Before the passage of the Wild Horse and Burro Act in 1971, wild burros were commonly hunted for sport, food, or other purposes, with hunting used as the primary means of population control.

POPULATION

Burros (*Equus Asinus*) evolved in the harsh deserts of North Africa and are very well adapted to a dry desert environment. Left alone in this remote region with few natural predators, the wild burro population flourished. The current population of burros is estimated to be about 100 animals. Nearly 80 percent of the burros in this area are gray in color, with the remaining 20 percent being black, brown, white, pinto, or piebald. Some burros possess the shoulder cross characteristic of the ancestral Nubian wild ass and many have leg barrings associated with the Somali wild ass. Adult burros average 48 inches in height and weigh about 350 pounds.

MANAGEMENT

The wild burros of the Tassi portion of the Tassi-Gold Butte Herd Management Area have been completely removed from this area based on a biological evaluation, a biological opinion and the findings in the Desert Tortoise Recovery Plan. The Bureau of Land Management will offer the animals to the public through BLM's Adopt-a-Wild Horse or Burro Program.

OFFICE CONTACT

For more information, contact the Arizona Strip Field Office at 345 East Riverside Drive St. George, Utah 84790, or call (435) 688-3200.