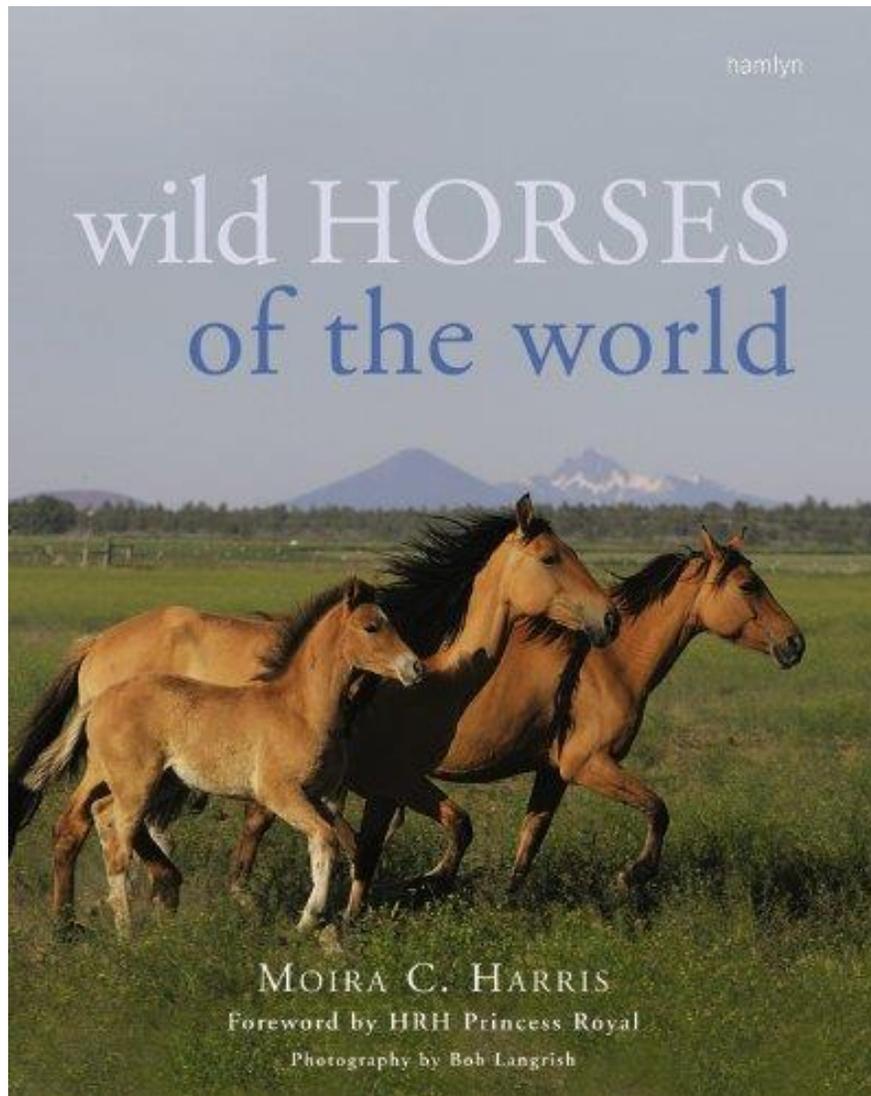


# Wild Horses of the World

By Moira C. Harris



Review by Gary Victor Hill

Moira C. Harris, *Wild Horses of the World. Photography by Bob Langrish. Forward by Princess Anne.* London; Hamlyn/Octopus, 2009.

This book is a very informative, wide ranging and a beautifully illustrated account of the world's last wild horse herds. Each sub species is described in terms of colourings, height, usual personality traits and unusual aspects. All equines are included, so assorted sub-species of Zebras and ponies get prominent treatment. The introduction succinctly describes their origins, past, present and future, herd structures, their behavior in the wild and the difference between wild and feral horses.

While the text is informative, the vividness, beauty and delight come from Langrish's photographs. Every herd gains several depictions. All the photographs are attractive without being sentimental or obviously posed.

After the introduction the text segments, first by continents and then by locales within the continents. This leads to a tentative criticism, In Asia, Africa and South America, only one herd is featured from each continent. Are there no wild Paso horses in the mountains of Peru, South Africa's Drakensberg Range, Tibet (where a previously unknown species of pony was found this century) Siberia, Afghanistan, Kazakhstan or Iran? Have wild herds in the more remote parts of Chile, Mexico or Argentina become extinct? In these Latino countries the massive long-term cattle industries there were reliant on horses for over two centuries, so surely some horses escaped, were discarded or were released into the wild. However did their descendants survive into the twenty-first century? Particularly from the early twentieth century onwards, pollution, urbanization, agriculture and automation all spread rapidly, becoming a threat to equines. Farmers often saw them as a pest to be exterminated and/or a source of income for meat, hides, hair products and glue.

Moira Harris describes in detail these processes happening elsewhere, when agricultural industries failed or became automated. She mentions that some species have been exterminated. Given that almost all of the thirty-five herds which she does describe have barely survived these threats with greatly reduced numbers and that by 2009 some were near extinction levels, there may be no omissions amongst the listed wild horse herds in this book. These thirty-five herds or their splinter groups within the same species may be all that remained by 2009. The smallest herd, the Abaco Barb of the Bahamas, numbered less than fifteen. Even species reliant on other larger herds frequently only number in the hundreds.



*'Wild Horses Running' Courtesy of publicdomainpicturesnet.  
Photographer: Jean Beaufort*

This leads to an irony: without exception across the globe, these wild horses, a symbol of seemingly untrammelled liberty, only survive that way because humans have formed societies or government departments to protect them. Harris repeatedly

describes this process as being broadly the same in every example she gives of a wild horse herd. Regulations, planning, breeding programs, scientific experiments and tests, laws, statutes and patrolling guardians all now exist to keep the herds living that wild life.



*'Wild Horse Vintage Painting' Courtesy of publicdomainpicturesnet. Artist: Karen Arnold*

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