

AN UNDENIABLE POWER

by Andrew Shearer

For most of us, the image of wild horses running freely on open plains is a powerful, romantic symbol of the American West that once was. Few of us, however, have ventured beyond the image of that phenomenon to its reality. Carol Walker is one of those few.

Over the course of four years, Carol, an author and photographer, followed and photographed seven bands of the Adobe Town Herd in Wyoming's Red Desert. The result of that adventure is *Wild Hoofbeats: America's Vanishing Wild Horses*.

If *Wild Hoofbeats* were only photographs of these majestic animals it would be enough.

Rich, dramatic and powerful, Carol's lens provides us with images that are both intimate and grand. They allow us to be there with Carol...whether we are observing, from a distance, a warrior stallion as he marks his turf or we are within a few feet of a new foal as it nuzzles its mother— we are seeing what Carol saw and, perhaps, feeling what she felt. Filled with truly stunning representations, every page moves the reader deeper and deeper into the mystery of these animals.

But *Wild Hoofbeats* is more than its images: it is also the poignant story of the horses Carol followed and their ultimate plight.



BOOK
REVIEW:
WILD
HOOFBEATS




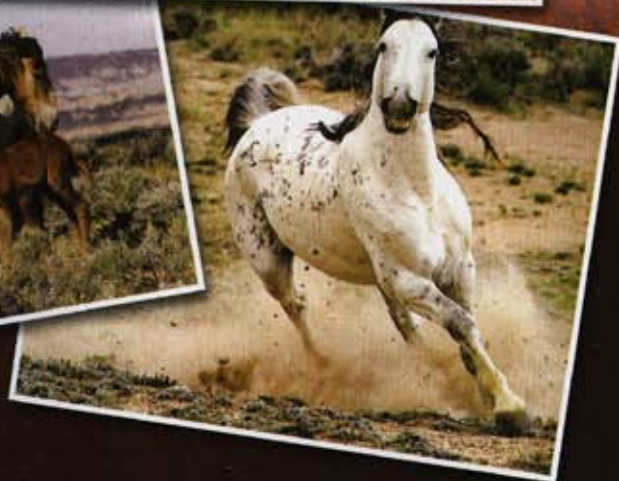
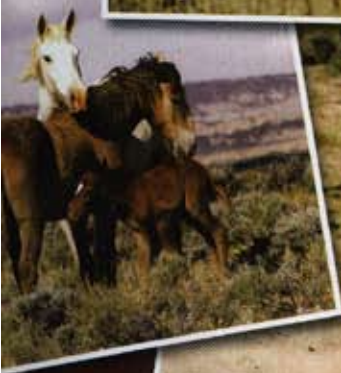
With an attachment to her subjects that is reminiscent of Jane Goodall's famous studies, Carol invites us to meet and care for the "families" she became a part of. Reference to Jane Goodall should not be misconstrued to imply anything clinical about Carol's observations. On the contrary, she is unabashedly engaged with her subjects but, like Goodall, remains respectful of their society and observes without intrusion. As observers, we are allowed to join in that respect.

While the terrain can be extremely challenging, the horses of the Adobe Town Herd are at much greater risk from the policies of the Bureau of Land Management. Those policies demand population control of the country's herds (in spite of the fact that there are


only a few thousand wild mustangs compared to millions of heads of cattle allocated to the more than 450,000 acres of land) and that control results in periodic BLM roundups that pull apart family units and often end tragically. Carol takes us on one such round up and through her narrative and lens, we experience the fear and turmoil as if we were there.

Carol Walker, through this elegant "documentary," reminds us of why wild horses are the symbol of America's free spirit. She also reminds us that these horses and the lands they roam are a part of the *public domain*. They belong to us and, through her images and her prose, Carol urges us to take better care of what is ours.

WILD HOOFBEATS



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