

EDITORIAL NOTE

Over millennia, equids, and other large herbivores, dominated the landscapes of Eurasia, Africa and the Americas. Free-roaming horses were common in medieval Europe, where one method of breeding was based on allowing herds of horses to live on their own, with or without a stallion or several stallions, and withdrawing horses from the herds on the need basis. This practice is still alive in some corners of Europe, such as the nature reserve of New Forest, home of New Forest ponies. Elsewhere, horses and ponies, particularly the wild Przewalski horse and the domestic but hardy Polski konik, have been reintroduced for conservation and rewilding purposes.

In the previous issue of the journal, we included news items about the Przewalski horse reintroduced in Chernobyl and about the role of free-roaming horses in managing natural landscapes. The present issue is fully devoted to the mustangs in North America, focusing on a particular population, the one residing in Heber. Craig C. Downer's report on the Heber horses argues that these majestic and hardy animals are inextricably woven into the ecosystem in which they reside and that they have a positive impact on the environment, yet the integrity of the herd is threatened by various human activities.

The situation with the Heber horses has parallels in earlier history: throughout history, those equids that evaded domestication have been either pushed away from the lands used by humans or hunted to extinction. In the rare instances when "wild horses" do appear in early records, they appear as the target of hunters, unless these are free-roaming herds that are bred in the wild. In the USA, however, wild horses and burros are legally protected, as Christine Reed explains in her response to Downer's report.

Reading about the Heber horses and the controversy surrounding them reminded me of the relevance of humanities and social sciences that is all too often questioned by governments and the public alike. While humanities, and especially history, are continuously challenged to prove their relevance in the digital world, where information can be accessed instantly, it is in controversial and challenging cases like that of the Heber horses that interdisciplinary approach to a problem is necessary. Looking back at history, we can see wild equids destroyed by human expansion. But we can also see humans and equids living in harmony with nature and with each other.

Next year, we plan to publish an issue of *Cheiron* devoted to aspects of archaeology and material culture in horse history. The issue will be guest edited by Dr Rena Maguire, and the call for papers is available on the journal website (<https://trivent-publishing.eu/blog/post/3-cheiron-journal-call-for-papers>). We will also publish a general issue, welcoming studies on all aspects of equine and equestrian history. Proposals are welcome for both issues.

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