

Rocky Mountain Region

In October 1991, a wild horse roundup, conducted in Theodore Roosevelt NP with 2 helicopters and 12 riders, captured 93 of the park's 114 wild horses. Of these, 58 wer sold at auction, the remainder were released into the park as part of a historic demonstration herd. Blood was taken from 77 animals for genetic testing at U/KY. This reduction, the first since 1986, received wide publicity due to claims that park horses are a distinct breed, descended from Sitting Bull's ponies (a premise disputed by area ranchers).

Last year, a bill to make this so called "Nokata Horse" the state horse failed in the ND legislature. Attempts to halt the roundup through the state's Congressional delegation and governor's office were unsuccessful. Representatives from the Human Societies of both the U.S. and ND were pressent. The culling eliminated animals introduced in recent years with the goal of preserving traditional bloodlines. Genetic analysis combined with recent range use and carrying capacity studies of the park herd will establish a minimum herd size.

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Devils Tower NM completed an extensive exotic plant mapping project in 1991. The Braun-Blanquet species abundance mapping method was used to map 53 of the 55 exotic species known from the Monument. Results will be used as a baseline to monitor changes in distribution and abundance of exotic plant species over time, to evaluate effectiveness of control methods, and to determine the best locations to concentrate control actions.

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Last fall, Mesa Verde NP experimented with a magnetometer to locate faults, dikes, and remnants of large archeological surface sites. The magnetometer was

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made available through the USGS for two months of field work by Dr. Mary Griffiths. The device detects local differences in the earth's magnetic field, brought about by the presence of iron rich minerals in intrusions, iron in solution, or iron in rocks (as in the base of archeological sites). In Mesa Verde, faults and dikes are related to localized unusual vegetation types, water outcrops, and interesting terrain features.

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Because of the difficulty of funding small-scale, high priority, hands-on natural resource management projects from park base (especially for medium and small size parks), a regional program called PRAM (for Preservation, Restoration, and Mitigation) was started in FY 91. Of 74 proposals submitted for FY 91 funding, 23 projects ranging from \$1,200 to \$10,000, received a total of about \$150,000.

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Responsibilities for the region-wide competitive research program is being shifted from U/WY to the Regional Office, at least until pending recommendations of the National Academy of Sciences are circulated and incorporated into the NPS science program. After almost 15 years of productive cooperative agreement with U/WY, it was concluded that the NAS recommendations might alter significantly the scope of the NPS competitive research program. Thus, any decision to advertise and award a cooperative agreement for future assistance will be delayed until the NPS response to the NAS recommendations is developed.