



# THE NOGAL JOURNALS

*Volume Twenty-six*

THUNDER, SPANKY  
AND  
MATTHEW MIDGETT

“ These meditations are so heartwarming.  
Thanks so much for your incredible visual diaries!”

*Jean Malkerson*  
Artist



Come along and ride with us!

# THE NOGAL JOURNALS

Volume XXVI

Part 1 of 3

With sincere gratitude  
to Randy Clarke-Ianiero and Clem Ianiero-Clarke  
whose technical expertise and tireless efforts  
made this publication possible.

*Cover Design: Laura Reynolds*

*Printing: PrintStar San Diego*

*First Edition Printing May 2024*

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window).



With another fast-moving storm predicted, we decided to take advantage of the mild and dry weather with a ride to one of our favorite vantage points.

*Snow-covered Sierra Blanca in the distance, but dry land underfoot.*



*Thunder knows where we are headed.*



*Up and up and up.*



*Then a final push to the top.*





*The reward - snack with a view.*



*Those clouds and rain showers look more like monsoon season, than winter.*



*The boys love to look out over their world.*



*So observant - they see a pronghorn looking back at us from down below.*





*"Hey! What are you doing up there?", he asks. (Pronghorns are very curious.)*



*"That is a friendly pronghorn, right?"*



*"Oh, yeah - he's cool!"*



*Magnificent Thunder.*





## 2023-02-15 - More Snow & a Nuzzle

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*The expected winter storm arrived overnight. After it passed - leaving a beautiful covering of snow - the horses went out to explore. Blue sky marks the edge of the weather front.*



*"Look up here, Spanky!"*



*They always manage to find a snack.*



*Since Belle's passing, we've all grown even closer. I was sitting looking at the view as they grazed, when Thunder came up silently in the snow and surprised me with a gentle nuzzle. Just the way he used to show his affection for her.*



MM



Winter reminds us it's still around - with occasional snow alternating with mild weather.

*Elk continue to visit, escaping the heavy snow in the high country - they graze near the upper barn.*



*All sizes and ages.*



*Peaceful to watch.*



*Within a day or so, virtually all the snow is gone (piles of corn are ready for the deer happy hour).*





*Meanwhile, the boys know where some precious green grass can be found. Thunders on a mission . . .*



*Success! . . . "Tasty!"*



*Melting snow fills the streams.*



*Rushing over a waterfall, where some snow still lingers in the shade.*





*We came upon this isolated relic of Fort Stanton's history. It's part of a diversion system which brought fresh water to the Fort during the tuberculosis hospital era (1899-1953).*



*The abandoned underground vaults are spooky (think "Phantom of the Opera" . . .).*



*At home, some of the cats enjoy cuddling on their new 'bear' blanket (Onyx, Mommie Cat, and Gracie).*



*Oops . . . woke them up! "Huh? What?"*



MM



Our local Future Farmers of America, and the 4-H Club, are very popular here and a prominent part of our middle and high school curriculums. Each year the Carrizozo School's FFA hosts a weekend-long Career and Development Event (CDE) in which "members are challenged to develop critical thinking skills and effective decision-making, foster teamwork and promote communication while recognizing the value of ethical competition and individual achievement." Essentially, they are large, hands-on workshops dealing with a variety of agriculturally related training. Once again, the horses were invited to participate in a tutorial about how to assess and judge equines - for purchase and breeding, and in competitive horse shows. More than 100 students from across the region participated in the session.

*The kids are great, and really take it seriously . . .*



*... Although one told me that, "Most of us come from such small towns that any reason to travel away for a weekend is a treat!"*



*The boys behaved very well, as they were asked to line up, walk, trot, and generally present themselves to the students for 'judging' on a long list of criteria.*





*While I was busy with Thunder, our friend Vivian handled Spanky.*



*He's always a cut up, and they got along very well. "Smoochy, smoochy, Vivian!"*





*Breaking the rules, I left Thunder for a moment in order to take a quick photo of part of our line-up.*



*He just waited patiently and did his job (that's Vivian and Spanky next to him).*



*"That was cool, and the kids are great - but can we hit the trail now?"*



*Our duties completed, we headed to those favorite 'secret' arroyos nearby.*



*It was a beautiful afternoon.*



*We took in the view from beneath the historic (1906) railroad bridge . . .*





*. . . and scoped out the badlands beyond.*



*"I love this open country!"*



*On the way back, we discovered an ancient grinding stone. Called a 'metate', it was used by the Native Americans to prepare various types of seeds, nuts, and other wild plant foods. It would have taken centuries to wear a hole this deep into the hard rock.*



It was an interesting day - thanks for coming along!  
MM



The deer sure do provide good company during their frequent visits.

*We had a little dusting of snow just before breakfast . . .*



*. . . but it was all gone by mid-day. Mom and the twins (who've really grown up) shared an apple. "Come on, mom! Save some for us!"*





*The girls had quite a gathering. It appears that deer gossip. "And she thinks she is such a Bambi, if know what I mean . . ."*



*Bucky stops by frequently.*



*He still enjoys his back rubs. "A little more to the left, please . . ."*





*He's figured out that I take carrots to the horses when I say good night around 10 pm.  
Now he wants his, too. "Eh, what's up, Doc?" The flash didn't bother him. He is special.*



MM

It is said that the best time to prune large trees is whenever you can find someone willing to do it. Well, I'm the one who does it here, and the first week of March is considered a good time in our climate.

*Actually, I didn't do it entirely alone. Little Gracie kept an eye on me while I gave a good trimming to her favorite apple tree. "I better have a look . . .", she said as she climbed up to check my finished job.*





*She seemed to approve. "This is nice! Lots of room for me to play! Oh oh - now what's he doing?"*



*She seemed more concerned when I began whacking away at the big mulberry over the picnic table.  
"My, my! What's going on here!"*





*Mulberry trees are notoriously difficult to prune because of their dense branching habits. As I worked, Gracie went up to take a closer look. "Oh dear, this thing really is a mess!", she said from the middle of the tree.*



*"Are you sure you want to take this on?"*





*"Ow! These branches are not very comfortable!"*



*"I better help you. I'll bite this one off!"*





*"Well, that's enough for now! (How do I get out of here?)"*



*More pruning.*





*Better.*



*Three flatbeds like this of debris later . . .*



*Finished at dusk. Now, to wait for the leaves to come.*



*Gracie was eager to tell her friends. "Hey! Did you notice?"*





*"The trees! Don't they look different?" The deer were more interested in their apples. "They're not paying attention!"*





*At least Bucky listened. "We worked really hard". Gracie told him. "So, you'll have lots of apples!"*

*"Uh, thanks! Where's my bucket of corn?"*



*"Whew! I'm glad that job's done!", she said to no one in particular. "I need a nap!"*



MM



After several years of 'restoration' (including draining and dredging to remove sediment and increase its capacity), Bonito Lake finally is filling up again with melted snow run-off. It's nice to see!



*Every stream is full right now, and some are overflowing onto the forest meadows . . .*





*Which surprises the horses.*



*"I don't remember it like this . . .", ponders Spanky.*





*The new grass is welcome.*



*A mallard couple thinks it's just ducky (sorry . . . I couldn't resist).*





*Then we visited nearby Blue Pond.*



*Although it doesn't show in all the photos, Blue Pond is crystal clear and reflects brilliant opal-like colors ranging from deep blues to bright electric greens. It's unique.*





*Photos don't do it justice.*



*It's a peaceful setting - we've never seen anyone else here.*





*An amazing two-headed horse! ;)*





*We wandered past an historic apple orchard (the trees were brought as saplings wrapped with sawdust and burlap, in covered wagons) . . .*



*. . . and found this wild turkey tail feather - good luck!*



*Homeward bound. Thunder always knows the way.*





*Bucky was waiting for a carrot . . . "Where ya been?"*



*Now he enjoys having his ears rubbed. "Ahhh, that feels good . . ."*



MM



While much of the country has been pummeled, our weather has been mild (which is good), and dry (which is not).

*Bright skies removed any excuse for not finishing the fruit tree pruning . . .*



*Happy that's done.*



*The boys felt that 'we' deserved some nice rides, and I agreed.  
"Watching him prune those trees is exhausting!"*



*Thunder observes a heavy weather front pass by to the north.*





*Dropping a little rain over the Capitan Mountains.*



*They like checking out these red-soil arroyos.*



*Then we discovered a little game trail leading up a narrow canyon - fun to explore! "Don't forget to duck down, Spanky!" (Deer are shorter than horses . . .)*



*Spanky warily passes a nasty cholla cactus. "Ooh, ooh, ooh - whew!"*





*That tiny white dot is our trailer in the distance.*



*It was a beautiful afternoon for an outing.*





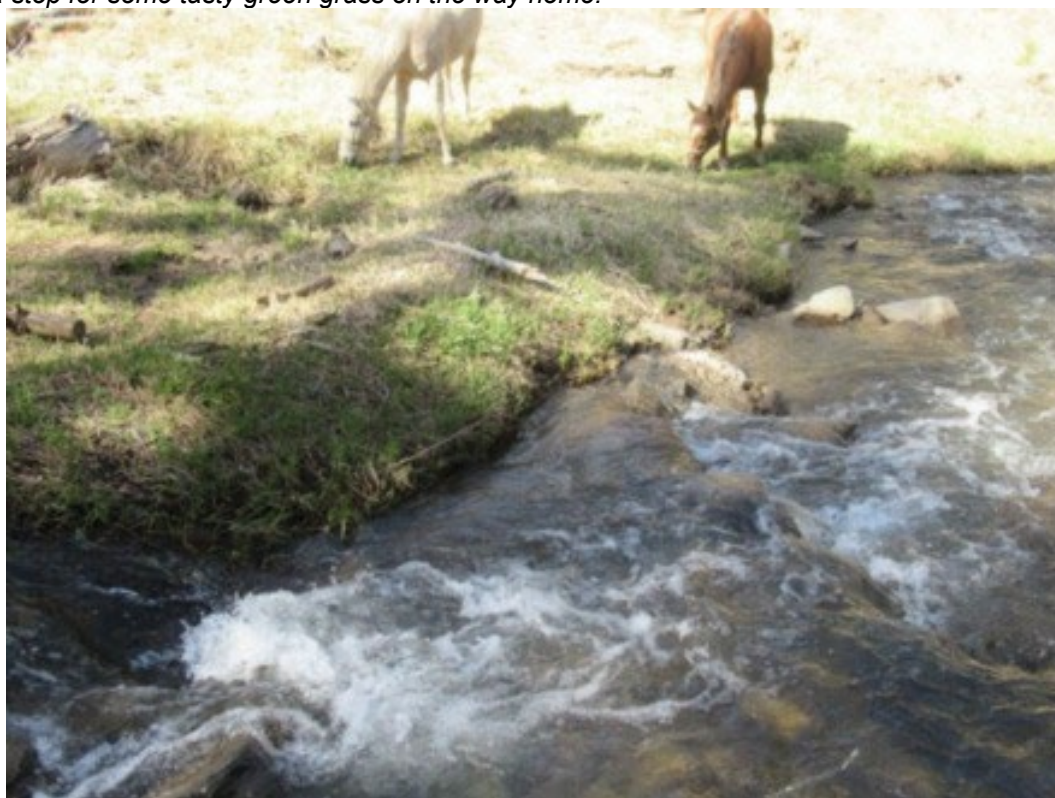
*So, we lingered along a tiny brook.*







*Then a stop for some tasty green grass on the way home.*





*Snow melt still is flowing down from the high country.*





*"Now this is what I call a 'happy hour', Thunder!"*



*"Yeah, it's a treat!"*







*The end of a good day.*



A change in our weather is predicted.

MM



The weather is clear and pleasant again, but we had several days of gloomy skies and snow showers. During one of the gray days, Thunder suggested that it might be fun to play in our local rodeo arena - "At least we can run around on drier ground!", he suggested.

*. . . and run they did - the soft moist sand was perfect for their play.*



*They had so much fun racing each other, it was tough for the camera to keep up.*





*Spanky's ring bone (arthritis) is still with him, but his joyfulness overcame any discomfort as he ran about.*



*Of course, Thunder loves speed.*



Yee haw!



And there were sand angels, too (which turned Thunder slightly pink).





*That wasn't an issue with Spanky's red roan coat.*



*Afterward, we went out on the trail, where we encountered a curious elk.*



*It looked like more snow was on the way. "Hmmm . . ."*



*So, after a nice (if gray) outing, we headed home.*





*The cats have their own way of spending a gray day. Cuddled on their plush 'bear' are Mommie Cat, Orca, and an almost invisible Onyx.*



*Later, Gracie joined in.*



*An oddity - somehow overnight these dagger-like icicles formed and bent horizontally under the eaves.*



*There was no wind involved. They had formed along the roof's edge, and when the snow began to melt and slide down, they were displaced in this very interesting way (they didn't last long).*



MM



The predicted change in weather did come, with colder temps and an odd series of (so far) light snow showers.

*The transition began with some very interesting and beautiful clouds.*



*We thought we should take a ride while the weather still was mild - but before long the sky turned ominous.*

*"Oh-oh", said Thunder.*



*"I think we should keep an eye on this . . ."*





*Sure enough, before long showers (rain? snow?) began falling around us.*



*The temperature dropped quickly.*



*Which was good news for skiers at the nearby resort. "More snow!"*



*Nogal Peak took on a 'Mt. Fuji'-like appearance, as snow began to fall at its elevation.*





*What do you think, guys? Should we head home? "Yup!", they agreed. "Just one more bite . . ."*



*Bucky and his buddies were glad to see us. "Oh, boy! Happy hour before the snow!"*



"Munch . . ."





"Crunch."



*"Wow! I wasn't expecting this!", enthused Gracie as the snow began to fall outside her window.*



We'll see what happens next.

MM



We got word that Bonito Lake was completely filled already. Everyone wanted to see for themselves. Although it was a gloomy, cloudy day we headed for the lake.

*There had been some rain overnight, and we passed standing water along the way.*



After such a long 'restoration', there it is. Full again!



*The lake is about 80 ft. deep and contains approximately 1500 acre-feet of water - almost five million gallons.*



*The Bonito River - now flowing with clear snow melt water - is one of the sources feeding the lake.*





"Golly!" Thunder exclaims.



"Ah . . ."



*"Beach time!" Spanky made the first sand angel - you can see the 'angel' mark in the sand in front of Thunder . . .*



*. . . and now time for some splash'in.*





*Drying off in the grass.*



*The river has spread beyond its usual course, creating shallow wet meadows.*





"Ah! Look at all that new grass!"





*We stopped by Blue Pond - which was less luminous under gloomy gray skies.*



*A pair of mallard ducks was very curious of the horses.*



*Devoted couple.*





*Contented horse.*



*It was good to see the sun back this morning.*



MM



We've been having lots of guests recently.

*The elk have decided this is a good place to be (that's a deer in the foreground).*



*The horses are used to them - Thunder continues to eat his breakfast while they eat theirs.*







*Sure are a lot of 'em.*





*Our 'drinker' water tank is a popular spot.*



*Awww - a little one.*







*A very young bull, under the crab apple tree. (wonder what he thinks of my pruning job . . .)*





*They just mosey around.*



*Another day, another group - in the east pasture.*







*These young'uns are staying close together. Wonder what they're thinking?*





*They're always curious about the metal 'deer family' sculptures. "Hey! Did you see these?" . . . "Yeah. Weird."*



*"I don't quite trust 'em."*



*Mommie Cat and Onyx aren't much interested. "It's okay - as long as they stay outdoors!"*



MM



Spring means the arrival of new calves, and an overload of cuteness.

*Here comes the herd to greet us.*



*They're hesitant at first.*



*Then Thunder welcomes this group of young heifers with a friendly nose touch . . .*



*. . . And one of the girls checks out his tail. "Gee, that's pretty. Wonder if I could get some extensions on mine . . .?"*





*The moms and calves arrive - they all are instant friends with the horses.*



*Spanky has become quite 'paternal' around the babies. "Hi, little guy!"*



*The calf sniffs Spanky's leg.*



*Yup - a definite 'awww'.*





*New buddies.*



*"Spanky's my pal!"*



*Then the boys discover tubs of molasses supplement - meant for the cows. "Yum!" (note the nose touch between the cow and Thunder).*



*This little one's having a milk snack.*





*"Slurp!"*



*Always curious. "Hmmm?"*



*Time to say goodbye for now.*



*"Where 'ya going? Come back soon, please!"*





*Spring also means the deer bucks are losing their antlers. It is a very interesting annual process.*



*When the time comes, hormones slowly 'release' the antlers and they painlessly fall off (which must be some kind of relief to the buck). Almost immediately the 'pedicle' socket (base of the antler) heals, and the development of a new set will soon begin.*



MM



The newly refilled Bonito Lake - and beautiful Blue Pond - called out again to us on an especially nice spring day.

*It's sure good to see the lake full again.*



*Thunder pauses to take in the view.*



*A perfect place for sand angels!*





*As we head over to Blue Pond, we stop for some snacking.*



*The water is crystal clear, creating a colorful underwater mosaic.*





*Then we 'bushwhacked' across a steep, forested hill - and literally stumbled over an interesting piece of local history. This white marble headstone marks the grave of Colonel Henry Pfingsten (the family remains prominent in the area today). Henry was born in Germany in 1840. At the young age of 15 he stowed away alone on a ship bound for America. He joined the US Army in 1861 and fought through the Civil War with the 16th Illinois Cavalry - during which he received "a severe saber cut to his head". He married in 1866 and had seven children - eventually moving his family to tiny Bonito, New Mexico. He worked several nearby mining claims, and eventually died in 1887 from injuries sustained in the Old Soldier Mine at the age of 47. It was an interesting find in the middle of nowhere.*



*There is something very special about Blue Pond. Not only it's clarity and jewel-like color . . .*



*. . . or it's secluded location just 10 miles from home (we've never seen anyone else here).  
There is an ethereal sense of peace . . .*





*I sat watching the horses graze and appreciating the beauty.*



*The little mallard couple came by to say hi.*



*We're grateful to know this place . . .*



*. . . and happy to share it with you.*



Thanks for joining us.  
MM



This week took us from checking on calves (awww); to a meandering stream (with green grass); a little arena work with Thunder (under saddle); a hitch-hiking bird and a cuddle.

*A mom babysitting little ones for her friends.*



*When a cow mom says to her calf, "Lie here and stay put!", they do.*





*The blessing of a water hole in cattle country.*





*Thunder has a romp . . .*



*To the music of a meadowlark's happy song.*



*Another snack along a meandering stream.*



*"Okay, Spanky - that's enough splashing!", says Thunder.*





*We explore a new trail . . .*



*My jeans. Yup . . . Thunder still is shedding his winter coat (one of the hazards of riding bareback).*



## 2023-04-07 - Calves, Cuddles and a Bird Friend

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*Not an issue when we use a saddle. Still snow in the high country.*



*Buddies on the trail. "Okay, we stopped and said 'cheese' like you asked - can we go now?"*







*It seems that Spanky has a new friend. Brave raven!*



*I have to wonder what they are both thinking.*



*"This is kind of like horse-surfing!"*





*"He better not poop on my blanket . . ."*



. . . and indoors, Onyx has a cuddle with her mommie. "Zzzzzzz."



MM



Like many families, we had friends over to Easter Brunch.

*Gracie greets her deer friends. "Welcome! Right this way to the buffet!"*



*The buffet line.*



*"There's more room over there...!", she suggests.*



*Gracie is a good hostess and makes sure everyone has enough to eat. "Um . . . better get some more corn ready!"*





*Here comes Bucky, fashionably late.*



*"May I order a la carte?"*





*He always gets served. First a crunchy apple-oat horse treat (his friend wonders what makes him so special).*



*Then a bowl of sweet feed 'cereal'.*





*"Thanks! That was great!"*



*Having lost just one of his antlers, this buck is a temporary unicorn (it must be an odd feeling). The other one will drop soon.*



*Later, the turkey family stopped by.*



*"Easter is one of our favorite holidays . . . much better than anything in the fall!"*





*Tom is always a bit of a showoff.*



*That's quite a tail fan.*



*A sure sign of spring's renewal - beautiful pear blossoms.*



MM



Beautiful early spring weather has raised the temps in the high country - the alpine snow is melting.

*Snowmelt cascades down from the mountains - making a magical melody as it rushes along.*



*Yet in some places natural dams create still pools of meditative silence . . .*





*... and all along its course - fresh green grass emerges. We can almost watch it grow.*





*The horses certainly enjoy the tasty treat.*



*They snack to the soothing sounds of rushing water.*





*Even with still-bare trees, there are some idyllic settings . . .*



*. . . but look closely - every tree and shrub is beginning to blossom with new, tiny leaves - earth's renewal.*









*The boys become hard to spot in the lengthening shadows.*





*Thunder makes a sand angel in the deep shade of dusk.*



*Spring is here, and we welcome all the new beginnings.*



*As Gracie and Mommie Cat enjoy a springtime snooze together.*



MM



In some ways, we feel most at home on the range. Freedom to roam in every direction.  
A great big sky above . . . and good friends we meet along the way.

*Thunder seems to ponder the great expanse - as he waits for his friends to arrive.*



*As they get closer, he goes to greet them.*



*"So, what's happening?", he asks. "I dunno - seems like everyone is having babies these days!"*



*"Yeah - it happens every year like this!" - another pipes in, between bites.*





*"I don't know - it just happened!"*



*"Come on baby, let's go look for your father . . ."*



*"They said it would be a blessing to have twins . . . but not so much. I'm exhausted!"*



*Ah . . . the cuteness factor . . .*





*Thunder keeps his eye on a brand new one. "Careful there! Take your time - coordination is weird to get used to!"*



*"Yeah - I see what you mean! That part back there wants to go in a different direction!"*



*"Ah, that's better! I think I'm getting the hang of it now . . ."*



*Spanky gives some advice of his own. "I'm sure your mom's around here somewhere . . ."*





*They look up to him - in more ways than one.*



*"Whoa, there. Take your time little guy!"*



*He does have his heroic moments (even with grass sticking out of his mouth). "I just want to make sure he's doing okay . . ."*



*This country is like that.*



MM



We hadn't seen the little band of wild horses at Mills Canyon for a while.  
*As we were leaving for our outing to the canyon, a herd of elk passed through the ranch.*



*They sure are fun to watch.*





*The Mills Canyon area is a favorite spot for us, and only about 10 minutes from home.*



*Nice shady trail . . .*

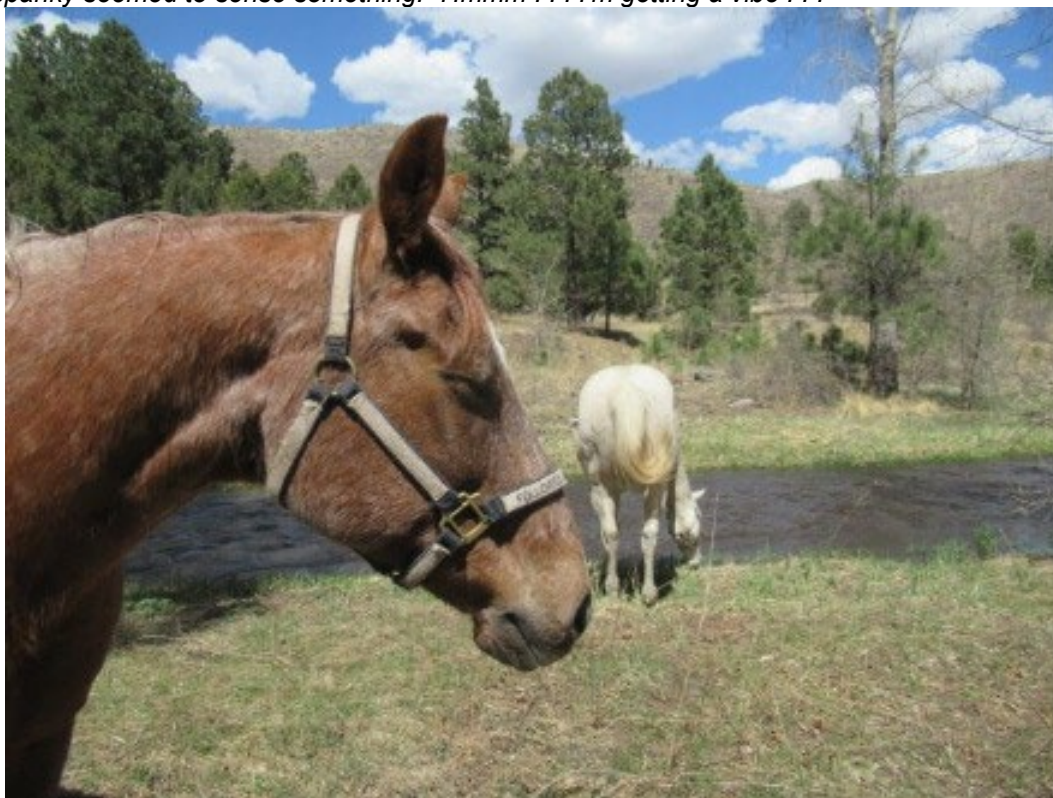




*. . . and of course, grass along the water is a big attraction.*



*Then Spanky seemed to sense something. "Hmmm . . . I'm getting a vibe . . ."*





*Thunder said, "Come on! This way!"*



*Sure enough! There was the wild horse family.*





*The babies have really grown up (and deepened in color).*



*That's a very pregnant mare on the left. But who's that with the other mare in the shadows on the right?*





*Guess what - their family has a new little angel baby! It's only days old.*



*Oh my gosh.*





*EVERYTHING is new to it. . . . "What's THAT, mom?"*



*Learning how to scratch an itch. "Almost . . . got . . . it . . ."*





*It doesn't wander too far from mom.*



*Everyone just does their horse thing.*

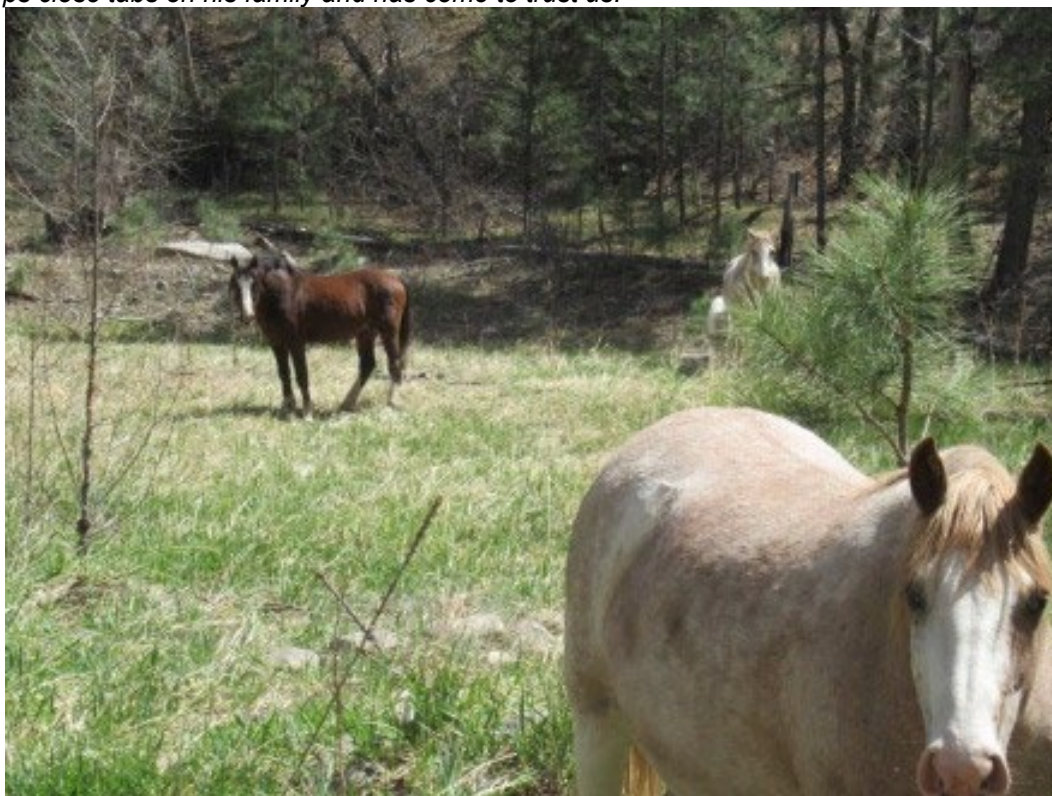




*All the horses get along - the dark horse in the distance is the father.*



*He keeps close tabs on his family and has come to trust us.*





*They have a beautiful home.*



*When it was time for us to go, mom and baby watched us move down the trail. "Who were they, mom?"  
... "Just some old friends."*



So glad we can share this happy event with you!

MM



Spring is in the air (at last).

*The horses certainly had 'spring fever' as they frolicked at the arena.*



*Thunder seemed to be in a nostalgic mood, as he suddenly ran part of the barrel race pattern (around barrels left in the arena by someone) on his own!*



*"Whee! I remember this!"*





*It's been many years since he competed - guess he wanted to know he could still do it!*



*He still has what it takes.*





*Meanwhile, Bucky finally lost both of his antlers (overnight). Seems odd to see him without them. He doesn't seem to mind.*





*Warm spring days mean 'splash time' for Spanky, in the warm dry end of Bonito Valley.*



*"Whoopee!"*





*"Hey! This is like snorkeling!"*



*The elk enjoy a more leisurely pace in the springtime sun, as the apple tree begins to leaf out.*





*No matter what season, the plush 'bear' is a hit with the cats (if you look closely, you can see Onyx snuggled between upside-down Mommie Cat, and Gracie).*



*Then Gracie and Orca share it - a cuddle in black and white. "Are you here with that camera again?", says Gracie.*



MM



# FOLLOWED DREAM RANCH



We were eager to see if the other wild mare had given birth, so we headed to Mills Canyon for a look (I'll end the suspense - she hasn't yet).

*As we arrived, the little band appeared out of the trees like the ball players in "Field of Dreams" They were happy to say 'Hi!' to Thunder and Spanky (that's the pregnant mare on the right).*



*The trusting daddy stallion hung out with us, too (at rear of photo - he keeps his distance as he watches over his family).*



*They all had a nice visit . . .*





*. . . and mom brought the baby close enough for us to know she is a little girl! The name 'Angel' seems to suit her.*



*She has a rare coloration on the top of her head and ears. Known as a 'medicine hat', it has long been held as a good omen by Native Americans. Typically, it was thought that horses with a medicine hat had special athletic abilities, and provided magic protection to those who rode them.*





*The medicine hat always crowns a white head - horses with this attribute usually have blue eyes and a pink nose (which Angel has - although all the colors can change as they grow).*



*Lots of 'awww' moments.*





*"Hey! We're cute, too!", says the previous generation of foals.*



*After exchanging pleasantries, my boys and I wandered along the stream - while the 'wild ones' went back to the forest. It was all very congenial.*





*Tough to beat a place like this in the spring.*



*Thunder has a tiny island all to himself.*







*The snow melt is really rolling.*







*A good day.*





*At home, little Gracie has discovered the warm patches of sunlight coming through windows . . .*



*"Oh - you're taking a photo. Wait a second . . . How's this?"*



MM



# FOLLOWED DREAM RANCH



We're still waiting for the second foal to be born to 'our' little wild horse family.

*We check on them occasionally (trying not to be too doting). The first foal, 'Angel', seems to be doing very well (she's out of sight in this photo, lying down in the grass next to her mom).*



*Of course, everyone has to come and say hello.*



*A friendly 'nose sniff'.*



*Angel wakes up. "Oh, look who's here!"*





*But first, a little snack.*



*This is the expectant mare. We're still waiting . . . "YOU'RE still waiting? Try carrying around a baby horse in your tummy!"*





*After a visit, we went on our way - enjoying springtime along a babbling stream.*





*A tiny waterfall on a brook leading into the stream. Its sound is truly musical.*





*Quick sip.*



*Within the wooded forest is this apparent apple tree - wonder how it got here? (And wonder if the wild horses will discover its fruit, as the deer usually do.)*





*Enjoying a 'ducky' day (sorry . . .)*



*Here's the little family again. Dad (far right) has gotten very trusting of us. The two mares exchange affectionate 'nibbles' along their manes, while Angel has another snack.*





*Awww . . . she is so sweet.*



*Here you can see her unusual 'medicine hat' coloration (dad still keeps an eye on us) . . .*





*. . . and check out those eyelashes.*



*A close (and very friendly) encounter.*



*At home, our happy hour has become more popular.*









MM



The other 'wild' mare gave birth to a baby girl early this morning at Mills Canyon.  
*Several hours later we got our first glimpse of her. \ Major 'awww . . .'*



*Mom is understandably proud. "Isn't she beautiful?"*





*The other mom admired her, too. "You are adorable!" (She sure is!) "And you smell new!"*



*Here are the two proud moms and their babies together along the stream.*





*I reassured Angel that she is adorable, too (and she has a 'medicine hat'!).*



*They were born in a kind of paradise.*





*My guys acknowledged the new one, then went on with their grazing. It was very peaceful.*



*Thunder struck an especially noble pose as he observed the family.*





*As usual, dad kept an eye on us all - he is comfortable with our presence . . .*



*. . . but we only had eyes for the brand-new baby.*







*Then, something astonishing. Mom brought her up to me for an introduction. I stood there transfixed - the baby is only hours old.*





*[Sound of my heart melting]*



*New foals can be 'imprinted' by humans with early handling (a type of bonding which can make them easier to train). But this little girl needs to live in the wild, so my contact was limited. Still . . . who could resist a quick rub?*



*Her coat is so soft.*



*It was tough to say good-bye . . . but we will meet again!*





*Then at home, Spanky joins a large group of deer for happy hour (if you look closely, you will see some elk in the far background).*



*The sun came out from behind a cloud, as they all wandered down the driveway.*



*It illuminated these cousins (deer and elk) grazing together.*



*A brave raven joins some deer at the water tank. "It's nice to know they're herbivores!"*





*And then Bucky came by for a little ear rub. "Ahhhh . . . that's . . . it!"*



*"A little more, please!"*



What a 'wild' day.  
MM



We wanted to assess conditions on some of the high-country trails, which also gave us a chance to check on the new foal during her second day (we now call her "Sweet Pea") on the way. You can probably guess that seeing the new foal was the real goal . . .

*She and Angel are doing just fine. This is Sweet Pea . . . "Oh look, mom, they're back!"*



*Angel and her mom.*





*I resisted petting the baby this time (it wasn't easy!)*



*Then we reluctantly moved on to the trails. We'd heard that there were some 'obstacles' left from the winter weather. A new wilderness sign has been installed.*





*Hmmm . . . this isn't too bad (we thought).*



*There were pretty flowers . . .*





*. . . and running water all along the trail.*



*And then . . . "Uh-oh!" (The trail is somewhere under this fallen tree).*





*The Forest Service hasn't yet cleared this trail - one of our favorites. We managed to get around that mess, only to find that some of the big Ponderosa pines had toppled over. When they did, they uprooted and created huge craters in the trail. As usual, Thunder assesses the situation . . .*



*. . . and finds a way to get around it.*





*Spanky tackles it head on. "He we go!"*



*There were several of these major obstacles.*





*As well as log jams across the trail (Thunder always finds a detour for us).*



*The horses were game, and we kept going. Much of the trail was untouched, and just as beautiful as we remembered . . .*



*. . . and before long, we were pushing the final distance to the top (Thunder always races up this part).*



*"Yay! We made it!" Spanky celebrates with a grass angel.*





*Was it worth the effort? Just look at that view. We're always happy to be back in the high country.*



*After enjoying this special place, we followed a gurgling little brook all the way down.*





*Sunset over Bonito Lake (which now is overflowing).*



*At home, Chile was there to greet us. "You were gone a long time! I was getting worried!" (Behind him, Thunder grabs a pre-supper snack.)*



MM



Though it's just barely spring, we have had a couple of warm, summer-like days. As always, we appreciate blue skies and the beauty of Nature.

*The boys graze in the shade under newly leafed trees.*



*What a colorful change from winter's bare limbs.*





*"Yeah, and this green grass is nice, too!"*





*Snow melt continues to feed the streams.*





*It genuinely feels like a calm summer's day - even the birds' singing sounds cheerier.*



*Bright sun and cool water.*







*A tiny grass island in the stream.*





*We visited the little 'wild' family. We kept our distance because little 'Sweet Pea' was having a nap. But once again mom brought her baby to see us.*



*"Hi!" (That's her dad in the background.)*





*"I might as well have a quick snack."*



*Angel thought that was a pretty good idea, too. The warm day has made everyone a little sleepy.*



*It's nice that they each have a playmate.*



*They stay close to their moms.*







*In this close up, Sweet Pea looks almost like an adult horse.*



*But she is still a baby, and very curious.*



*"Well, I'm growing up as fast as I can!" It's hard to believe she is just eight days old.*



MM



Spring is a time of growth and renewal (even though our real 'green season' doesn't come until the summer monsoons).

*It's a pretty time of year, as the trees sport fresh new foliage . . .*



*. . . and stream banks are lush with grass - while snow melt water cascades by.*





"Yum!"



*Speaking of new growth . . . Bucky proudly shows off his emerging antler 'bumps' as I massage his ears (note his tongue out in joy).*





*(He also likes a back rub.)*



*Only weeks since the last pair were jettisoned, a new set of antlers is beginning to grow on top of his head.*



*"It's going to be cool to have them back!"*



*I had seen a drab little bird frequently in the garage. Then I noticed she had built a beautifully woven nest on a high shelf - and she was occupying it (this is the best shot of her I have managed so far - I'm not sure what type of bird she is).*





*She's currently sitting on two little eggs. I have to leave a door ajar, so she has access in and out.*



*In the forest, even the fir trees are sprouting a couple inches of new growth.*





More growth . . .



*The new babies are looking less like newborn foals, and more like little horses already. Mom shows off her beautiful 'Sweet Pea'.*





*This was the wobbly newborn less than two weeks ago.*



*"Oh, yeah - I know you!"*





*She comes up for a closer look.*



*Her little friend 'Angel' is busy having a meal.*





*Dad continues to take our presence in stride, which is pretty cool for a stallion.*



*Yup, spring is special around here.*



MM



End Journal Part 1 of 3

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