

Shackleford Banks Horse Herd Update August 14, 2009

Shackleford horses can live as long as - or longer than - domestic horses, despite the relatively harsh conditions in the wild. This past winter we lost four old stallions who have left indelible impressions on the people who care about this wild herd. This update is dedicated to them.

Julius kept a harem until his death, though at the end he had only one mare. He is remembered for having two young stallions in his harem for some time. Julius taught them masterful harem management by example and they in turn were respectful of their elder. A less dominant harem stallion might not have tolerated their potential threat for so long. One youngster, Axl, now has his own harem and uses Julius' old home range. Julius lived to be 18 years old.



Left: Julius with his long-time mare, Leila, at the Mullet Pond.

Satellite lived in the Whale Creek Bay area for most of his life. He could often be found grazing with his mares on the marsh islands of Bottle Run Point. He was 20 years old when he died.



Right: Satellite.

Lenon sired at least 11 offspring during his 21-year life and has an adult granddaughter, Liani, on the island. He was dominant enough that, for many years, his harem had their choice of any area on the west end of Shackleford Banks.



During one Shackleford roundup, Lenon, a major herd stallion at the time, didn't come in with his mares. The experienced ATV riders participating went back to the western-most tip of the island to bring him in. Their strategy was to get Lenon on the ocean beach near the water and herd him down the island to the pens. They planned to let him set the pace; slow was fine. Lenon would lope along for a while, then kick into high gear, pass the lead ATV, swing around and head back west. By the third try, they managed to keep up with him (probably only because he chose to oblige!) Dallas Willis, a long-time horse handler, commented that he had never seen such endurance. He said

Lenon continued to lope the whole way on the several-mile trek to the pens.

Above: Lenon in the chute during the 2003 roundup.

Mystic was beta (second in command) to another stallion for most of his adult life. In the last few years he kept a mare or two of his own. Mystic was known for not paying close attention to his mare(s). He sometimes grazed unconcerned while they wandered off toward other harems. Occasionally he disrupted other harems when running from harem to harem trying to find his lost mares. He lived to be 17.

Below: Mystic in full herding posture after his mare Delphi II.
Photo by Kate McLachlan, VIP.



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Source: Cape Lookout National Seashore, Wildlife Biologist - Horses