

## Feral Free-ranging Horse Impacts to Native Wildlife

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**ABSTRACT:** The impacts of introduced horse on the vegetative communities has been widely studied. However, minimal research has been conducted to scientifically determine how they affect native wildlife. Ecologically, feral and free-ranging horses have been documented to cause environmental effects including: soil loss, compaction and erosion; trampling of vegetation; reducing plant species richness; inducing mortality of native trees; damage to bog habitats; damage to water bodies; facilitation of weed invasion; altering composition of insects; crabs, fish, reptiles, birds and small mammals; and, keeping wildlife out of waterholes. The controversy surrounding management of horses and the continued growth of feral free-ranging horse populations will challenge the ability to properly manage habitat for wildlife into the future. We identify gaps in the literature and recommend that more peer-reviewed research would be beneficial in reducing the current public controversy surrounding management of feral horses.

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