

## WinkWorld February 2008

### Notes from the Real World

Please enjoy some of the birds I've seen in CA this month. Mid-February will find me commuting my 1534 miles back to the ranch in South Dakota; I return to CSU in mid-March for a short time.

Audubon Warbler

[http://grd-jerry.home.att.net/audubons\\_warbler\\_photo\\_pic.html](http://grd-jerry.home.att.net/audubons_warbler_photo_pic.html)

Western Bluebird

<http://www.mbr-pwrc.usgs.gov/Infocenter/i7670id.html>

Green Heron

[http://identify.whatbird.com/obj/32/ /Green\\_Heron.aspx](http://identify.whatbird.com/obj/32/ /Green_Heron.aspx)

Great Egrets

[http://identify.whatbird.com/obj/30/ /Great\\_Egret.aspx](http://identify.whatbird.com/obj/30/ /Great_Egret.aspx)

Cedar Waxwings

[http://identify.whatbird.com/obj/159/ /Cedar\\_Waxwing.aspx](http://identify.whatbird.com/obj/159/ /Cedar_Waxwing.aspx)

### Prairie Pedagogy

Wink Cattle Company

(Contributed by Dean Wink)

Greetings from the prairies,

This Winter has been a mixed blessing so far. The weather has been moderate until recently with very little snow. This allows the cows to graze Winter pasture thus saving on much needed hay supplies. However, it only serves to create more concern over the continuing drought. Hopefully, we will receive much needed moisture this Spring allowing us to maintain the base cowherd. Every neighbor I know is running only a fraction of the number of cows that their ranch will run on a normal weather cycle. In previous years, we've had a reserve of water in our stock dams left over from wetter years, but just about all of them are now dry, and ranchers are relying on their wells for livestock water. Every week, we hear of shallow wells going bad because there has been no recharge of the groundwater aquifers for eight years. Last week, the 8th neighbor hooked on to our deep water well pipeline in case their shallow well stops providing enough water for the cowherd.

Prairie people say this is "next year country" because if things don't go well this year, it is sure to get better next year. The optimism and independent attitude of my neighbors continues to amaze me. The human spirit is still alive and well, but I'm afraid ranchers have their backs against the wall this year if this weather pattern doesn't change soon.

On a brighter note, *Wink's Washout* is finally up and operational. In 2005, when we were blessed by "hitting" a wonderful deep water well (3200 feet), some of the local livestock haulers asked me if I would be interested in putting in a facility to wash out the manure from their trucks and trailers. It involved putting in a lagoon to catch the manure and wood

shavings they use to bed their trucks and a cement slab so none of the runoff would soak down to the groundwater supplies. In addition, it required a small pump house to hold booster pumps to provide added volume and pressure to get the job done. It has three bays so three trucks can washout out at the same time so nobody has to wait in line. I've only installed one booster pump at this time so I can let truckers use it for awhile and get feedback on if there is enough volume and pressure to get the job done before ordering the other two pumps. Hopefully, the washout will provide more diversity in our operation so we do not have to rely solely on the price of calves for our income.

I wanted to call it "The Royal Flush" keeping in mind its purpose. I was out voted in family council. I believe the term family members used was "bathroom humor." What do you think? I know Joan trusts her readership's judgment. It's an election year-- cast your ballot on [dwink@gwtc.net](mailto:dwink@gwtc.net). *Wink's Washout* or *The Royal Flush!*

Several ranchers I know have resorted to diversification to keep their ranches afloat. Some have gone to trucking; some offer hunting camps, some train horses, and some start new ventures like welding, doing mechanics, etc. By far, many still rely on their wives working in town to provide extra income to help pay the bills. (Present company not excluded) Like everyone else, the increase in fuel prices has affected ranchers' bottom line. Unlike our friends that live in town, distances to supplies and services magnify the situation. Driving 160 miles round trip for groceries, tractor, or plumbing parts leaves us scratching our head on what to cut back on in other areas of the budget.

The colts are doing well, and I look forward to working with them this Spring. I wanted to have them all gentle and halter trained by now, but other jobs like hauling hay and fixing water lines have a higher priority so the colts keep being put on the "back burner."

The last few days have been "crisp." -18 degrees with a breeze takes the wind chill factor to -40. It makes going outside to do chores a challenge. I find myself looking for things to do inside-I must be getting soft!!

### **The 5 Grands**

Uncle Jason and boys

[www.joanwink.com/gifs3/UncleJasonandBoys.jpg](http://www.joanwink.com/gifs3/UncleJasonandBoys.jpg)

Austin 5

[www.joanwink.com/gifs3/Austin-Read.jpg](http://www.joanwink.com/gifs3/Austin-Read.jpg)

Garrett, 2, writing

[www.joanwink.com/gifs3/Garrett-writing.jpg](http://www.joanwink.com/gifs3/Garrett-writing.jpg)