

Friends of Pinnacle Peak Park NEWSLETTER

Fall 2025 Volume #44

Fun Facts Guaranteed To Make You Say..... EEW! ICK! GROSS! WOW!

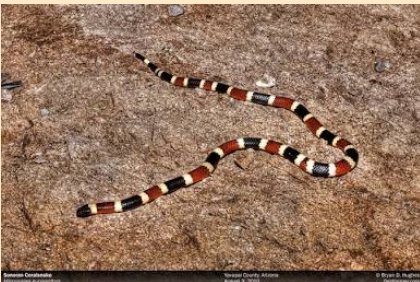
By Alice Demetra, Don Brockway, Sue Handke and Don Handke

Pinnacle Peak wildlife is full of weird and wacky surprises! Meet some of these animals with unique adaptations and unusual means of self-defense



“SNALTS”!

The Common Chuckwalla sneezes excess salt from its diet of flowers and leaves, leaving telltale white rings around its nostrils.



FARTS!

When threatened, the venomous Sonoran Coral snake produces fart noises as a defense.



EATS ITS POOP!

The Desert Cottontail eats its poop to get every bit of nutrition from the hard-to-digest grasses it eats.



SHOOTS BLOOD!

The Regal Horned Lizard squirts foul-tasting blood from his eyes. It can shoot this gory goo 3 feet or more to send its enemies running.



SCARY HAIRS!

The Desert Blond Tarantula uses its back legs to fling barbed hairs from its abdomen into a predator's eyes, mouth or skin.



EATS WITH ITS EYEBALLS!

As the Sonoran Desert Toad grabs food with its sticky tongue, it quickly shuts its eyes while squeezing its eyeballs into its throat to aid in swallowing.

The Splendid Ocotillo

By Molly Heekin

One of the easiest desert plants to recognize, the ocotillo (*Fouquieria splendens*) stands tall with spiny, whip-like canes sprouting from a short central trunk, crowned by bright red flowers. Its scientific name means “splendid,” and once you see it in bloom, you’ll understand why

It usually takes 7 to 10 years for an ocotillo to mature enough to produce its iconic red flowers.

An ocotillo is actually a shrub in a plant family all its own. During dry spells, it looks like a bundle of bare sticks. After a rain, it transforms almost overnight, sprouting vivid green leaves that soak up sunlight. When the soil dries, the leaves quickly drop to conserve water.

Ocotillo can grow up to 20 feet tall. With a deep taproot and remarkable drought tolerance, it can live for 60 to 100 years or more.

Its fiery red flowers provide a vital nectar source for hummingbirds. Native bees, butterflies, and even nectar-feeding bats also visit the flowers. Birds such as the verdin and curve-billed thrasher often nest among the ocotillo’s thorny stems, which offer protection from predators.



With spiny stems and bright red flowers, the ocotillo is one of the easiest plants to spot on the Pinnacle Peak Park trail.

Ocotillo grows throughout the Sonoran Desert, including Scottsdale and Pinnacle Peak Park, as well as the Chihuahuan Desert in the southwestern

United States and northern Mexico.

For generations, Indigenous peoples such as the Tohono O’odham and Yavapai-Apache have had many uses for the ocotillo. The stems were used to build shelters, fences, and tools, while its roots and bark were used medicinally to treat wounds and illnesses.

Next time you’re hiking through Pinnacle Peak Park, take a moment to appreciate the ocotillo not just its unique beauty but also its history and important role in the desert ecosystem. It’s one of the many living features that make our park so special.

AZ Bat Rescue

By Hally Cokenias

Look for AZ Bat Rescue sharing information about these unique creatures at the park this Fall!



Did you know that Arizona is home to 29 species of bats? They live all around us in man-made and natural places. Most of Arizona’s bat species are insectivorous; the pallid bat even eats scorpions! Some species are nectivorous and pollinate cacti and agave. Bats are an essential part of our ecosystem and need protection.

Arizona Bat Rescue helps injured, ill and orphaned bats. We give bats the specialized care they need to get back to the wild. We strive to share how amazing (and adorable) bats are and how people benefit from living with them. We’re Arizona’s only bat-dedicated rescue and have helped hundreds of bats. We’re a non-profit, 501c3 organization that operates on private donations.

The Legend is Retiring: John Loleit

By Yvonne Massman

Pinnacle Peak Park did not exist before John Loleit. John was hired in 2000, specifically to turn the 180 acres plus donated land, that had laid fallow and fenced off for almost a decade, into the next city of Scottsdale Park.

Coming from Santa Fe, New Mexico, with his 25 years of working for the National Park Service, John helped to create one of the city's top destinations. He brought with him an appearance and demeanor from his past, Smokey Bear hat and uniform, that included a professionalism that appearances indeed make a difference

Creating Pinnacle Peak Park had many challenges. These included a contractor who wasn't always a gem to work with, a nearby neighborhood that was mostly opposed to a park, and many city council meetings that were less supportive of the park than one could imagine.

While overseeing the park development, some of the many other tasks that John took on was



to create a successful volunteer program, Jr. Ranger program, Interpretive Guided Hiking program, and a volunteer trail crew to address trail maintenance and improvements.

When asked what the highlight of his career was, without hesitation, John replied, "the people, definitely the people!" The "magic of the peak" as he would always say. It is a gathering place for families to share the outdoors together, grieve a lost loved one, celebrate a birthday or special occasion, a place to learn more about the unique Sonoran Desert, and for many a daily morning hike to start their day.

"The best thing that the city of Scottsdale ever did was to hire John Loleit!" A quote by Scott Hamilton, previous Preserve Manager and who hired John.

Thank you John, for 25 years of service, leadership, and friendship.

Katie's Corner

By Katie Anders

While visitor numbers tapered off over the summer, the Pinnacle Peak staff and volunteers, Trail Crew, and Katie did not! We took advantage of the slow, long summer days to do some office revamping. Since May, the Pinnacle Peak office has gone from dingy, cluttered, and outdated and finally got refreshed for the first time in 23 years.

Over the summer, the office got a new coat of white paint, the shelves that house the animal photos were rebuilt and the cabinet doors were sanded, stained and sealed. We didn't stop there – the facilities team re-epoxied and sealed the floors, the countertops (original to the building in 2002) were replaced, as well as some other technologies, chairs, desktops and organization were upgraded. – bringing the office into the current decade.

As far as Pinnacle Peak Park and trail go – the Trail Crew has been hard at work almost every Monday this summer. They have trimmed the trees in the PPP parking lot and took on the daunting task of trimming the trees on Pinnacle Peak Parkway (the road that leads into the park). Tree trimming not only makes the park look nice but also aids in fire mitigation as well! We are so grateful for their hard work! In the upcoming months, the nature trail will also be reworked so we can offer short, guided hikes for children and their families in the fall and winter. In addition, we are looking forward to a new hand-crafted bench at PK 45 later this fall.

Stay tuned! There's always something happening in Katie's Corner!



Events and Activities:

[Astronomy Evenings](#)

[Sunset/ Full Moon Hike](#)

[Jingle Hike](#)

[Wildlife Discovery](#)

[Eek At The Peak](#)

[Explore More Days](#)

[And More](#)



For Dates and Times and to register go to:

Pinnaclepeakpark.org



Pinnaclepeakpark.org

Visit our new and improved website!

Pinnacle Peak Apparel is thrilled to be part of **Explore More Day** on November 15th, where we'll be set up with a table full of your favorite PPA gear. It's a great chance to check out our styles in person, ask questions, and grab something fun for yourself or a fellow trail lover. One of our most popular items—the **Kids Wildlife Tee**—will be available to purchase on-site in a variety of sizes and colors. This playful design features a few of the incredible creatures you might be lucky enough to spot along the Pinnacle Peak Park trail, from the bobcat to the Gila monster. It's a perfect piece for little nature lovers! We'll be accepting both cash and money transfers on-site. And remember, you can always shop online anytime at pinnaclepeakapparel.com to gear up for the trail.

Friends of Pinnacle Peak Park

PMB 288
8711 E. Pinnacle Peak Rd.
Scottsdale, AZ 85255
pinnaclepeakpark.org
info@foppp.org

Volunteer Opportunity

Do you want to be a steward and help protect our beautiful Sonoran Desert? Do you want to share your knowledge of our special environment? If yes, then Pinnacle Peak Park has a variety of volunteer opportunities available to you, including trail roving, trail sweeping, trail maintenance and visitor center attendant. Find more information and a volunteer application at City of Scottsdale- Pinnacle Peak Park Volunteers (scottsdaleaz.gov).

Board Members

Lisa Levey, President
Open, Vice President
Tom Eye, Treasurer
Sheila Wright, Secretary
Domenica Corbo

Paul Diefenderfer
Molly Heekin
Sean Hufford
Eric Repec

Editor/ Designer: Robin Prosser