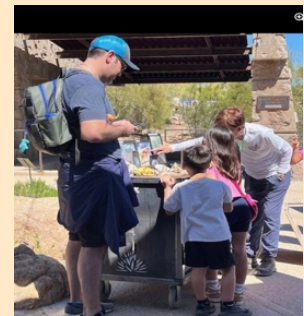


Friends of Pinnacle Peak Park

Fall 2026 Volume #46

A Peek at the Peak: Nature Stations

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



During the 2024-25 and 2025-26 seasons, Park Volunteers Alice Demetra, Sue Handke, and Don Brockway, with behind-the-scenes support from Don Handke, presented **29 weekend nature stations** and **17 midweek mini-stations**, resulting in a **record-setting 5,198 visitor engagements**.

These volunteers aim to engage, educate, and entertain hikers with Sonoran Desert stories that are unusual, unforgettable and fun. Their goal is to create hands-on, interactive presentations that are as unique as Pinnacle Peak Park itself.

“WOW! You won’t believe the cool things we saw, touched, heard, and smelled at Pinnacle Peak Park!”

Kids—and kids at heart—are amazed to discover that a regal horned lizard can shoot blood from its eyes, a chuckwalla sneezes salt from its nose, and a coral snake makes farting noises. Visitors shriek as a harmless millipede slowly crawls up their outstretched arms. Out-of-town guests can touch the skin and shake the rattle of a Western Diamondback while learning snake safety. International visitors marvel at towering saguaros, which begin life from a single seed no larger than the period at the end of this sentence. If it’s weird, wild, or wonderful, Alice, Sue, and Don have the fur, skull, skin, track, model, photograph—or even rubber poop—to bring a story to life.

Sunday morning nature stations and Wednesday morning mini-stations return this October on a pop-up basis at the Visitor Center. Have you ever felt the coarse bristles of a javelina? Heard about the bird whose tongue wraps around its brain? Stop by to discover what surprising peek at the Peak these volunteers will share next!

* (“Thanks to the Friends of Pinnacle Peak Park for their purchase of educational materials and props.”)

Agents of Discovery

By Susan Sheahan

"Agents of Discovery is a free, AI-powered platform that turns real-world locations into interactive augmented reality (AR) educational adventures." Wow! That's kind of a mouthful. And what does it really mean?

Pinnacle Peak Park uses this exciting program to help visitors learn more about the Sonoran Desert. At Pinnacle Peak Park, we are using this as a Jr. Ranger option

Agents of Discovery allows users to explore, learn, and engage through location-based AR games called Missions, playable on-site or from anywhere. We currently have two missions: one to be played on the main trail up to marker 17, and the other to be played on the newly developed activity trail. This was chosen to help parents keep their little ones active and engaged without worrying about navigating the main trail. In the program, players become "Agents" who complete Challenges—activities like matching images sorting AR objects, solving puzzles, or answering quiz-style questions—to unlock rewards. Each Mission includes a customizable AI avatar, a location map, safety information, and interactive content. The avatar for Pinnacle Peak is a chuckwalla named Dusty.

At the end of the mission, players take a virtual photo with Dusty. When they are finished, they bring their phones to the window for the standard Jr. Ranger badge..

Soon we will have a large cutout of Dusty to encourage visitors to play. But you don't have to wait to see him. Next time you're out, grab your phone, go to <https://app.agentsofdiscovery.com> and give it a try. You might even learn something new!

Meet the Javelina, Pinnacle Peak's social (and stinky) local residents

By Molly Heekin

If you've ever spotted a group of javelina at Pinnacle Peak, you might wonder, "are those wild pigs?" Despite their appearance, javelina are not pigs; they are collared peccaries, a New World mammal with a unique evolutionary history.



Javelina are well adapted to the Sonoran Desert. They eat primarily prickly pear and other cacti, succulent plants, roots, seeds, and occasionally insects and grubs. Their foraging disperses seeds, making them an important part of the desert ecosystem. They are also prey for larger mammals, such as mountain lions and coyotes. In the heat of summer, they are more active at night. In the cooler months, daytime sightings are common.

These are highly social, typically traveling in herds of up to 20 animals. Young javelina are protected by the group, and adults may move between groups. Adults weigh between 35-60 pounds, and they live about seven years in the wild.

And then there's the smell. Javelina are famously, and unmistakably, stinky. Their distinctive musky odor comes from a scent gland on their backs, and is used to communicate and reinforce social bonds.

Fun Events at Pinnacle Peak Park



Wildlife Saturday



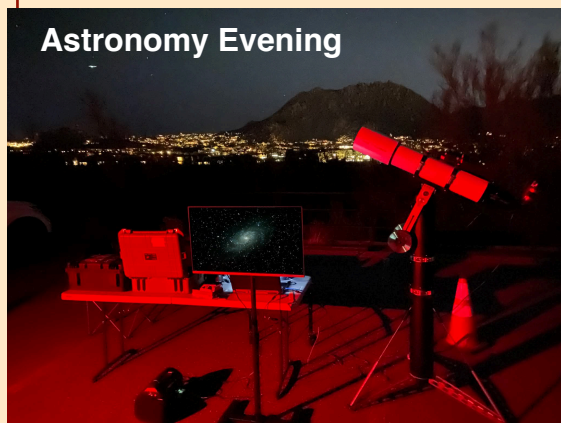
Volunteer Appreciation Lunch



Geology Adventure



Sunset/ Full Moon Hike



Astronomy Evening



Yoga

Katie's Corner

By Katie Anders



This summer's work was behind the scenes. Katie and the staff spent a lot of time putting our heads together for many new things around Pinnacle Peak. Staff has worked hard on their personal Ramada signs, that will be displayed year-round in the Ramada. The initial plans and layout for the Discovery Trail were worked on by the Trail Crew. The Discovery Trail will be utilized for small, guided hikes, interpretive usage, and for Agents of Discovery. Pinnacle Peak Park is getting a mascot, Dusty, who will be used in Agents of Discovery and for PPP messaging. Eek! At the Peak will return on Saturday, October 24 from 9-11 am. Katie acquired a safety grant to redesign the PK markers on the trail. New trail signage, a monument sign, and other facility upgrades are in the works.

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

Events and Activities:

Spring/ Fall/ Winter

- *Astronomy Evening
- *Sunset/ Full Moon Hike
- *Wildlife Saturday
- *Yoga
- *Trail Tales
- *Geology Adventure

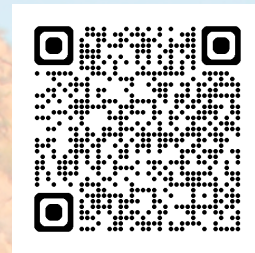
Late Fall

- *EEK At the Peak
- *Jingle Hike

Spring 2027

- *Explore More Days

Events

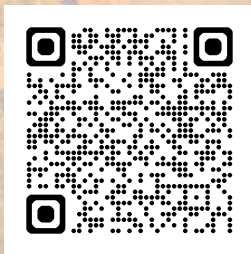


For Dates and Times and to register go to:

www.scottsdaleaz.gov/parks/find-a-park/pinnacle-peak-park

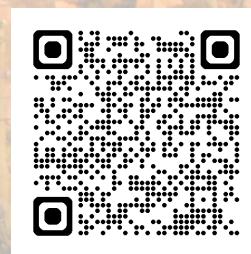
Pinnaclepeakpark.org

Donate



*Visit our new and improved
website!*

Shop



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
Molly Heekin, Vice President
Tom Eye, Treasurer
Sheila Wright, Secretary
Domenica Corbo

Paul Diefenderfer
Sean Hufford
Robin Prosser
John Romanow
Eric Repec

Editor/ Designer: Robin Prosser