

Friends of PINNACLE PEAK PARK Newsletter

Friends of Pinnacle Peak Park • PMB 288, 8711 E. Pinnacle Peak Road • Scottsdale AZ 85255 • www.pinnaclepeakpark.com

Bats

By Yvonne Massaman

Pinnacle Peak Park this season has been hosting a “Watchable Wildlife” program,” presented by the Game and Fish Biologist, Randy Babb. Our first program focused on bats of Arizona. This article is a summary of some of what the audience learned.

There are 1,300 species of bats worldwide. Twenty-eight of these species have been documented in Arizona, making us second only to Texas in bat diversity in the United States. The rocks and crevices at Pinnacle Peak Park are habitats for at least two species of bats. The Cave myotis (*Myotis velifer*) is a medium-sized bat with brown or black fur on its back and paler fur on its underside. Its ears are short and pointed and its eyes are small. They have a wing span of 11-13 inches and weigh 0.4-0.5 ounces. During the summer months, the park hosts large numbers of this species but, as the end of October approaches, they migrate to a different habitat for hibernation. The smallest bat in the United States is the canyon bat (*Parastrellus hesperus*). It also takes up residence in the park. Its fur varies from a silver-gray to golden brown on top and a white underside. Its face and ears are black. They weigh between 0.1-0.2 ounces and their wingspan is 7-9 inches. These are the bats that you will see just as dusk is setting in, often times coming out to feed hours before the other bat species.

Bats are unique creatures. They are the only mammal to have true flight. Their wings are built like our hands, with four fingers and a thumb. The flying movement that they exhibit is similar to a swimming motion with their wings. The single use of most bats’ feet is to act like a coat hanger, for hanging upside down while they roost during the day. To accomplish this, their feet point backwards. This unique sleeping posture poses an interesting idea: how does a bat regulate its blood pressure? Additionally, why doesn’t blood rush to their heads? One possible answer is that they do not weigh enough for gravity to affect their circulation.

Most bat species use “echolocation” to navigate and hunt, which is emitting sounds (often far beyond a human’s range of hearing) that bounce off of obstacles and return to the bat. Their often funny and weird-looking facial structures help them focus sounds, similar to the placement of a satellite dish on the roof. Echolocation is efficient and effective and, through its use, bats can determine the size and form of their prey, as well as avoid obstacles during flight. Since bats take the night shift, echolocation is very useful for them.

The bats found at Pinnacle Peak Park are insectivores, they do in the night what birds do in the day; eat bugs. Seventy percent of the world’s bats eat insects. A single bat can eat up to 1200 insects per hour. Most people don’t appreciate the ways in which bats benefit us. They eat insects that threaten people and threaten crops. They are also very clean animals. People fear bats because a small percentage of them carry disease and can expose humans and pets to rabies or other pathogens. In reality, bats are generally harmless to humans. Nevertheless, never pick up or touch a bat. Although less than one percent of wild bats are likely to have rabies at any given time, bats you are able to approach or are acting bold or unafraid are most likely sick and potentially dangerous. If there is a bat on the ground do not touch it.

As with most wildlife, bats have predators. These include the American Kestrel, Great Horned owl, skunks, raccoons and Lyre snakes. People can also threaten bats. Disturbing a colony of bats can result in their death and large fines. Bats are protected by law for this reason.

Bats are fragile animals, and most will produce only 1-2 young per year. Their young are referred to as “pups.” Many bat species are vulnerable to disturbances by people because of their colonial roosting habits and low reproductive rate. If they lose a baby, they will not reproduce again until the following year. Bats can identify their particular young out of an entire colony of thousands. Pups are typically born in June and July, and learn to fly at three weeks old. Many bats can live to be 30-40 years old.

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Photo by Randy Babb



Photo by Randy Babb

Gone Guy (Kind of...) John Loleit Moves to McDowell

By John Loleit

Before accepting the new position of Recreation Coordinator of Pinnacle Peak Park in February 2000, I spent nearly 25 years with the National Park Service in various Parks and Monuments in the Southwest. Using my Park Service background, I was able to develop a volunteer program, trail maintenance and emergency plans, and interpretive programs before ground was broken on the new trailhead. However, the biggest challenge was working closely with the surrounding communities to dispel their fears that the trailhead would bring increased vandalism and decrease

their property values. Shortly after opening the new Park on April 20, 2002, a medical evacuation that included landing a helicopter in a nearby residential cul-de-sac did not help alleviate the fears of the community. Working closely with them, and maintaining constant communication, We mostly laid those anxieties to rest after about a year. Now the communities embrace the Park, its beauty and wildlife, and its proximity for them to enjoy a hike!

With a small-part time staff and a growing number of volunteers, Pinnacle Peak Park provides educational programs and talks to the public about the natural history of the Sonoran Desert. Park visitors have come to rely on staff and volunteers to answer questions and are confident in knowing that if there was an emergency, trained park personnel would be there to help. Early on, volunteer Morrie Chernis suggested we start a non-profit "Friends" group. Through his leadership, the Friends of Pinnacle Peak Park (a 501(c)(3) organization) has funded interpretive programs, training for staff, and capitol improvements to the trailhead. I was successful at Pinnacle Peak because of the dedicated staff and caring group of volunteers. More importantly, a highly talented but small group of trail crew volunteers has kept the trail in great shape for all levels of hikers.

This past summer I accepted the Natural Resource Coordinator position at Browns Ranch Trailhead, which is part of the Scottsdale McDowell Sonoran Preserve. I will use the same approach I used at Pinnacle Peak to meld the operations of the Preserve with the local community. My most successful tool is developing relationships with volunteers, staff, and the visiting public. I will use these relationships to accomplish my goals in making the McDowell Sonoran Preserve a world-class destination.



Photo by Tracy Weaver

New Class of Pinnacle Peak Volunteers

By Yvonne Massman

Typically we highlight the accomplishments of one particular volunteer in each newsletter but, with this issue, we wanted to share with you the accomplishments of 16 volunteers: our new graduating class! We have found an ambitious and take-charge group in these volunteers. Even before the month-long training was over, they were making themselves seen in their pristine, white, new volunteer shirts, tackling the trail, answering questions in the office, and even helping with the trail crew. They have smoothly transitioned to an attitude of self-confidence in their visitor interaction; you might even be convinced they have been doing this job since the opening of the park 12 years ago. This dedicated group spent hours upon hours in the month of October (some of those were long training nights too) learning about the fauna, flora, history, policies, and regulations of the park. They also learned CCC (Continuous Cardiac Compressions), first aid, and how to operate an AED (automated external defibrillator). This dynamic group maintains the same standard of excellence that our current team of volunteers exhibits. Thank you all!



Photo by Yvonne Massman

Historic Rain Storms

By Leona Weinstein

Early Monday morning, September 8th, 2014, an historic rainstorm slammed the Valley. Pinnacle Peak Trail was one of its victims. By 9:30 a.m. that morning, the valley's rainfall record was already broken, with Phoenix Sky Harbor Airport reporting 3.29 inches of rain since midnight; the wettest day on record since Phoenix began record keeping in 1895.

Our desert terrain is incapable of absorbing a lot of water all at once, which means heavy weather can cause significant damage to the trail. We need rain to fall in a gradual and consistent manner, so our soil can store the water, and not create run-off that erodes the trail.

The Pinnacle Peak Park Trail and Maintenance crew of volunteers (Joe Zveglich, Thale Dammon, Ken Koch, Jim Sciacero, Inge Harper, and Leona Weinstein) usually work on the trail on Mondays and after a rainstorm to make any necessary repairs. They were all more than surprised when they arrived early Tuesday morning, as the trail was in bad shape. Major rutting had occurred in many places on the trail, in some cases so deep that the roots were showing from the trees along the trail. A large portion of the trail beyond Owls Rest was washed away so severely that no trail existed in this area. The City of Scottsdale decided to close the park until it became safe for hikers and runners.

Our dedicated Trail Crew worked as quickly as they could to get the trail in stellar shape to reopen it. The Crew filled the ruts, rebuilt the portion of the trail that had washed away, and put in some steps where the rain had eroded some of the soil from the trail. It took three days to get the trail back in shape and safe. Each morning our dedicated Crew laughed about their aches and pains from the previous day's hard work. Their dedication to Pinnacle Peak Trail is what makes this trail so popular for locals and tourists alike.

Let's hope for gentle rains in the future. Until the next rainstorm....



Photo by Leona Weinstein



Photo by Leona Weinstein



Photo by Leona Weinstein

Bats, Continued

By Yvonne Massman

Bats are very particular about the places they select as roost sites. Though bat boxes have been put up to encourage bats to reside around homes, they have proven to be largely unsuccessful. Bats select roost sites based on specific features such as airflow, humidity and temperature which are difficult to replicate in a bat house. There are, however, many ways to encourage bats to frequent your area. If you have palm trees, don't trim them; by keeping the frond skirts on them, you are creating a nice habitat that many urban bat species utilize. Providing a water source is one of the easiest and greatest attractants, as is evening lighting that brings in insects for them to feed on. The Arizona Department of Transportation has even incorporated structural gaps into their bridge designs that bats use as roosts.

Finally, there are many legends and folklore regarding bats worldwide. One of the best comes from the Chinese who associate bats with good fortune. It is our good fortune to have them at Pinnacle Peak Park!

The fee for this educational program was funded by the Friends of Pinnacle Peak Park; the 501c3 non-profit organization whose mission is to provide educational opportunities and enhancements for the betterment of the park and its visitors. The last program of the season will be on "Venomous Critters" in Arizona and will take place on February 20th.

Welcome to a New Board Member!

By Yvonne Massman

The Board of the Friends of Pinnacle Peak Park welcomes Domenica Corbo as their newest board member! Domenica has been a loyal hiker at the park since it opened in 2002.

In addition to her daily hike, Domenica has been gracious with her artistic calligraphy skills over the years, creating elaborate signs and displays for the many events and activities the park offers.

Now Domenica has also taken on the role of board secretary.

Welcome, Domenica, and thank you!

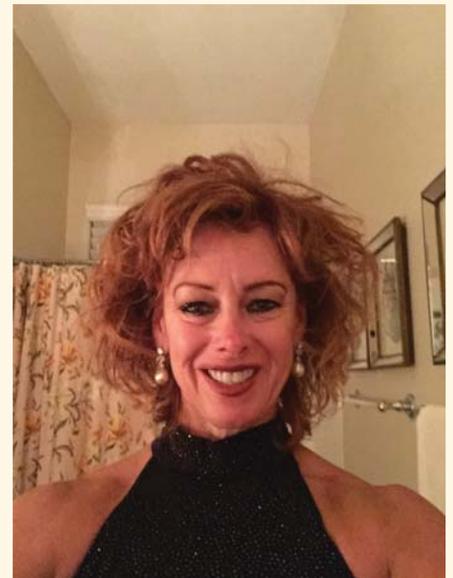


Photo by Domenica Corbo

**Scheduled Activities
at the Park from
01/01/15 - 05/03/15**

- 1/17/15 6:15PM Astronomy Night
(8yr+)
- 1/18/15 10AM-12PM Liberty Wildlife
- 2/3/15 6PM Full Moon Hike
- 2/13/15 6:30PM Astronomy Night
(8yr+)
- 2/20/15 6:30PM-8PM Venemous
Animals of AZ
- 3/5/15 6:30PM Full Moon Hike
- 3/21/15 10AM-12PM Liberty Wildlife
- 3/21/15 6:40PM Astronomy Night
(8yr+)
- 4/3/15 6:45PM Full Moon Hike
- 4/17/15 7:30PM Astronomy Night
(8yr+)
- 5/2/15 10AM-12PM Southwest
Wildlife
- 5/3/15 7:15PM Full Moon Hike

*Reservations are required a week
ahead of all events, please contact
the park.



**This Newsletter is published by
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Friends of Pinnacle Peak Park

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