

Friends of Pinnacle Peak Park

NEWSLETTER

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The Mighty Saguaro

By Tom Eye and Challie Facemire

The saguaro (scientific name *Carnegiea gigantea*) is a very special cactus species. It is what scientists call monotypic, meaning that it is the only plant in the genus *Carnegiea*. Not only is it special enough to have its own group, but they can also grow to be over 50 ft tall. The tallest saguaro was actually 78 ft tall. This cactus is native to the Sonoran Desert in Arizona, the Mexican state of Sonora, and parts of California. Saguaros have a long lifespan, often exceeding 150 years. A signature aspect of the



Photo by Sonoran
Desert NPS

saguaro is its side arms which often form when the saguaro is around 75 years old. Some saguaros never form any arms (these are called "spears") while others have more than 50! The saguaro is not listed as threatened or endangered, but Arizona has strict regulations about the harvesting, collection, or destruction of this species.

A saguaro can absorb large amounts of rainwater, visibly expanding in the process. You can see when it has had a lot of water because the accordion folds running vertically across its body will be wider, like when an accordion is expanded by pulling the two sides apart, and when it hasn't had much water the ridges get closer together. When rain is plentiful, and the saguaro is fully hydrated it can weigh between 3200 and 4800 lbs. It uses this water to survive during periods of drought.

Native Americans used the saguaro for many different purposes, some of which we'll talk about here. The ribs of the cactus (their internal structure like our skeletons) were used for fencing, or mixed with grass, mud, and ocotillo to build houses. The ribs were also used to split broken bones and to make instruments. Finally, they were used to make arrows, build animal traps, and to build tools to pick the fruit from Saguaros. Those sweet red fruits ripen during the early summer months, and native peoples harvest them when ripe. The fruits are eaten fresh, and also dried for later uses (like being baked into cakes). The pulp of the fruit is also made into syrup to be preserved or made into wine. As was discussed

above, there are strict regulations around saguaro harvesting, so never try to remove saguaro fruits from the cacti at Pinnacle Peak Park, and make sure you ask before doing so anywhere else.



Photo by Gary L. Clark from
Wikimedia Commons

Animals also rely on the saguaro (which is a keystone species) offering shelter and food to a significant number of species. For example, Gila woodpeckers and gilded flickers will create cavities inside the saguaro's body (these are the holes you see in the saguaro). They use these cavities for nests, and then when they are finished with the nest elf owls, purple martins, sparrows, finches, and elf owls might move in. In the Phoenix area you can actually see the feral lovebird populations making homes of these abandoned nesting cavities. Other birds create nests in the arms of saguaros, like red-tailed hawks. These large, hunting birds also use saguaros like a platform to launch from to gather prey. The saguaro itself also provides food for local animals. The flowers in the summer provide nectar and pollen for bats and insects. The resulting fruits are sources of energy and moisture for a variety of animals like birds, bats, and lizards. When the desert is particularly dry some animals (such as deer, pack rats, and jackrabbits) will eat the flesh of the saguaro as a source of water.

While all saguaros look interesting due to their height and variable arms, there are some weird saguaros out there too. A rare variation in form is called the crested saguaro. Some of these cacti fan out at the top resembling a head of broccoli, while others split in two and continue to grow arms. It's unknown why some saguaros become crested, but theories include frost damage, lightning, or genetic damage. There's a beautiful specimen just a half-mile from the Pima Dynamite trailhead along the Latigo trail, near an outcrop of granite boulders.



Crested saguaro near
the Pima Dynamite
trailhead.

A Letter to the Community From Dave

By Dave Myers

Dear Pinnacle Peak Park Community,

Thank you for such an incredible and warm welcome! It's been about six months since my family, and I made the move from Colorado so I could join the Pinnacle Peak Team. There have been many moments over this short amount of time that make it clear to me that the community is what makes Pinnacle Peak Park such an amazing place. Some of my favorite moments to date include my first opening shift where I was able to greet the long line of regulars ; Monday mornings with the hard working trail crew; listening to all the stories from visitors and generous volunteers about their love for Pinnacle Peak; working with an extraordinary Eagle Scout; and watching everyone welcome my beautiful wife, Bree, and my adorable 2-year-old daughter, Bodhi Lemon, to the park with kindness and enthusiasm. These moments and countless more leave me feeling grateful to be here.

So, how did I end up at Pinnacle Peak? To answer that, we must travel back in time to when my love for nature truly began. Like many, I was just a youngster when I learned firsthand our connection to the natural world and its importance as a friend, teacher, and healer. This early connection solidified my desire at a young age to do "something" to protect and share the majesty and magic of nature. I was 3 years old when I first remember exploring the hills behind my childhood home. They came under threat of development, and I recall begging my family to let me help save this special place. Before my 4th birthday my father, uncle, and neighbors created the Hills For Everyone (a community activist group determined to save the 30,000-acre Chino Hills, in Southern California). I was at every canvassing event and went door to door with the adults. We were successful and the State purchased the land, which is now a State Park. This experience really set the stage for a lifelong pursuit to protect the natural world so native flora and fauna had space to thrive, and so these special places could be shared in respectful and

Rattlesnake Dos and Don'ts

By Bryan Hughes

What do you do if you see a rattlesnake on a trail?

Nothing! Rattlesnakes are just part of living in the sonoran desert, and often only dangerous to those who choose to interfere with them. Most often, a snake that is stretched across a trail "sunning" is still because it has seen you first and doesn't realize that its camouflage doesn't work on a trail. They are just waiting for the "predator" to leave so they can make an escape. If you get out of sight for a minute or two, the snake will likely move on. Make sure to alert

appropriate ways with local communities and travelers alike.

I stayed on this path over the course of my career. I have been fortunate to steward some amazing places from rolling grassland hills in Southern California, to the Mojave Desert, to alpine open spaces in Colorado. Working side by side with great people to create positive outcomes has truly been an honor and each site holds a special place in my heart. This experience taught me a lot over the years through hands on habitat restoration and management, construction and maintenance of safe and enjoyable trails, and cultural preservation for the public to enjoy. All the skills and knowledge I gained from my past experiences set me up to be a perfect fit for Pinnacle Peak Park.

The short answer to how I ended up here is that over the years Bree and I have found ourselves heading to the Southwest for nearly all our vacations. Exploring the desert has always been our favorite pastime. After Bodhi was born, we had many deep discussions about the types of places we wanted her to experience, especially in her early years. The desert kept circling to the top of the list. As luck would have it, I found this position and convinced Bree it was a perfect place for our family to land, she agreed and so I applied.

I am grateful for this time in my life, this amazing community and visitors, the wonderful volunteers, and super coworkers. It is truly an honor to serve you and I continue to look forward to each day at the Peak. Don't be a stranger, if you see me on the trail or at the Visitor Center please pop in and introduce yourself. I would love to get to know you.

Cheers,
Dave



Dave Myers and family.



Photo by Bryan Hughes

others who may be coming down the trail to watch for the snake, and then simply go around it while staying out of strike range (about half of the body length but give it a good 5' or more). Remember that rattlesnakes aren't aggressive, but defensive, and won't actively come after you as long as you do not appear to be a threat. Most importantly, if you see someone disturbing a snake, please remind them that wildlife should not be disturbed and alert staff or a volunteer if they are nearby.

If I am bitten by a rattlesnake, what should I do?

You need to get to a hospital as fast as possible. Try your best to keep calm and keep your heart rate down (slowing the venom's progress), and remember the statistics. According to the CDC, there are between 7,000-8,000 venomous snake bites in the United States each year, and less than 10 of those die. Of those 10, there may be other health issues that complicate the situation.

Remove any jewelry to allow for swelling. Keep the bite area below your heart, if possible. **Do not** cut, suck, or try to bleed venom from the wound, and **do**



Photo by Bryan Hughes

not let anyone try and use a suction device on the wound. A study by Loma Linda University School of Medicine shows that these devices do not help and can actually cause harm. **Do not** apply a tourniquet because they can also cause more damage. **Do not** apply ice or

home remedies. Basically, leave the bite area alone completely.

If you are in a populated area, do not attempt to drive yourself to the hospital. You may pass out or otherwise become unable to operate a vehicle, making a bad situation worse. Call for help, keep calm and stationary, and let help come to you.

If you are far from help, out hiking or otherwise, and can get a cell phone signal, call 911 and let them advise on how to proceed. If you cannot call, notify anyone around of the situation and let help come to you. If you are alone, calmly make your way to where there are people who can help. Do not run – it is important to keep your heart rate down – and stay on trails so you can be easily found.

Do not try to kill the snake or interact with it further and insist that others do not try to either. Doctors don't need to identify it, the antivenin you will receive is made to work for all species in our area.

If it is your dog that has been bitten, call an emergency veterinarian as quickly as possible.

Jingle Hike to Santa

By Lisa Levey

It's time to embrace your inner elf! Put on your most festive holiday hiking outfit and grab the kids to head over to Pinnacle Peak Park's Annual Jingle Hike to Santa! Join us on Saturday, December 10th from 9:00 – 11:00 a.m. The morning will be filled with festivities and merriment the whole family will enjoy!

Participants will receive a special holiday bell at check-in so they can jingle all the way to Santa at the Grandview Overlook. Make sure the kids bring their "wish list" for the Jolly Old Guy. Each registered child will receive a 2022 commemorative holiday patch. There will be plenty of coffee, cocoa, and Christmas treats for all to enjoy at the trailhead. Interactive storytelling, crafts, and professional face painting will also be part of the fun.

REGISTRATION IS REQUIRED: The Jingle Hike and all activities are free, and every hiker must be

registered. Don't delay, this event fills up fast! For many families it's part of their annual holiday tradition.

Registration begins Monday, October 17th with three different time slots to choose from: 9:00am, 10:00am, and 11:00am. Please note, you must start your hike at the time you are registered. Strollers, bikes, and pets are not permitted. Please visit RECREATION.SCOTTSDALEAZ.GOV to complete your registration. For more information, please call the Park at 480-312-0990.

The Friends of Pinnacle Peak Park organization is happy to continue to sponsor this unique event as well as other environmental education programs at the Park. Visit the "Friends" website at FOPPP.com.



Santa at the Park

Pinnacle Peak Park Celebrates its 20th Anniversary!



Pinnacle Peak Park Scheduled Activities

Sat., 10/08/22	10AM - 12PM - Southwest Wildlife	Sat., 02/11/23	10AM - 12PM - Phoenix Herpetological 5:45 - 7:15PM - Sunset Hike
Sat., 10/22/22	10AM - 12PM - Phoenix Herpetological	Sat., 03/04/23	10AM - 12PM - Southwest Wildlife
Sat., 11/05/22	10AM - 12PM - Southwest Wildlife	Sun., 03/05/23	7PM - Astronomy Evening
Sat., 11/12/22	10AM - 12PM - Liberty Wildlife	Tue., 03/07/23	6:45 - 8:15PM - Full Moon Hike
Sat., 12/10/22	9AM - Jingle Hike 10AM - Jingle Hike 11AM - Jingle Hike	Sat., 03/11/23	10AM - 12PM - Liberty Wildlife
Fri., 01/06/23	5:45 - 7:15PM - Full Moon Hike 6:15PM - Astronomy Evening	Sat., 03/18/23	6:30 - 8PM - Sunset Hike
Fri., 02/03/23	6:30PM - Astronomy Evening	Mon., 04/03/23	7:15PM - Astronomy Evening
Sat., 02/04/23	10AM - 12PM - Wild at Heart	Thur., 04/06/23	7 - 8:30PM - Full Moon Hike
		Sun., 04/16/23	6:45 - 8:15PM - Sunset Hike

*** New this Year! Online Registration.** Please go to Recreation.Scottsdaleaz.gov.
Registration begins 7 days prior to the Full Moon and Sunset hikes and 14 days prior to
the Astronomy Evening. Please call the Park Visitor Center for details (480) 312-0990

Friends of Pinnacle Peak Park

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