

Friends of Pinnacle Peak Park NEWSLETTER

Fall 2024 Volume #42

Meet Pinnacle Peak Park Volunteers Sheila and Tim Wright

By Len Sherman

Sheila and Tim Wright have done every kind of job you can do on Pinnacle Peak. They've opened the park at dawn, roamed the trail watching over our visitors, manned the office, pitched in with trail maintenance, carried jugs of water up the mountain, assisted FOPPP with accounting, helped during holiday events, on and on. "I remember crawling down the side and pulling the grass and weeds," relates Sheila. For their efforts, they were jointly named Pinnacle Peak Volunteers of the Year for 2012.

They had been coming out to Arizona for vacation for a while, and then, 20 years ago, Sheila was offered the chance to transfer here. Given that they had intended on retiring to Arizona, this was an opportunity to get a jump on those plans.

They moved close to the mountain and Pinnacle Peak was a trail they hiked before it was officially a hike. All this kept them quite fit.

Neuropathy has slowed Tim, and these days he spends his time volunteering in the office, greeting visitors, while Sheila remains on the trail, as well as serving on the board of the Friends of Pinnacle Peak, the nonprofit group that supports the park. Sheila and Tim have seen a lot in their time, and have watched the park grow and change.

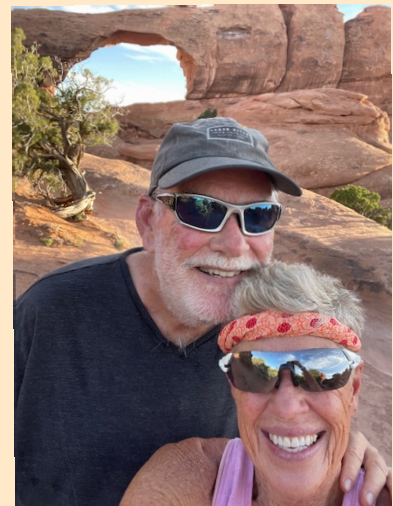
"There are so many more parks now," adds Tim. "Pinnacle Peak was first. Then came Tom's Thumb, Pima."

"We were at the dedication of Brown's Ranch," Sheila recalls.

"We've sent people to other trails," says Tim, "so people are figuring out there are a lot of choices."

Still, Pinnacle Peak remains the crown jewel of Scottsdale parks, first for the trail and then for the people who maintain the land and welcome the visitors. "We've become friends with quite a few people who hike regularly," says Sheila.

Sheila and Tim have been at this for a long time, and have no intention of stopping anytime soon. "I will keep doing this as long as I am mentally and physically able to," states Tim. Sheila seconds that notion. And Pinnacle Peak and all its staff, volunteers and visitors, all who know Tim and Sheila even a little, are grateful for that.



The Crucifixion Thorn (*Castela Emoryi*)

By Lisa Levey

Some of the most unusual vegetation found around Pinnacle Peak Park is the crucifixion thorn. It is an intricately branched, spiny shrub or small tree which has no leaves -- just thick, rigid, sharp branches, which perform photosynthesis. The crucifixion thorn is bluish gray-green in color is often less than 3 feet tall and occasionally grows to 13 feet or more. Young branches are covered with very short, fine hairs; older branches are streaked with gray-brown bark. The very sharp thorns at the ends of branches are either lighter or darker than the stems.

Castela Emoryi is one of the few plants in its habitat that blooms in the mid-summer heat, and serves as an important source of resources for insects during that time. Its nectar is collected by ants, and pollination is performed by wasps and bees, particularly bumblebees. Its habitat is dry, rocky desert washes, slopes and plains from 500 to 2,000 feet.

Though occasionally confused with a cactus, crucifixion thorn is technically a shrub. Crucifixion thorn produces tiny clustered fruits that occasionally remain on the stem for years. Its large, dangerous thorns are the reason for the ominous name. Crucifixion thorn grows sparsely in the Sonoran and Mohave deserts where the ancient Yavapai used this for medicinal purposes, making a dermatological aid from its bud's sap. Chlorophyll packed stems carry out most of this plant's photosynthesis to conserve water which could be lost through the plant's tiny leaves (drought deciduous and small leaves also facilitate water conservation).



(Blooms (upper right) are typically seen from mid June through mid August. Seed pods (lower, right) can hang on the tree all year long)
Photo by Marianne Jensen

The Shrub forms a dense thicket which provides habitat to small desert animals and food for bird pollinators.

The Fruit of the crucifixion thorn was a part of the Native American diet. Its wood was used for construction and furniture. Some ancient peoples burned the wood to produce smoke believed to sanitize the home after disease epidemics.

Other common names for this species include chaparro amargosa, holocantha or corona-de-cristo, and rosario; all such names are in reference to its thorny twigs, which are likened to the Crown of Thorns. It is interesting to note the name "crucifixion thorn" is also applied to several unrelated species.

The North American Bobcat (Lynx Rufus)

By Maureen Eye

Native to N. America it ranges from Southern Canada through most of the contiguous U.S. to Oaxaca MX. It has distinctive black bars on its forelegs and a black tipped stubby (or bobbed) tail for which it is named. An adaptable predator, it inhabits wooded areas, semi-deserts, urban edge, forest edge and swampland environments. Though the bobcat prefers rabbits and hares, it also hunts insects, chickens, geese (and other birds), small rodents and even deer. It is territorial and largely solitary.

Breeding is from Winter into Spring and has a gestation period of two months. Two to four kittens are the average litter. The female raises the kittens alone. The young open their eyes by the 9th or 10th day. They start exploring their surroundings at 4 weeks and are weaned at 2 months. Within 3 to 4 months, they begin to travel with their mother. They hunt solo at approximately. 8 months and usually disperse shortly afterwards. Bobcats remain reproductively active their entire life. The average life span is 7 yrs and rarely exceeds 10 yrs.

The oldest bobcat on record was 16 in the wild. The oldest on record in captivity was 32.



Photos by Tom Eye

At our North Scottsdale home, bobcat sightings are frequent. The photos are from our courtyard, where the bobcat decided to spend the entire day. It posed in a tree and napped on our patio furniture. Always a thrill to see such a beautiful wild animal up close!

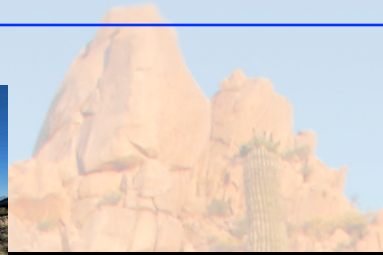
Volunteer Appreciation Luncheon



Events and Activities:



Geology Adventure



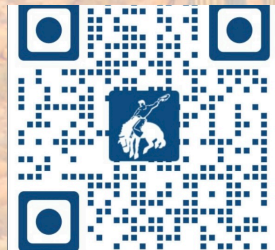
Astronomy Evenings



Sunset/ Full Moon Hike



Wildlife Discovery



Scan code to sign up



Jingle Hike

Friends of Pinnacle Peak Park

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Volunteer Opportunities

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).

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