

# Friends of Pinnacle Peak Park NEWSLETTER

Spring 2024 Volume #41

## Meet Pinnacle Peak Park Volunteer Dick Luther

By Tom Eye



Dick Luther moved with his family to Scottsdale from Rockford, Illinois in January of 1968 to start a new job with Airesearch (now Honeywell). His wife Anne was 3 months pregnant at the time and their first child Karl was just over 1 year old. Their family was completed in 1971 with daughter Kymberly.

Dick was a regular hiker and jogger. He hiked many of the trails at the Grand Canyon along with Squaw Peak (now called Piestewa Peak) on Sunday afternoons. Dick retired at age 65 and one day in 2003 hiked the Pinnacle Peak trail. There was a sign that advertised a need for volunteers. This fit right in with his desire to give back to the community, and at the same time stay in shape. After finishing the Park training class, Dick hit the trail as a volunteer 3 times a week, helping hikers in need, keeping visitors safe, answering questions, keeping the trail clean, and doing the trail closing hike on Friday.

John Loleit, who opened Pinnacle Peak Park

in 2002 and managed the park for over a decade, has many fond memories of Dick. "What I remember most about him is his dedication to the Peak. He was always willing to help. That included highly physical work like hauling water to new plants on the trail, doing trail maintenance, or closing the trail in the evening. He also gave his time with lots of ideas, thoughts, and time helping in a variety of capacities."

In 2005 Dick was introduced to Morrie Chernis and they talked about a new organization that Morrie was leading called the Friends of Pinnacle Peak Park. It was another opportunity to do something for the community and Dick jumped right in. Dick served on the board of the Friends from 2006 to October 2023 and was Secretary of the organization during much of this time. His contribution to the Friends organization was always thoughtful, positive, and productive.

Per Dick: "Pinnacle Peak is a great place to volunteer. The people are great. The trail is beautiful, and the scenery is awesome. If there is rain in the fall the following spring the slope of the Park is covered in a golden carpet of yellow Mexican golden poppies."

Thank you so much Dick, for your friendship and service to the Friends and Pinnacle Peak Park.

# Invasive Plants

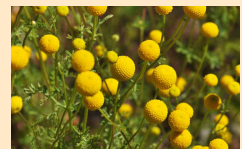
By Jake Romanow

Pinnacle Peak Park is a popular destination known for its hiking trails and scenic views. Like many natural areas in Arizona, Pinnacle Peak Park can face challenges from invasive plant species that threaten the native ecosystem. While the specific status of invasive plants at Pinnacle Peak Park can change over time and may be subject to local management priorities, some invasive plants that have been identified as problematic for the Park include:

**Buffelgrass (*Pennisetum ciliare*):** Buffelgrass typically grows in clumps and can reach heights of 2 to 4 feet. It has fine, wiry leaves and produces seed heads with numerous small seeds. . It can increase fire frequency and intensity, which poses risks to both natural areas and nearby developments.



**Stinknet (*Oncosiphon piluliferum*):** Also known as globe chamomile, Stinknet is a small, annual plant that typically grows to a height of 1 to 2 feet. It has finely divided leaves and produces clusters of small yellow flowers. The plant gets its name from the strong, unpleasant odor it emits when crushed. Stinknet can rapidly spread and form dense mats, outcompeting native vegetation and altering natural ecosystems.



**Fountain grass (*Pennisetum setaceum*):** This plant is a perennial bunchgrass that can grow up to 3 to 5 feet tall. It is characterized by its feathery, purplish or reddish inflorescences that resemble water spraying from a fountain, hence its name. Originally from Africa, this ornamental grass is a common invader in desert areas. It can outcompete native vegetation, has a propensity to burn more frequently than native species, and reduce habitat quality for native wildlife.



**Sahara Mustard (*Brassica tournefortii*):** As the name suggests, this mustard plant is native to the Sahara Desert region but has become invasive in the southwestern U.S. This annual herbaceous plant typically grows 1 to 3 feet tall and has yellow flowers and produces elongated seed pods. It can form dense stands that displace native plants, reduce biodiversity, and negatively impact wildlife and grazing lands.



**Red Brome Foxtail (*Bromus rubens*):** This annual grass species typically grows 1 to 2 feet tall and is native to the Mediterranean region but has become widespread in many parts of the western U.S., and is found around Pinnacle Peak. It has slender stems with purplish-red tinges and produces nodding, red-tinged seed heads. It can dominate disturbed areas, increase fire frequency, and compete with native plants for resources.



These invasive plants can negatively impact native biodiversity, alter ecosystem processes, and affect recreational experiences at Pinnacle Peak Park. Park management and other agencies often work to monitor and control these invasive species within the park through various strategies, such as manual removal, herbicide application, and public education. If you encounter invasive plants in natural areas, it's essential to avoid spreading seeds and to follow guidelines for reporting invasive species to Pinnacle Peak Park and local authorities. Awareness and proactive management can help mitigate the impacts of invasive plants on Pinnacle Peak Park's native ecosystems and biodiversity.

## Red-tailed Hawk

By **Domenica Corbo**

For the last several years we have had a bonded pair of red-tailed hawks nesting, making their home on the rock formation called the East Wall. The pair makes a stick nest in a tree or rock formation, high above the ground. Red-tailed hawks often mate for life.

They will use the nest year after year, so it grows bigger and bigger. The female hawk lays one to five eggs-which are white with brown spots. The parents take turns sitting on the eggs. Baby red-tailed hawks are covered with white, downy feathers. The hawk parents feed their young until the young birds can leave the nest, usually when they're about six weeks old.

The red-tailed hawk is a top predator, officially named *Buteo Jamaicensis*. One of the greatest enemies of the red-tailed hawk is the great horned owl. Great horned owls kill over 30% of nestlings in some populations.

The red-tailed hawks use tall perches to spot their prey.

As they circle and soar, they can spot their prey from 100 feet up in the air.

When a red-tailed hawk spots a rodent, rabbit, lizard or other prey, it swoops down and grabs its meal in its talons.

Once the hawk grabs its prey, it usually flies back up to its perch to eat it.



Male and female red-tailed hawks basically look alike, though the females are larger. The average life span in the wild is 21 years. Their body is 18-26 inches, their wingspan is 38-43 inches. They typically weigh 24.3 to 51.5 ounces.

Look for them spreading their wings enjoying the thermals.

## New Events and Activities

By **Dave Myers**

We are excited to announce many new and exciting activities we have added this year.



**Vinyasa Yoga** – Led by volunteer Sharnan Ghio. A community yoga class with a focus on connecting breath, movement, and intention. This 60-minute yoga flow begins with grounding and sun salutations, moves into dynamic standing series, and ends with deep stretch and community connection. Bring your own yoga mat and water. Must be 13 years of age or older.

**Ew! Ick! Gross! Wow!** – (Designed for Kids up to age 10, accompanied by an adult) Join one of our friendly Park Naturalists on an easy quarter-mile trail for an interactive walk on the wild side where everyone in the family will be guaranteed to say "ew! ick! gross! and wow!" while learning about our desert animals, their behaviors, and their habitats.

**Geology Adventure** – Hike with a Park Geology

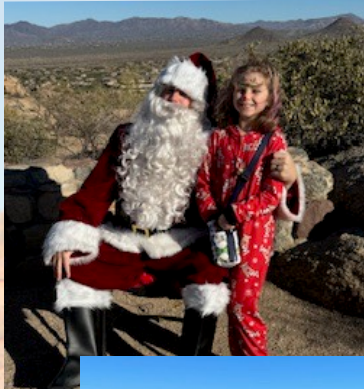
Guide to the Grandview Overlook. Learn about the rocks, minerals, and land formation of Pinnacle Peak, McDowell Mountains, and the valley of the sun as seen from the trail. This is a moderate 3/4-mile hike.

**Incredible Edible Desert** – Meander with our Park Naturalists along an easy quarter-mile path, pausing at saguaros, cholla, prickly pear, and desert trees. Experience how the earliest residents of the Sonoran Desert picked, prepared, and preserved these plants as food, in an hour of hands-on fun.

**What's Your Saguaro IQ?** – The iconic Saguaro Cactus is known for its majestic beauty as it peppers the Sonoran Desert landscape. Walk with our Park Naturalists, along an easy quarter-mile path, as you experience the lifecycle of the Saguaro and how it is used by people and animals for tools, food, and shelter.

Registration is Required – Space is limited so please visit the parks website at [City of Scottsdale - Tours, Events and Activities \(scottsdaleaz.gov\)](http://CityofScottsdale-Tours,EventsandActivities.scottsdaleaz.gov) for dates and to register.

## 2023 Jingle Hike to Santa



## Friends of Pinnacle Peak Park

PMB 288

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[info@foppp.org](mailto:info@foppp.org)

### 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](http://scottsdaleaz.gov)).

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