

Do you know what a gall is ?

Find out on page 2



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The Friends of Pinnacle Peak Park

is dedicated to assist in maintaining the wonderful
character of the Park and to support improvements and
educational activities through fundraising.

Tax deductible contributions to support the Friends
mission may be mailed or made through the website

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Send feedback and inputs to: Editor@MattLucky.com

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Morafka's Desert Tortoise "Look but Don't Touch"

By Diane McCoy-Berney

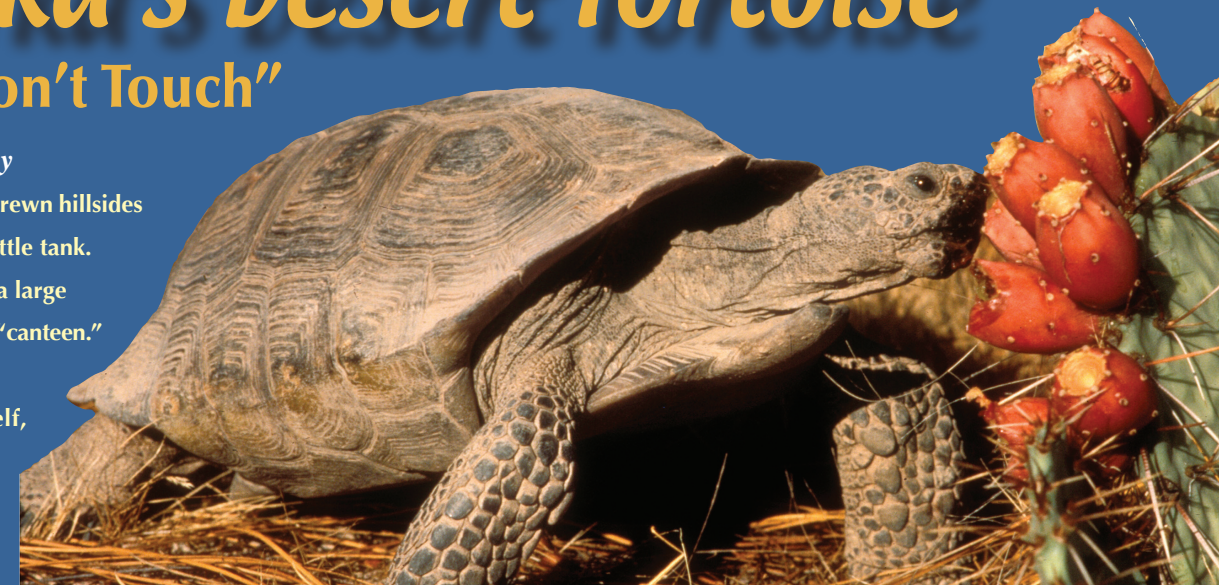
It navigates the boulder-strewn hillsides
of the Sonoran Desert like a little tank.
It has armored forelimbs and a large
internal bladder, like a built-in "canteen."
It would seem this reptile is
well-equipped to defend itself,
but in reality, it is anything but
armed and dangerous. In fact,
it is one of the most docile
and endearing animals in the
desert. "It" is the desert tortoise and "it"
is in danger.

Desert tortoises have many characteris-
tics that enable them to survive 80 or more
years in a harsh desert environment. They
metabolize most of their water from the
plants they eat and store it in their large
bladder, thus enabling adult tortoises to sur-
vive for a year without a drink of water! They
can retract their head, feet and tail into their
hard shell for protection. Tortoises also have
a great sense of direction and recognize
important landmarks leading to burrows,
pallets (resting sites) and food locations
within their home range.

Unfortunately, these characteristics are
not enough to keep desert tortoises thriving
in today's fast-changing world of habitat
loss. Environmental threats include devel-
opment, roadways, irresponsible off-road
vehicle use, wildfires and illegal collecting.

Additionally, Upper Respiratory Tract Disease
(URTD) can be transmitted to wild tortoises
when captive tortoises are set free. These
factors, coupled with the tortoise's
slow-moving pace, all contribute to their
continuing population decline. The des-
ert tortoise population living south and
east of the Colorado River in Arizona and
Mexico was recently reclassified as its
own species, *Gopherus morafkai*. These
tortoises have been protected by Arizona
law since 1988. Its Mojave desert cousin,
Gopherus agassizii, living north and west
of the Colorado River has been on the
Federal "threatened" list since 1990, the
final designation before
"endangered."

What can you do to help?
If you should encounter
a desert tortoise in the
wild, DO NOT touch it



or pick it up! Doing so may cause the
tortoise to use a defense mechanism
designed to startle a predator – emptying
its bladder of stored fluids. Handling the
tortoise causes stress and may lead to de-
hydration and death during drought
if an adequate source of moisture
is not available. You also can help by never
releasing captive tortoises into the wild.
They may carry URTD that can infect wild
tortoises. Instead, research Desert Tortoise
Adoption Programs (TAP) and local
Game and Fish Departments online for
appropriate alternatives. Important
information is available at [http://](http://www.desertmuseum.org/programs/tap.php)

[www.desertmuseum.org/](http://www.desertmuseum.org/programs/tap.php)
[programs/tap.php](http://www.desertmuseum.org/programs/tap.php). Let's all
work together to keep this
docile and endearing reptile
lumbering across desert lands
for future generations!



Creosote Galls

You may have noticed the ball-shaped, leafy galls (growths), roughly the size of walnuts, on stems of the creosote bush. Often encircling the stem, recent galls appear green while those from past years are brown. The round, leafy balls are caused by a small insect known as the Creosote Bush Gall Midge, *Asphondylia aurinila*.

The lifecycle of this small fly begins when the adult female midges oviposits (inserts eggs) into the plant, then adds a fungal spore. The fungus induces the plant to produce the gall, and the fungus grows inside the gall, lining the inside of the egg chamber. The egg eventually hatches, and the larva feeds on the fungus inside the protective mass of tissue. Adult emergence is timed with periods of plant growth associated with winter, spring or summer rainfall. *By Matt Lucky*

What is a gall? A gall is usually a growth on a plant that is caused by the secretions of a bacterium, larva or other parasite. It is harmless to the plant or tree, except for the disfigurement.

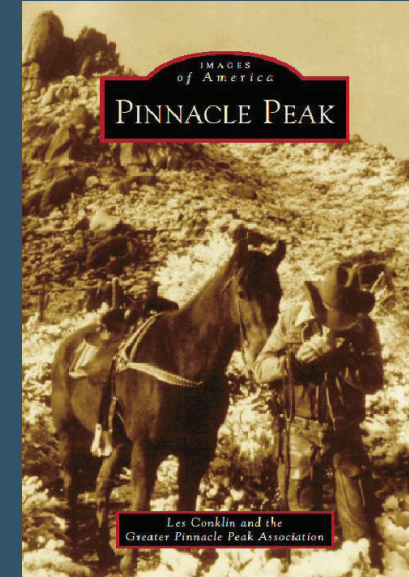


PHOTO: MATT LUCKY

Did you know?

- From 1982 to 1984 under the leadership of Mayor Herb Drinkwater, the City of Scottsdale annexed 95 square miles, including Pinnacle Peak. Drinkwater, who later became a resident of the Pinnacle Peak area, worked to enhance communication and understanding between the older downtown section of Scottsdale and its remote northern neighborhoods.
- In 1985, Jerry Nelson began building Troon Village, a 2,655-acre community anchored by Troon Golf and Country Club. It cost Nelson's company \$1 million to remove the cactus from the course's site and replant them after construction. Nelson incurred

additional expenses when his crew discovered an ancient Hohokam settlement on the land



he was developing. The construction project was temporarily halted, and the archeological site was excavated and studied.

- In 1986, the City of Scottsdale installed the first traffic light in North Scottsdale at the intersection of Pinnacle Peak and Pima Roads.

These quotes are excerpts from "Pinnacle Peak," which published in late June. This book showcases more than 200 photographs to bring Pinnacle Peak's rich history back to life. To purchase the book or obtain more information, or visit www.gppaaz.org (GPPA Store).

Les Conklin

Tammy Teegardin VOLUNTEER



Tammy Teegardin has volunteered at Pinnacle Peak Park since 2006. You will often find Tammy leading the Park's daily guided interpretive hike, educating visitors on the edible and medicinal uses of

the plants found in the desert. Trail roving is another one of her specialties, and she always is greeting people with engaging enthusiasm. Although Tammy has backpacked and hiked many of the national parks in the West with her family, her true love is the Sonoran Desert in our Grand Canyon State.

Tammy was born in the Black Hills of South Dakota and moved to Arizona where she learned to further appreciate the outdoors, and fell in love with the desert. Tammy did her undergraduate study at the University of Vermont, and

then proceeded to earn an additional degree at Arizona State University. She focused her areas of study in archeology and botany.

Volunteering is a large part of her life. When not at Pinnacle Peak, she spends her time in the community volunteering with Arizona's State Parks Systems, Desert Awareness Committee, Desert Foothills Land Trust, Maricopa County Parks and the State Trust Land Programs as an Interpretive Ranger. Tammy has even achieved the level of "interpretive educator" from the National Association of Interpreters!

Fall Activities at the Park

PHOTO: FRANK BIONDO

Pinnacle Peak Park offers a wide variety of educational programs, talks and hikes that provide an insight into natural and cultural history of the Sonoran Desert.

● **Guided Hikes:** Will begin on Tuesday November 1st. They are conducted every day, except Monday, starting at 10am. This one hour moderate hike provides in-depth information about the geology, history, archaeology, flora and fauna of Pinnacle Peak. Bring water and good hiking shoes.

● **Full Moon Hikes:** This one hour guided hike will walk to Grand View, slightly over half mile from the trail head. You will be able to enjoy the desert sounds, city lights,

and views under the glow of a full moon. Registration is limited and will open one week before the scheduled hike. Full Moon hikes are scheduled for Oct. 13th, Nov. 11th, and Dec. 10th. Dress accordingly for the weather and bring a flashlight.

● **Astronomy Talks:** The heavens come alive with the help of Park Volunteer Mark Johnston. With his powerful telescope and green laser light, planets, stars, and constellations are easy to find. Registration is limited and reservations will be accepted one week prior to the talk. Talks will be Sept. 24th, Oct. 28th, Nov. 18th, Dec. 18th and 27th.

Dress accordingly for the weather and bring binoculars if you have them. Children must be at least 8 years old for this program.

● **Junior Ranger Programs:** Children ages 5-11 can become Junior Rangers of Pinnacle Peak Park! This easy to do activity can be done anytime you are in the park. At the trail head office you will be given an activity sheet to hike the trail with and learn more about the Sonoran Desert and Pinnacle Peak Park. When you have finished your hike, return the sheet to the office and a Park Ranger will have you say the Junior Ranger Oath and give you a Certificate and Junior Ranger Badge. *By John Loleit*

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