

Friends of Pinnacle Peak Park

NEWSLETTER

Spring 2023 Volume 39

Our Beautiful Trail and How it Stays This Way

By Dave Myers

The joy of visiting Pinnacle Peak Park is not only its natural beauty and abundant wildlife; it is the trail which guides visitors through this natural Sonoran Desert landscape. The 2-mile trail starts at an elevation of 2570 feet and ends at the elevation of 2281 feet. In between you rise up to the High Point at 2889 feet, down to the saddle between Pinnacle Peak and the unnamed mountain at marker PK56, 2642 feet. The trail climbs up again to the highest point on the unnamed mountain at marker PK66, 2755 feet, then down to the valley floor at the end of the trail at marker PK103, 2281 feet. Visitors get to enjoy a 4-mile hike with a total elevation gain of 1352 feet.

Along the way one gets to enjoy amazing vistas from just about anywhere, the Grandview Overlook, High Point Overlook, and Owl's Rest Overlook are a must. Interpretive signs can be found describing some of the amazing plants and wildlife that call Pinnacle Peak Home. Mule Deer, Javelina, and Bobcats can be seen regularly throughout the year and a variety of reptiles can be spotted during the warmer months.

With over 250,000 visitors a year, trail maintenance is vital to keep the trail well marked and as safe as possible. Trail maintenance is done on a weekly basis and cannot be done without the dedicated Trail Crew. These volunteers have dedicated their time to maintain the trail every Monday morning with few exceptions. Besides the Monday fun, the Crew checks the trail after every weather event and works diligently to repair the trail after severe weather damage. They rake out minor erosion, perform complete trail rebuilds, and everything in between.. In addition to maintenance and enhancements the Crew is focusing on



removing man-made "stair steps". The trail grade has changed over the years which required steps to be installed, but as the trail grade continues to change many of these steps are now obsolete. The steps are made of various materials- from natural rock, to recycled planks. The crew is removing or replacing all steps that are not made of rock to create a more natural environment. Removing steps and grading the trail is slow hard work. The Crew evaluates each step for safety, slope, and potential for erosion before deciding to keep, replace, or remove the step. This is a long and arduous process.

Next time you are enjoying the trail, please be sure to share your gratitude with the Trail Crew because without them the trail wouldn't be the safe enjoyable trail, we all know and love.



Meet Lisa Spero!

By Bob Newport

In this newsletter we are introducing you to the marvelous Ms. Lisa Spero. Lisa is the Assistant Park Manager at Pinnacle Peak Park. You can see her hard at work at her desk in the Visitor Center, or out and about taking care of things in the Park.

Lisa came to Pinnacle Peak Park from another position with the City of Scottsdale, she studied Parks and Recreation Management in college. As you might guess, Lisa has wide-ranging managerial responsibilities at Pinnacle Peak. Some of what you might see her doing include ensuring the Park and the trail are in good condition, helping to keep out invasive vegetation, and managing an unruly staff (OK, they are not that unruly!). Lisa works closely with Dave Myers training and overseeing volunteers and training and supervising part-time staff.

The Park has a wildlife camera, which Lisa positions around the area to capture photos of reptiles and mammals you might not see during the day, but come out at night. She is the "unofficial" Park shutterbug. If you stop at the Visitor Center you will see a collection of excellent photos including snakes, birds, reptiles, and mammals. Knowing how visitors love to take photos at the Park, Lisa set up a "selfie station" near the entrance to the trail. Visitors can place their phone on the post and get a beautiful photo of themselves in front of the Peak.

Lisa develops programming and special events for the Park. She has written talking points for the full moon and sunset hikes at the Park. Lisa recently received certification as an interpretive guide, which helped further refine her curriculum development skills. She is currently working on some learning modules for adult audiences.

So one might think Lisa is pretty busy, but she still finds time for other things that are important. Lisa and her awesome dog Everest are a committed volunteer duo with Pets On Wheels of Scottsdale and Gabriel's Angels, which provide programming and support for at-risk youth.

Despite growing up in the arid desert, Lisa is very at home in the water. Lisa's father likes to tell the story of when she jumped off the high dive at a community pool at age 3! After they had a pool put in at home, dad made Lisa sign a contract promising not to jump into the pool off the roof of the house. Yikes! Lisa's love of water manifested itself later when she learned to scuba dive.

The staff and volunteers at the Park really enjoy working with Lisa. We thought you should get to know her!



The Un-Huggable Teddy Bear Cholla Cactus

Teddy Bear Cholla (*Cylindropuntia bigelovii*)

By Lisa Levey

From a distance they might look soft and fuzzy like the arms of a teddy bear, but up close they are nothing like that! In fact, some have said the cholla cactus was born angry at the world and everything in it.

This common cactus is found throughout the southwestern United States and northwestern Mexico. The teddy bear cholla earned its nickname because of the seemingly soft blanket of silver, white spines covering its branches resulting in a fuzzy appearance. These 1-inch spines are actually anything but soft and form a tough fortress around the cholla, preventing animals from eating its flesh. Also known as “jumping cholla” because of its tendency to hop onto travelers as they brush up against its spiny branches. Since this species usually makes no viable seed, it relies on detached segments to form new plants by rooting and growing, therefore multiplying itself.

Teddy bear cholla buds provided food for the native peoples of the Sonoran Desert. The young cactus branches, or buds, were picked and cooked. The cooked teddy bear cholla cactus could be dried and stored as a food source indefinitely. Spines from this cactus were used as needles for sewing. In addition, Teddy bear cholla wood is extremely combustible and makes an excellent starter material for a campfire.

Although this cactus looks beautiful, don't forget its dangers.

Here are some key facts about the teddy bear cholla:



- Its stems are separated into segments that fall off easily.
- The separated segments allow teddy bear cholla to store water and allow photosynthesis.
- Its spines are what saves it from the heat of the desert.
- Water and light are the main source of food for this plant.
- It grows in low elevation desert areas below 3000 feet.
- The plant blooms in spring and has 1.5 inches wide flowers.
- Its flowers are greenish white or lavender.
- A favorite home of cactus wrens for nest building.
- Pack rats pile the joints of this plant to ward off predators.

The quills of the cholla have microscopic barbs that hold on tightly and are painful to remove. If the cholla segments are just stuck to your clothes or are barely into your skin a comb can remove them easily but if they are deeper into your skin, you are looking at some painful tweezing. So please, admire these cacti from afar.

Pinnacle Peak Park Scheduled Activities:

Thur, 05/04/23 7:45 PM Astronomy Evening
Fri, 05/05/23 7:30- 9:00 PM Full Moon Hike
Fri, 06/02/23 8:00 PM Astronomy Evening
Fri, 09/22/23 7:00 PM Astronomy Evening
Fri, 09/29/23 6:30- 8:00 PM Full Moon Hike

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

Spring has Sprung!

Enjoy the Sonoran Desert even more this Spring with a unique flora photo ID guide that helps you identify the various plants, flowers and butterflies. Purchase **Wildflowers, Butterflies and More** in a pocket size book. Go to FOPPP.com to purchase for a \$25 donation (\$20 + \$5 postage). Include your mailing address and note that it is for the Wildflower Guide.



Friends of Pinnacle Peak Park

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