

Friends of Pinnacle Peak Park

NEWSLETTER

Fall 2019 Volume 32

Arizona's State Mammal - The Ringtail

By Lisa Levey

Have you ever heard of a Ringtail? Maybe you've heard of a Ringtail Cat, Miner's Cat, Civet Cat or Cacomistle? Each of these names represent the same animal, the ringtail! Although the ringtail has a cat-like shape, it is not a cat at all! It resembles a fox with a long, raccoon-like tail. It's related to the raccoon and coatimundi but lacks the black mask of the raccoon and long snout of the coati. Ringtails are nocturnal, secretive animals that reside in arid regions of North America. In Arizona, ringtails can be found in most habitats except very flat, open desert areas and in the highest elevations. They are particularly fond of high, rocky habitats such as those found at Pinnacle Peak Park!

The ringtail has a pointed nose, large black or brown eyes, and upright ears that make it easier for them to navigate at night. Like many nocturnal animals, the ringtail has long facial whiskers which help them sense their surroundings. Their fur is light brown, golden tan or gray. The ringtail's most identifiable characteristic is their long tail, which is as long as their body and has 14-16 black and white rings. The rings on their tail can act as a distraction to their predators. The white rings act as a target, so when the tail is caught rather than the body, the ringtail has a greater chance of escaping. They have semi-tractable claws, which enable them to be good climbers.



"Ringtail" by dbarronoss



"A Kringle Day!" by MTSOFan

Ringtails are omnivorous and forage mainly at night. Their diet is mostly small vertebrates (especially rodents), invertebrates (insects and their larvae) and fruits (berries, prickly pear). Many plants in their diet, such as prickly pear have a high moisture content, so by consuming these it reduces their need for water.

Ringtails are prey for foxes, coyotes, bobcats, raccoons, great horned owls and red tailed hawks. Miners and settlers once kept pet ringtails to keep their cabins free of vermin. This led to the common name of "miner's cat". The ringtails would move into the miners' or settlers' cabins and become domesticated. Often a small box with a hole in it was placed near a stove to be a den for the ringtail to sleep in during the day. This effective moucer would then come out at night to rid the cabin of mice.

As you hike Pinnacle Peak trail during daylight hours, it is quite likely that you are passing a ringtail asleep in one of the rock crevices, resting up before exploring the park after hours, during the time that is meant for the animals.

Jingle Hike to Santa

By Yvonne Massman

Since 2005, Pinnacle Peak Park has hosted a unique way for children to enjoy a visit with Santa in our “Jingle Hike to Santa” offered each December! For many families it is part of their holiday tradition that they have carried out year after year.

This year, the park’s non-profit 501c3, Friends of Pinnacle Peak Park has taken on sponsoring this popular activity with additional fun added to the already exciting day. Besides the thrill of getting to share their Good Boy and Girls' Wishlist with the Jolly Old Guy himself, children will have the opportunity to create a craft at the trailhead, and have their face painted by professionals. The hike up to Santa at the Grandview Overlook will offer families the added fun of reading a holiday themed book along the way.

If your family is interested in participating, registration will begin on Monday, October 7th at 6:30 a.m. The event will be held on Saturday, December 7th. The three

registration time slots are 9:00 a.m., 9:30 a.m. and 10:00 a.m. There is a limit of 8 family members per registration. To register you can call the park’s main phone line of 480-312-0990 or stop by the office. Each registered child will receive a 2019 original art holiday patch.

We look forward to a merry event and appreciate the Friends for their support and commitment to our community and families!



Dan Lauritsen

By Bronte Ibsen

If you are someone who frequents our lovely trail, then you’ve probably been lucky enough to have at least a small interaction with our illustrious staff member Dan Lauritsen! Dan has a particularly interesting relationship with the park – he has been a part of our wonderful community for four years in a variety of capacities. At the moment we are lucky to have Dan as a member of our staff which means that he is paid to make sure that our guests are safe and having a lovely time. If you hike out in the McDowell Sonoran Preserve you may also see him out and about as his employment status allows him to “double-dip” and help perform tasks for either entity in the City. Dan was a seasonal employee here for one season prior



to this, and otherwise has been a volunteer both at Pinnacle Peak and the Preserve. It would seem he likes to stay busy!

Up until this year he would go back to his home state of Washington in the summer months and volunteer as a time you see Dan make sure to express your gratitude, at Mount Saint

Helens National Monument. He did that for 7 years and was even a Camp Host for a staff/volunteer campground for one season.

Dan graduated with a Bachelor of Science in Electrical Engineering from University of Nebraska after switching his major from Outdoor Recreation! He had a 22 year career in tech working for Motorola, Intel, and Praegitzer industries just to name a few. In his career, Dan wore many hats ranging from management to software engineering. So if you have any computer issues, be sure to give him a holler. Outside of the professional realm Dan has been a long-time road biker and motorcyclist. To compliment his affinity for being on two wheels and love for the Sonoran Desert Dan has recently picked up mountain biking as well. Dan is also an avid learner and has taken it upon himself to learn more about the plants, animals, history, and geology of the Sonoran Desert. He’s hoping to do this not only to enrich his own life and knowledge, but so that he can connect better with our guests at the park and answer any questions they might have. To that end he intends to be able to guide interpretive hikes and be more involved with educational programs at the park!

Dan loves to make sure that guests enjoy their time in the park safely and does his best to get them as excited about this place as he is. He says that the gratitude of the visitors here is so rewarding and helps him remain passionate about what he’s doing. So next time you see Dan make sure to express your gratitude, we’re certainly thankful that he’s here!

The Mighty Mesquite

By Tom Eye

Mesquite trees are a hardy desert tree that has adapted over centuries to live in the dry ecosystem in and around Arizona. There are 3 main native species of mesquite trees in Arizona:

- *Prosopis glandulosa*: Also called the Honey mesquite.
- *Prosopis pubescens*: Commonly called the Screwbean mesquite, the name comes from the spiral shape of the seed pods.
- *Prosopis velutina*: Is often called the Velvet mesquite.

In addition, there are other nonnative species which originate from South America, including the Chilean mesquite, Argentine mesquite, and other hybrid forms.

Mesquite trees can survive in our dry Arizona climate due to their unique root system. The Mesquite tree's lateral roots can reach out much further than the canopy. They also have tap roots that go very deep to get water beyond 150 feet down (the deepest live root, found in a copper mine, extended 160 feet below the surface). Mesquite trees, when provided with optimum growing conditions, can reach heights of 50 feet when fully grown and live for more than 2 centuries.

Native Americans relied on the mesquite tree for multiple uses. Bark from the tree was used to make clothing, baskets, ropes, twine, and to make a poultice for treating wounds and illnesses. Resin from the tree was used as glue to mend pottery and as dye and paint.



Photo by Wikippeak



Photo by Fastily Clone

The mesquite pods were ground up and used to make meal and flour. The wood was used for firewood and building. The thorns from the trees, which can be long and razor sharp, were used for sewing needles.

And in modern times, the wood and bark of the mesquite tree are very popular for backyard barbeques. The wood has a unique aroma and will burn slowly and hot with very little smoke.

Arizona Mesquite trees are not only beneficial for humans but for wildlife as well. Animals will use the mesquite trees as food, shelter and habitat. For example, during the fall and summer, the mesquite beans will make up about 80% of a coyote's diet.

If you would like to get a firsthand look at this native tree, there are two newly planted Velvet Mesquite specimens near the trailhead of Pinnacle Peak Park! This winter, the North Valley Rotary donated and planted these trees as a community service project for the park. One tree is located just west of the ramada on top of the slope, and the other is located approximately thirty feet up the trail on the south side at the culvert.

Pinnacle Peak Park Scheduled Activities:

Fri., Oct. 4	6:30PM - Astronomy Talk (registration starts 9/20)	Fri., Dec. 20	5:45PM - Astronomy Talk (registration starts 12/6)
Sun., Oct. 13	6:15PM - Full Moon Hike (registration starts 10/6)	Sat., Dec. 28	5:45PM - Astronomy Talk (registration starts 12/14)
Sat., Oct. 19	10:00AM - Phoenix Herpetological Society	Sun., Dec. 29	10:00AM - Saguaro Demo 5:45PM - Full Moon Hike (registration starts 1/2)
Sat., Nov. 2	6:00PM - Astronomy Talk (registration starts 10/19)	Thur., Jan. 9	5:45PM - Full Moon Hike (registration starts 1/3)
Sun., Nov. 3	10:00AM - Liberty Wildlife	Fri., Jan. 10	10:00AM - Metal Art Demo by Dief of Desert Rat Forge
Tue., Nov. 12	5:45PM - Full Moon Hike (registration starts 11/5)	Sat., Jan. 12	6:00PM - Astronomy Talk (registration starts 1/3)
Sat., Nov. 16	6:00PM - Astronomy Talk (registration starts 11/2)	Fri., Jan. 17	10:00AM - Wild at Heart
Sat., Nov. 23	10:00AM - Southwest Wildlife	Sat., Jan. 25	10:00AM - Southwest Wildlife
Sat., Nov. 30	10:00AM - Native Foods Demo	Sat., Feb. 1	6:15PM - Full Moon Hike (registration starts 2/1)
Sat., Dec. 7	9:00AM - Jingle Hike to Santa (registration starts 10/8)	Sat., Feb. 8	6:15PM - Full Moon Hike (registration starts 2/2)
Wed., Dec. 11	5:30PM - Full Moon Hike (registration starts 12/4)	Sun., Feb. 9	6:45PM - Astronomy Talk (registration starts 2/8)
Thur., Dec. 12	5:30PM - Full Moon Hike (registration starts 12/5)	Sat., Feb. 22	

** Call the Pinnacle Peak Park main number at (480) 312-0990 to make reservations for the Astronomy Talk or Full moon Hike*

*** Minimum age to attend the Astronomy Talk is eight years old.*

Friends of Pinnacle Peak Park

PMB 288
8711 E. Pinnacle Peak Rd.
Scottsdale, AZ 85255
www.foppp.com
info@foppp.org

Board Members

Brian Carson, President	Eric Repec
Dick Luther, Secretary	Domenica Corbo
Tom Eye, Treasurer	
Paul Diefenderfer	Ex Officio:
Lisa Levey	John Loleit
Rick McNerney	Yvonne Massman
Rob Rando	Bronte Ibsen

Contributors: Yvonne Massman, Lisa Levey, Tom Eye,
Bronte Ibsen