



## TIME & MUSCLE GOT THE TRAIL OPEN IN 24 HOURS

The Park was closed Friday Jan 22 for trail maintenance following 5 days and 4.35 inches of rain. Thanks to the many volunteers who devoted their time and muscle to keep our trail beautiful and safe.



PMB 288 • 8711 E. Pinnacle Peak Road • Scottsdale AZ 85255

Non-profit Organization  
US Postage PAID  
Cave Creek, AZ  
Permit No. 102



Friends of Pinnacle Peak Park • PMB 288, 8711 E. Pinnacle Peak Road • Scottsdale AZ 85255 • www.pinnaclepeakpark.com

# I saw a Gila Monster and other fables

Story & photos by Mark Johnston



GILA MONSTER

Contrary to what one visitor said, a Chuckwalla is not a cross between a Woodchuck and a Wallaby. Adults are typically 10-14" in length, with distinctive coloring: black head, arms and legs, orange or black back, and a thick yellow tail. Juveniles have broad black and tan stripes.

Chuckwallas are very commonly seen in the warmer months, preferring rocky areas where they will bask in the sun. Harmless to humans, Chuckwallas are strict vegetarians. When threatened, they will dart into a rock crevice and gulp air to inflate their loose folds of skin, wedging themselves in place.

Many visitors to the park make the mistake of thinking the big lizard they saw on a rock is a Gila Monster, when usually what they have seen is a Chuckwalla. Let's contrast the three most common larger lizards in the park: the Chuckwalla, the Gila Monster, and the Desert Spiny.

Count yourself fortunate if you have seen one of our elusive Gila Monsters in the park. It's easy to hike regularly in the park for a year and not see one, as they spend 95% of their lives underground. This venomous lizard can reach 2 feet in length, making it the largest lizard found in the United States.

Feeding mostly on eggs, small lizards, and insects, the Gila Monster is sluggish but has an acute sense of smell. It can detect and dig up eggs buried 5" in the ground and will climb trees to take eggs from bird's nests.

The Gila Monster is orange and black with a reticulated or banded pattern of bumpy, beadlike scales. Contrast this pattern to the Chuckwalla, which has smooth scales and large solid chunks of color.

Unlike the rattlesnake, the Gila Monster must inject its venom by chewing on its victim, and only small amounts of venom are produced. The bite is said to be excruciatingly painful, but no known fatalities from a Gila Monster's bite have ever been recorded. The Gila Monster is a protected species in Arizona.



DESERT SPINY LIZARD

Possibly the most colorful lizard we see at the park is the Desert Spiny Lizard.

Males reach

7-10" in length and can display quite vivid blues, greens, and yellows.

Females tend to be light tan, brown and black. The Desert Spiny has distinctive, raised triangular scales and black patches above its front legs, usually broader on males. It is equally likely to be seen on the ground or basking on rocks. Harmless to humans, it eats insects, spiders, centipedes, and smaller lizards.

One of the spiny lizard's favorite foods is bees, and when bees are swarming and temporarily huddled in a ball around the branch of a tree, a desert spiny lizard can often be seen waiting patiently below for an errant bee to come near enough to become a tasty snack.

Next time you're out on the trail, keep an eye out for these three popular residents of the park.



CHUCKWALLA

## 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.

The Friends of Pinnacle Peak Park Newsletter is published four times a year and is viewable on the website. Distribution of the newsletter continues to be made at the Park and selected sites in North Scottsdale.

Friends of Pinnacle Peak Park is a non-profit, 501(c)3 organization. Tax deductible contributions supporting the Friends mission may be mailed to the address below or made through the website.

Friends of Pinnacle Peak Park

PMB 288 • 8711 E. Pinnacle Peak Road • Scottsdale, AZ 85255

www.pinnaclepeakpark.com

PHOTOS: NANCY HUGGARD

This Newsletter is published by the Friends of Pinnacle Peak Park. We welcome participation in the form of story ideas, letters and comments. e-mail: Editor@MattLucky.com

### Friends of Pinnacle Peak Park

#### Board Members

Morrie Chernis	Dave Mills
Dick Luther	Karen Creviston
Steve Fox	Kevin Sauer
Paul Diefenderfer	Matt Lucky
Luba Grosz	

#### Editor

Matt Lucky

#### Art Director/Graphic Designer

Frank Biondo

#### Contributors

Matt Lucky • Mark Johnston • Gretchen Mills  
John Loleit • Yvonne Massman

For park information  
Telephone: 480-312-0990

# What's That Flower?



PURPLE THISTLE



GOLDEN-EYE



CHUPARROSA



MEXICAN GOLD POPPIES



COULTER'S LUPINE

By Gretchen Mills

Of the over 150 species of plants identified in Pinnacle Peak Park, only a few attract much attention until they burst into bloom. The most distinguishable plant, the Saguaro cactus, bears the state flower. The Ocotillo, which is NOT a cactus, is easily identified by its distinctive canes (with or without green leaves) tipped with a cluster of red flowers.

In February, March and April much of the park's flora puts on its best display. One of the first shrubs to bloom is the Ragged Rock Flower with pure white 5-petal flowers. Flat-top Buckwheat bears small pinkish white flowers at the top of umbrella-like stems. Chuparosa with red tubular flowers is frequented by hummingbirds.

Yellow daisy-like flowers of Brittlebush can be so abundant as to color whole slopes of the foothills. Its soft hairy, grayish-green leaves distinguish Brittlebush from a similar yellow-flowered shrub, Golden-Eye, with rough-textured bright green leaves. Other yellow flowered plants include Creosote Bush and Janusia (a vine) and the dominant park tree, the Foothill Palo Verde.

Spectacular displays of wildflowers - especially Mexican Gold Poppies, Coulter's Lupine and Wild Heliotrope - may wait years until just the right combination of winter rains and mild temperatures set the stage. For more information on the natural history of the park, see Plants and Animals of Pinnacle Peak Park, available as a free download at [www.pinnaclepeakpark.com](http://www.pinnaclepeakpark.com).

## EVENTS AT PINNACLE PEAK PARK

### FEBRUARY

- 6th - Astronomy Talk 6:15pm - Registration required one week in advance at the office. Minimum age 8. Meet in the parking lot.
- 13th - Southwest Wildlife will talk about the animals that live in our desert. 10am - Noon in the Ramada
- 13th - Astronomy Talk 6:30pm - Registration required one week in advance at the office. Minimum age 8. Meet in the parking lot.
- 28th - Full Moon Hike 6:45pm - Registration required one week in advance at the office. We will hike to Grandview. (about 1 mile round trip)

### MARCH

- 6th - Astronomy Talk 6:45pm - Registration required one week in advance at the office. Minimum age 8. Meet in the parking lot.
- 13th - Astronomy Talk 6:45pm - Registration required one week in advance at the office. Minimum age 8. Meet in the parking lot.
- 20th - Phoenix Herpetological Society will be in our Ramada 9 - 11am with some of the reptiles that call our desert home.
- 29th - Full Moon Hike 7:00pm - Registration required one week in advance at the office. We will hike to Grandview. (about 1 mile round trip)

### APRIL

- 3rd - Astronomy Talk 7:15pm - Registration required one week in advance at the office. Minimum age 8. Meet in the parking lot.
- 10th - Astronomy Talk 7:15pm - Registration required one week in advance at the office. Minimum age 8. Meet in the parking lot.
- 17th - Celebrate Earth Day 8 - 11 am No registration required

# Eyes On The Future At Your Park

Ideas for improving and enhancing Pinnacle Peak Park were the subject of a community gathering on November 6 of last year. The event brought together Scottsdale Mayor Jim Lane, various City Council Members, Park Staff, and local residents to enjoy light refreshments at the Park and talk about potential enhancements to Park facilities. Projects of interest include a visitor center, alterations to the existing Ramada, and a small botanical trail for people with



limited hiking abilities. The Friends will join with the City of Scottsdale to assist in the development of a Master Plan to incorporate improvement proposals.

Future community gatherings are being planned to solicit input from Park users and neighbors. Watch for more information about this exciting event at the Park and learn how you can get involved.

## Beverly Angeli-Burch



PHOTO: FRANK BIONDO

Volunteer Beverly Angeli-Burch has a passion for working with children and her passion is put into motion at Pinnacle Peak Park! Whether it is on the trail or a newly inducted Junior Ranger, children who encounter Bev during their Park experience, leave feel-

ing a newer found sense of self-esteem and nature awareness, and actually the adults she interacts with do too! Beverly moved here twenty years ago, with a good majority of those twenty years spent sharing that time between here and San Francisco. Scottsdale is now her permanent home, with her living just around the corner, right in our neighborhood.

When asked why she volunteers, Beverly firmly acknowledges that even though we have the staff at the park that take care of the park adequately, it's the volunteers that help to keep the park going! "Staff needs the help!" she says. (You bet we do!) Her favorite part of volunteering is the hiking and interaction with the visitors.

Bev's past career focused on working with abused children in the courts system. Retired now, her focus in the community has been with the Casa Center for Prevention of Abuse

& Violence, and currently with the Children's First Academy (formerly the Thomas J. Pappas School) a central Phoenix school for homeless and disadvantaged children. It is the nation's largest school for homeless children, where the students are not typical public school students. Many of the children routinely go without life's basic necessities - food, clothing, air conditioning, water, and most importantly a stable home life. Although many of the students move frequently, they always have their school to attend each day and the happy, upbeat demeanor that Bev offers each week! This year Beverly intends to organize a school field trip to bring these children to the park! It appears we may have a new batch of Junior Rangers on the horizon from the heart of Phoenix!

Thank you Beverly for everything you do for the park and others!

*Please help support the Friends mission*

Name \_\_\_\_\_ Address \_\_\_\_\_

City \_\_\_\_\_ State/Zip \_\_\_\_\_ Email \_\_\_\_\_

Contribution Category (circle one) Jojoba \$40 • Teddy Bear \$50 • Compass Barrel \$75 • Ocotillo \$200-499 • Saguaro \$500+

My check payable to Friends of Pinnacle Peak Park for \$ \_\_\_\_\_ is enclosed.

You may contribute using Friends website [www.pinnaclepeakpark.com](http://www.pinnaclepeakpark.com), or by mailing your check to:

Friends of Pinnacle Peak Park • PMB 288 • 8711 E Pinnacle Peak Road, Scottsdale, AZ 85255