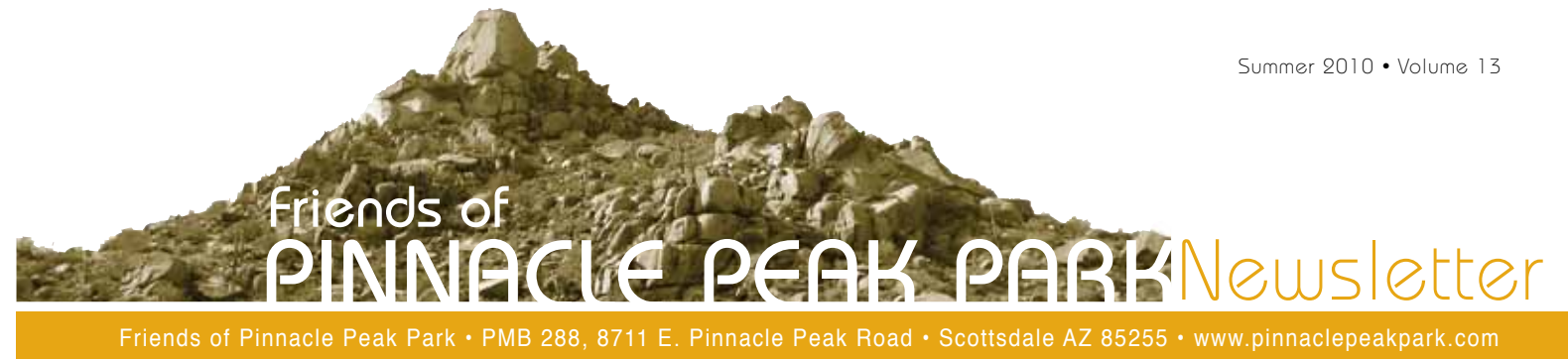


Join us for an evening of fun at the "Cookout At The Ranch" (see page two for more information)

Friends of PINNACLE PEAK PARK  
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# TURKEY VULTURE

By Matt Lucky



Look up. During warmer months you often see large birds gliding on thermals above Pinnacle Peak. The largest of these birds is the Turkey Vulture. Slightly smaller is the Black Vulture which usually soars in a group.

In cartoon fiction, vultures are ghastly portents of death, circling ominously overhead when explorers are lost in the desert. In reality, vultures play a much more wholesome role. By cleaning up the carcasses of dead animals, they act as the sanitation department of the natural world.

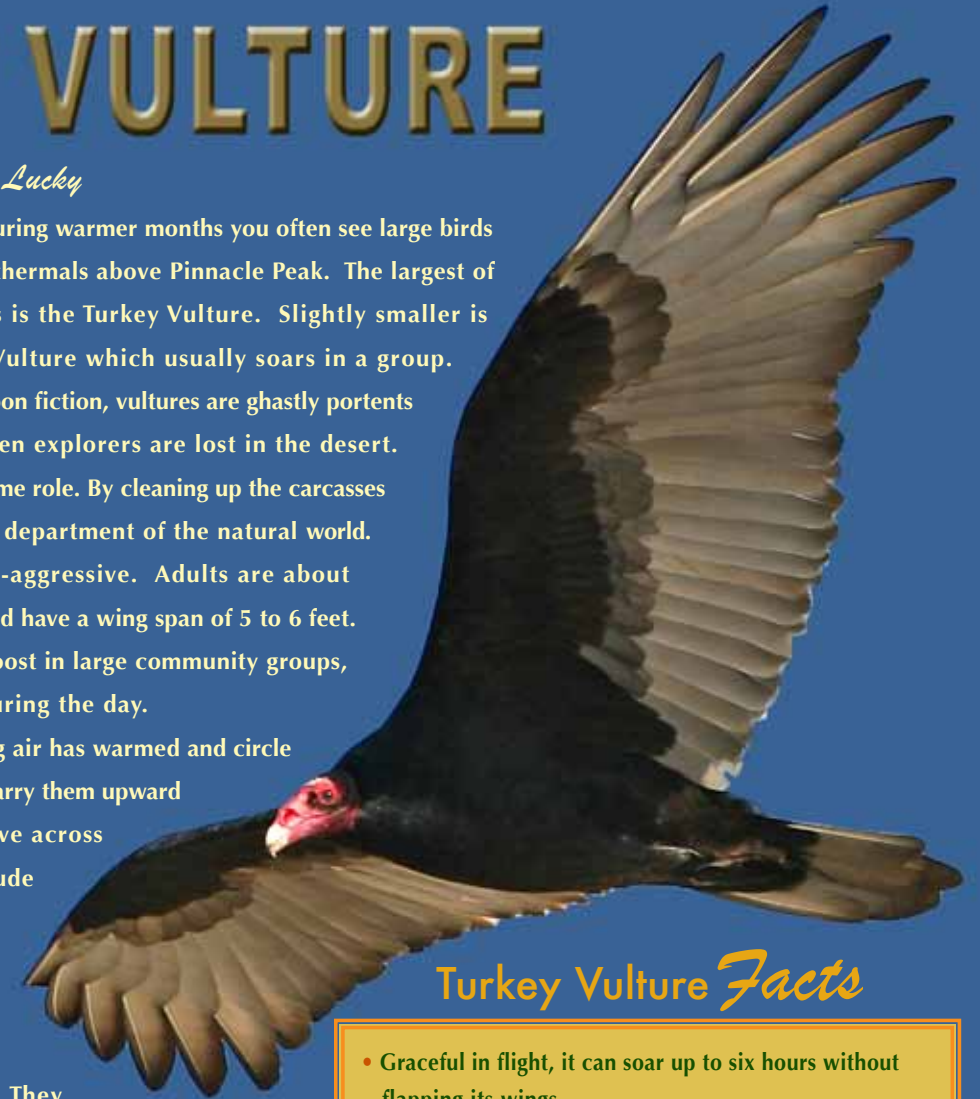
The Turkey Vulture is gentle and non-aggressive. Adults are about 30 inches long, weigh from 3 to 5 pounds and have a wing span of 5 to 6 feet.

These highly social animals prefer to roost in large community groups, breaking away to forage independently during the day.

They leave their perch after the morning air has warmed and circle upward searching for warm air pockets that carry them upward in rising circles. Once at the top, they dive across the sky at sixty miles per hour, losing altitude until they reach another warm air pocket.

Vultures are sometimes recognized because of their circling in the air over carcasses, however this circling does not necessarily mean there is a carcass nearby. They may be gaining altitude for a long flight, searching for food or just playing. While soaring, the turkey vulture holds its wings in a V-shaped formation and tip from side to side. The infrequency of the flapping of their wings is easy to identify from a distance. By contrast, the American Black Vulture makes several flaps followed by brief gliding and holds its wings flat as opposed to at an angle.

Both vultures soar in open areas watching for dead animals. A Turkey Vulture uses its sense of smell as well as its vision to locate carrion, or animal carcasses. They fly low to the ground to pick up scent of mercaptan (the gas produced by the beginnings of decay of dead animals).



## Turkey Vulture Facts

- Graceful in flight, it can soar up to six hours without flapping its wings.
- Its head is small in proportion to its body. The lack of feathers on its head helps keep off unwanted bacteria.
- They are often seen standing in a spread-winged stance called the "horaltic pose". The stance is believed to serve multiple functions: drying the wings, warming the body, and baking off bacteria.
- Turkey Vultures have weaker talons and beaks than many of the other raptors, and often don't kill their own food.
- It gets its name because its red bald head resembles the male wild turkey.
- During the winter the Turkey Vulture migrates to South America.

## 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

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

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The Arizona Blister Beetle (*Lytta magister*), aka Desert Blister Beetle or Master Blister Beetle, has a narrow cylindrical body, 3/4" to 1" long, with a red head and black wings. They are typically seen in abundant numbers on yellow flowering plants like the Brittle-bush or Fiddleneck in the Spring and disappear as quickly as they appear. Of particular interest is the fact that when handled they secrete hemolymph (blood) from their joints as a defensive mechanism. Their blood contains "cantharidin"—a blistering agent that has been used medically to remove warts and tattoos.

## ARIZONA BLISTER BEETLE



"hypermetamorphic" (pass through several larva stages), the first of which is called "triungulin" (3 claws on each foot) where they will locate and feed on Grasshopper eggs or come together in large groups to form a mass that mimics and smells like a solitary female bee to attract a male. When the male tries to mate, they climb on his legs and then transfer to a female bee when the male finds a true mate. From there the larva gets another ride to the bee's nest where it climbs into a cell prepared for the bee's larva and eats the larva and any food provided for it's nourishment. It goes unnoticed as it passes through

Ingestion by humans can irritate the urinary tract and cause swelling in the genitalia, as well as severe gastrointestinal irritation, and even death.

The life cycle is quite interesting and opportunistic. The adults first lay their eggs on the ground or under rocks. They are

the grub and pupa stages to emerge as an adult in the Spring. Each generation takes approximately one year.

Keep watch on the trail for these red-headed beetles and remember not to pick up or handle them as you might be left with a blister for your efforts. *By Cindy Metz*

## Cookout at the Ranch - Save The Date - Oct 2nd



Support a great cause and enjoy a fun evening in the desert with family and friends.

Outback Steakhouse Buffet; Live Western Entertainment; Hay Ride; Exhibits; Silent Auction; and Owl Release in a beautiful desert setting.

The 15th annual Cookout at the Ranch will be held October 2nd. This benefit for desert and wildlife preservation is sponsored by the Desert Foothills Scenic Drive, as well as the Friends of Pinnacle Peak Park. The highlight will be the release of an owl by Liberty Wildlife set in the beautiful Sonoran Desert.

Call the Cookout Hotline at (480) 580-0593, or visit [www.scenicdrive.org](http://www.scenicdrive.org) or [www.gppaaz.org](http://www.gppaaz.org) for tickets and information.

## FIRE

The beautiful desert surrounding Pinnacle Peak and throughout Arizona is at a heightened risk for unexpected wildfires. As the temperatures heat up, the desert grasses that grew with spring rains have dried out, creating a fire danger.

Protect your home from wild land fires by creating a defensible space around your home. Remove perennial grasses and thin overgrown bushes. Remove dead branches from living trees and all dead vegetation from the ground. Lastly, keep a rolled up garden hose with a nozzle attached to an outside hose valve connection.

A Scottsdale Fire Department bulletin at [www.scottsdaleaz.gov/emergencies/brushfires](http://www.scottsdaleaz.gov/emergencies/brushfires) provides guidance that achieves the dual role of ensuring natural area open space (NAOS) protection and also allows for appropriate wildfire prevention.

Start taking steps today to protect your property and family during wildfire season!

Remember Smoking is NOT allowed in the park.

## Friends of Pinnacle Peak Park— The man ahead of the dream

### Morrie Chernis

In the hustle and bustle of getting Pinnacle Peak Park open to the public in early 2002, volunteers were being trained to meet, greet and educate visitors to the soon to be opened City of Scottsdale Park. It was during a training hike on the trail that I had a discussion with a new volunteer named Morrie Chernis—a recent transplant from Seattle. He was utterly captivated by the Sonoran Desert after spending a lifetime in the Northwest. He looked beyond the starkness that so typically describes the desert and saw the beauty of the unique landscape. He often comments "this is the most beautiful desert in the world". Morrie envisioned the potential the park held for visitors and wanted to protect, and promote it as well as educate newcomers about the wonders of the desert.

Knowing City budgets – even in the best of times – Morrie felt that people would gladly donate additional monies that could be used to expand the educational opportunities the park had to offer. He suggested a "Friends of the Park" group do just that. I could not agree more and casually said "why don't you get something started." And he did just that!

The process to establish a non- profit 501(c) 3 organization is not an easy task. Working

with Federal, State, and City governments—each with their own specific forms and regulations—is a daunting endeavor and was overwhelming at times throughout the next few years. Morrie was up to the challenge and even some major health problems did not detour him from his mission. He never lost sight of his vision to see this process through. In 2005 the dream became reality with the establishment of the Friends of Pinnacle Peak Park.

Over the course of the next few years, under the enthusiastic Chairmanship of Morrie, the Friends have become an intriguing part of the park and community. Using donations, they have funded numerous educational programs for park users, training opportunities for volunteers and staff, and a park newsletter. Now the Friends are working with the City to develop a Master Plan for future park amenities.

Always looking ahead, Morrie has decided to turn the duties of Chairman over to Paul Diefenderfer and take on the active role of a board member. The City of Scottsdale and all the park users have benefitted from his enthusiasm, energy, and profound love of this place. Thank you Morrie for establishing and leading the Friends of Pinnacle Peak Park. *By John K. Loleit*



### 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:

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