

## Cookout at the Ranch— Terrific Success



Supporting a great cause never was so much fun. MacDonald's Ranch was the site of the 14th annual "Go Green" fundraiser for desert preservation and wildlife rehabilitation, sponsored by the Desert Foothills Scenic Drive, as well as the Friends of Pinnacle Peak Park. Hay rides, Mexican dancing, and a spectacular horseback, roping and shooting demonstration made for good entertainment. Everyone enjoyed a good cowboy dinner too. One of the exciting moments was the release of an owl by Liberty Wildlife set in the beautiful Sonoran Desert capped off by a full moon.

The Friends participation included a display showing pictures of Park activity, handing out newsletters, post cards and brochures.



Friends of  
**PINNACLE PEAK PARK**

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

Non-profit  
Organization  
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# Friends of **PINNACLE PEAK PARK** Newsletter

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

## Roadrunner

The bird that preys  
on rattlesnakes

By Matt Lucky



acceptable fare for the roadrunner.

When spring arrives, the male roadrunner, in addition to acquiring food for himself, offers choice morsels to a female as an inducement to mating.

He usually dances around her while she begs for food, and then gives her the morsel after breeding briefly.

Both parents collect the small sticks used for building a shallow, saucer-like nest a few feet off the ground, typically in dense vegetation such as palo verdes or chollas. The female then lays from 2 to 6 white eggs which hatch after 18-20 days.

The first to hatch often crowd out the late-arriving runts, which are sometimes eaten by the parents. Usually only 3 or 4 young are finally fledged from the nest after about 18 days.

These remain near the adults for up to 2 more weeks before dispersing to the surrounding desert.

Pinnacle Peak Park experiences two rainy seasons, so roadrunners may breed twice a year; once in the spring and again after the summer rains in August and September. Look for the young roadrunners on the hunt.

PHOTO: MARK JOHNSTON

Roadrunners are one of the most widely recognized desert birds and have unusual characteristics. They are a large bird, very inquisitive and lively and very often quite comfortable around humans. Their long legs suit their active, terrestrial lifestyle; they fly reluctantly and usually for short distances. They can run as fast as 15 miles per hour. It holds its head and tail flat and parallel to the ground when running at its top speed.

They have four toes on each foot; two face forward, and two face backward. This leaves a distinctive X shape track, making it difficult to tell if the bird was coming or going.

Did you know a roadrunner preys on rattlesnakes? When it spots an appetizing-looking snake, the roadrunner circles it warily, occasionally dropping its wings to give the appearance of docility. If and when the rattler strikes, the roadrunner quickly leaps back, then jumps forward to grab the snake in its bill and quickly fling it into the air. After it lands, the roadrunner bites the unfortunate creature on the head and proceeds to beat it to death against a nearby rock. Lizards are usually captured with less danger, and insects, rodents and small birds virtually anything the desert has to offer are all

### Roadrunner Facts

- To warm up after a cold desert night, a roadrunner will turn its back to the sun, fluff its back feathers, and expose skin along its back. This skin is black in order to absorb more solar energy.
- The Greater Roadrunner eats many venomous prey items, including scorpions, spiders, and rattlesnakes. Two birds may cooperate to kill a large snake.
- The Greater Roadrunner is an opportunistic forager. It frequently captures small birds at bird feeders and nest boxes. Make sure your bird feeders are at least five (5) feet above the ground.
- The desert-dwelling roadrunner uses salt glands in front of its eyes to excrete excess salt from its blood. Such glands are common in ocean-going birds that can drink seawater. The roadrunner is able to get along without drinking water if it eats food with high enough water content.

Neighborhood Gathering  
See page 3

## 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.

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PHOTOS: NANCY HAGGARD

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Friends of Pinnacle Peak Park.  
We welcome participation in the form of  
story ideas, letters and comments.  
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# DESERT *Mistletoe*

Phoradendron californicum

As its scientific names implies, Desert Mistletoe is a tree thief. They have chlorophyll and thus photosynthesize, but take water and nutrients from their host plant. The host plant of choice at Pinnacle Peak Park is the Palo Verde tree. Desert mistletoe is an essentially leafless with dense clusters of brittle, jointed stems. From the trail, look for dark and dense "clumps" in trees for easy identification. A heavy infestation of mistletoe can damage or even kill the host plant.

A winter bloomer, the flowers are not very obvious but the clean, fresh, fragrant is. The female plant produces a small red berry that is a favorite food of the phainopepla, also known as a black cardinal. When the berries are consumed, the seeds pass unharmed through their digestive system and if the droppings happen to land on a suitable branch, the seeds may stick long enough to germinate. The phainopepla is unknowingly planting its future food supply and spreading the mistletoe.

The Seri and O'odham Indians will eat the berries, which are sweet when growing on most legumes; however they have a bitter taste when growing on Palo Verde and other non-legume hosts.



PHOTO: FRANK BONDIO

## Neighborhood Gathering

The Friends of Pinnacle Peak Park extend an invitation to all neighboring community residents and Park users to enjoy an evening of light refreshments, entertainment and conversation.

This is an opportunity to introduce the scheduled events to be held at the Park during the 2009/2010 season. More importantly the Friends of Pinnacle Peak Park want to hear your input, comments or suggestions to maintain and improve the



Park's environment for all to enjoy. Join into the discussion of our "Man on the Moon" proposed Park improvements.

The Friends of Pinnacle Peak Park look forward to meeting our community residents and park users. Join us November 6, 2009 at the Park Ramada from 4:30-6:30 p.m. RSVP to info@foppp.org.

Refreshments and drawings are sponsored by Mary Drazek and Luba Grosz, Realtors with Coldwell Banker Residential Brokerage.

## HOLES

As a volunteer for Southwest Wildlife I was recently called out to rescue a badger from the side yard of a house north of 67th Ave and Deer Valley Rd. The homeowners noticed a large mound (18 inches across and about a foot high) of dirt and rocks on top of cement pavers along the side of their house. Between the pavers and the house was a 4 by 6 inch oval shaped hole. When the husband looked down into the hole he saw the distinctive black and white striped face of a badger. The badger is now roaming free around the McDowell Regional Park near Fountain Hills.

Badgers are common in the desert but since they are nocturnal most people never get to see one. They spend the day hanging out in one of the burrows they have dug and then they go hunting during the night. If you hike in areas of the desert with loose soils you may have noticed an oval hole up to 12 inches across with lots of dirt scattered about. This could be a badger hole.

On your next hike, take some time to stop and look down. Unless you're in the paved parking lot you will most likely see

holes everywhere. Lots of critters dig holes in the desert. Beetles, ants and bees will dig small holes under 1/2 inch. Holes in the 1/2 to 1 1/2 inches might be created by species of wasps, spiders, lizards and mice. Bigger holes up to 2 1/2 inches are probably dug by mice and squirrels. Packrats, kangaroo rats and some squirrels make holes up to 6 inches. For big holes, 6 inches and up, the excavator is probably a kit fox, badger or coyote.

Not only the size of the hole but the ground around it will give you clues to who created the hole. Are there "trails" that lead to the hole? Is there scat or debris around the hole? What type of vegetation is nearby? Is the ground loose or hard and rocky?

What do you do with all of this info? Open your "Field Guide to Desert Holes" by Pinau Merlin and find out who most likely created the hole and even who may be borrowing it. The desert is teeming with life. Some of it is flying overhead. Some of it is walking or crawling around in plain sight. And, some of it is out of sight right under your feet!

Happy Hiking and keep your eyes open!

By Paul Dief



PHOTO: PAUL DIEF

## VOLUNTEER



PHOTO: TRACY WEAVER

If you were to meet Hayne on the trail on a Wednesday or Saturday, he would tell you that his favorite part of volunteering at the park is working with the staff (he really said that on his own, honest!). Additional perks for him at Pinnacle Peak Park, are the other volunteers, meeting people from other states and countries, and the scenic views from the trail.

Hayne's father spent 35 years with the FBI. By the time Hayne was born, his dad's traveling days with the agency were finished. Sioux City, Iowa was the final stop and where he grew up.

The four years Hayne spent in the Air Force stationed in New Mexico created an addiction to the "openness, blue sky and earth tones." He vowed to some day return to the west. In 1976, Hayne returned to the Phoenix area, and eventually retired from a career with Ramada Inn.

Hayne hikes with a hand-carved "old man" hiking stick, that he said is a reminder of what he will look like some day. Its beautiful design has been a real conversation starter while out on the trail, and has the added advantage of keeping him from falling down!

Hayne is to be admired for his diligence! Six weeks after a total knee replacement of his left knee in October 2008, he was back volunteering on the trail. Years of running, a broken leg while in the Air Force and "overuse" had left his knee completely devoid of any cartilage. Hayne hiked through months of recovery pain, and today he is completely pain free! Less than a year later!

When Hayne isn't being a dynamic ambassador on the trail or visiting his daughters, Kelli and Kaitlin in California, he spends his days with his wife, Tricia, and Lucy, their 12 year old Aussie Terrier.

Hayne can be found at Pinnacle Peak Park volunteering, greeting and chatting with park visitors, every Wednesday and Saturday.

*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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