



# Phoenix Mountains Preservation Council Lookout

November/December 2022 NEWSLETTER



*Remembrance: Picture courtesy of Joel Peterson*

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Please check out our PMPC website for more in-depth information! Our PMPC website Calendar lists coming events!

*Let's Keep in Touch!!*

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## President's Message #1

### ~ Phoenix Chapter 26 – Protecting Our Desert Preserves ~

by Patrick McMullen, PhD, PMPC President

The Desert Mountain Preserves became public law in 1985; with the establishment of **CHAPTER 26**, the City of Phoenix Mountains Preserves.

*In Section 3 (a) The City Council shall, upon recommendation of the Parks and Recreation Board...Maintain the Mountains Preserves, including native plant and animal communities, in their natural state to the maximum extent practicable..."*



The Preserves are established with defined pathways for maximum protection of hikers, and to maintain the **natural state** of the desert mountains for plant and wildlife for **all our** future generations. Some of these restricted areas off trail are darn attractive and call out for a closer look. This we certainly understand. With 3.8 million people within the Phoenix area, staying on the trails is crucial and mandatory to maintain the natural state and citizen safety within the Preserves.

Going off trail is prohibited within the Phoenix Mountains Preserves and is a violation of City Ordinance – this applies to both hiking and biking off trail within the Phoenix Preserves. Those doing so are subject to a citation and fine by the City of Phoenix. The Preserves are **NOT** a Wilderness Areas.

The re-designation of Camelback Mountain as a Desert Mountain Preserve in 2019 brought with it the full **CHAPTER 26** requirements; including the stability of ‘approved’ access hiking trails and requirements to:

*“Stay on established trails”*

The ‘new and improved’ Cholla Trail – especially the trailhead area - all finished in 2022 – have brought substantial improvements. These changes and upgrades took two years to complete.

**CHAPTER 26** impacts the Cholla Trail; eliminating and closing off the illegal “spider” trails. The effort to clean up the Cholla Trail more clearly defines the trail now for everyone.

The local neighbors and the adjoining neighborhoods of Arcadia, Scottsdale and Paradise will certainly appreciate the restrictions of the Desert Preserve status; along with visitors from around the world who come to the Valley of the Sun.

PMPC appreciates the City of Phoenix improvements to one of the most heavily used trail systems within the Phoenix Mountains Preserve. Well done and thank you!

## President's Message #2s Protection of Desert Flora

\*\*\* *Desert plants grow by the inch and die by the foot!* \*\*\*

### Stay on the Established Trails!

The above statement comes from a sign near Indian Gardens on the Bright Angel Trail on south side of the Grand Canyon. The desert landscape of the Grand Canyon is very similar in many ways to our desert landscape here in Phoenix. This statement is exceedingly of great concern and value for the preservation of our Phoenix Mountains Desert Preserves!

The desert environment is so fragile that just by walking 'off-trail' through the untouched desert landscape, the fragile bio-crust layer, which is life support layer of the desert soil, the top soil bio-crust layer and the small growing plants are crushed by the foot. The bio-crust is life support for organisms that

live within the soil, as well as plants and wildflowers growing upon it. And every time we walk off the trail, we are putting bio-crust, and all the life it supports, in danger!! Written by Ms. Bri Cossavella, a freelance writer for Territory Supply.

#### Stay on the trail

It's simple, but not exactly easy.

People walk off-trail for various reasons. Sometimes it's to shortcut the trail. Sometimes it's to get a better view. Regardless, it doesn't take long for people walking off-trail in the same location to create a new trail, potentially resulting in the destruction of the bio-crust.

## Phoenix Park Ranger Programs

*Information contributed by City of Phoenix Parks Department Rangers Alonso, Dan and Claire*

The City of Phoenix Park Ranger Program began in 1984 and was permanently established when Chapter 26 (Mountain Preserves Section) of the City Code was approved. Four main objectives:

- **Preservation:** Forty trails now have counters to track the usage on specific trails. This information is useful and helps the Rangers to know the heaviest usage by the four million visitors to the Sonoran Parks each year.
- **Maintenance:** Trail maintenance and invasive species control (like Buffelgrass).
- **Education & Programming:** Interacting with Preserve users, 5 AM-7 PM, and every day.
  - Current Staff: 55 Park Rangers on staff;
  - Funding of Rangers: 33 with General Fund (taxes), 22 through PPPI funding.
  - *"Take a Hike – Do It Right"* campaign and education.
- The pilot safety initiative banning dogs from all Phoenix mountain hiking trails on 100+-degree days, *is now permanent*, and will be in place from July through September.
- **Enforcement Goal:** Compliance through education:
  - Last year the Rangers issued over a thousand citations. The majority of these citations were parking violations and for dogs off leash. Citations are issued for going off trail and for failure to comply with posted regulations.
  - The fees range from \$85 to \$240, depending on the specific violation.

Our Park Rangers have a very large area to patrol and protect. The next opportunity to increase their numbers and hours is at the City of Phoenix Budget Hearings hopefully will take place in the near future. Please check the City of Phoenix website for dates, times and locations. <https://www.phoenix.gov>

## Owls in the Phoenix Mountains Preserve

### ~ Fall is Special Time for Owl Activity ~

In Remembrance - Photos and Original Article by Joel Pearson

October and November are special months above all other months of the year that seems to bring out greater owl activity. It's the beginning of the fall migrating season, after all. In addition, October is the start of cooler daytime and nighttime temperatures in the lower deserts. It's simply more pleasant to hang around in October. I imagine these owls probably have a second home in Prescott or Flagstaff like some humans we know. Some of these owls may live in Arizona year round. It doesn't hurt to have a second home in a cooler climate, too! (I'm just speculating.)



The Elf Owl lives in Baja and visits the Southwest in the summer. It is included with the Owls of October to make the Owl list complete. Otherwise it

would be the only one of the owls seen in Phoenix Mountains Preserve not listed. Maybe they visit Arizona in October. I just haven't seen them in the Preserve in October. Actually, I have only seen an Elf Owl once in nearly eight years photographing in the Preserve!



This is what a bird book says about the Flammulated Owl which has only been seen in the month of October: "Uncommon in oak and pine woods, but difficult to detect. Nocturnal: roosts during the day in cavities; at night forages in woods for insects. Usually solitary." That seems to indicate the bird is only traveling through to some higher elevations in the State and not looking to spend any time in Phoenix.

The Great Horned Owl lives and breeds in the area. Great Horned nests have been seen in PMP. They do appear to go elsewhere when the temperature is too high, however. They can be seen only occasionally in the summertime in PMP.



Long-Eared Owls are also just travelling through. They live farther North and can be found as high up as Canada in the summertime. They are pretty birds and are a real challenge to photograph.



The Western Screech Owl lives in the Western regions of the Americas from the western edges of Alaska, down through the western U.S. and western portions of Mexico.

Our Phoenix Preserves have several species of Owls – if you hear a ‘Hoot’ – guess which Owl you are listening to!



## PMPC UPDATES

### (1) Taylor Morrison Project, Verdin Development –

Adjacent to the Sonoran Preserve:

The ‘Desert Character Overlay District’ (DCOD), per Section 653 of the Phoenix Zoning Ordinance is what protects our Desert Preserves from the impact of new development and maintaining the beauty of our desert landscape. The DCOD is the result of hundreds of hours work by individuals committed to thoughtfully and specifically ensure the native desert areas adjacent to the Preserve are not eclipsed by future housing developments that disregard the fragile beauty of the desert.

*Article Provided by Susanne Rothwell*

On Friday July 1<sup>st</sup>, 2022 the City Council along with the Mayor, voted to approve Taylor Morrison’s request for a rezoning on 480 acres of land to the west side of Cave Creek Wash, just south of the Sonoran Drive.

The rezoning included the removal of the ‘Desert Character Overlay’, Chapter 653 of the Phoenix Zoning Ordinance. This chapter was written by professors from ASU, and the Director of the Phoenix Parks Department at that time, James Burke and numerous concerned citizens. “The purpose of the Desert Character Overlay Districts is to implement the north land use plan, to define the nature of development while maintaining undisturbed areas, and to provide guidance for new development to occur within the context of the fragile undisturbed desert”.

It was a truly advanced piece of legislation that put Phoenix at the forefront of environmental Zoning law. The first challenge the overlay was from Taylor Morrison, the property developer and the MacEwan 480 land owners.

PMPC members attended the public meetings and PMPC was a big part of the objection to this waiver of the Zoning Ordinance, starting in 2018. Although we lost the fight to keep the overlay compromises are better than the original project.

After years of pressure from PMPC, Save Our Sonoran and others working with Councilman Jim Waring and the City and Developer these compromises were affected:

1. Number of houses reduce to 1250 from 1420
2. No lots smaller than 5,000 SF; (proposed lots were as small as 3,000 sf)
3. Developer will contribute to the development of the Sonoran Desert Drive

4. A National Wildlife Certification to ensure use of bird and animal friendly plants
5. An additional 16 acres to be added to the Sonoran preserve
6. A fifty foot easement along the eastern property line and adjacent to the Cave Creek Wash
7. The Mesquite Wash which runs through the center of the property will be left in-tact as a pedestrian corridor
8. Single story homes along the eastern property line for a softer edge along the cave Creek Wash

PMPC will continue to fight for the best use of our beautiful, peaceful and unique Phoenix Mountains and Sonoran Preserves, and for the ongoing purchases of land yet to be made a part of the Sonoran Preserve.

### (2) South Mountain Environmental Education Center is now open!

South Mountain Environmental Education Center (SMEEC) serves as an education resource center for many of the City’s school children, residents and visitors to South Mountain Park/Preserve. The City of Phoenix Parks and Recreation Department is excited to open the doors once again to visitors so they can learn about the rich wildlife and culture Phoenix has to offer.

Located at: 10409 S Central Avenue.

Hours: Wednesday through Saturday, 8 to 2 pm

### (3) Drought Pipeline Project Update

The Dreamy Draw bike path is scheduled to be completed and opened in late 2022. Dreamy Draw Recreation Area and its facilities are looking toward an early-2023 reopening.

Perl Charles Memorial Trail (#1A) remains closed as construction of the 66" pipeline continues.

Open routes within the Phoenix Mountains Preserve include the 22nd Street trail, 32nd Street trail, 40th Street trail, Mesquite trail, Quartz Ridge trail, Piestewa Peak Park, and Trail 100.

Due to the shortage of water on the Colorado River caused by over-allocation, prolonged drought, and climate change, the City of Phoenix has declared a **Stage 1 Water Alert** and activated its Drought Management Plan. We have been preparing for these shortages.

The Drought Pipeline is one of the long-term solutions the City of Phoenix has been working diligently to execute, in anticipation of severe water shortages.

## PMPC UPDATES continued

### (4) Cholla Trailhead Reopens (Camelback Mountain):

Cholla Trail was closed for two years, due to construction and a trailhead realignment (moving the trailhead from Cholla Lane to Invergordon Road), and reopened September 30, 2020. The new trailhead offers hikers amenities such as a drinking fountain, restrooms and bike racks.

Cholla Trail Realignment Project was a joint effort between the departments of Parks and Recreation, Street Transportation, Phoenix Fire and the Town of Paradise Valley; each playing a crucial role in making this project safe and accessible for first responders, hikers and neighbors.

#### Background Information

- Since 1997, the City of Phoenix has utilized an easement on Phoenician land which provides hikers with access to the popular Cholla Trail on the east side of Camelback Mountain. From 1997 until March 2020, hikers were permitted to park only on Invergordon Road, then walk up Cholla Lane to access the trail. This condition created several undesirable hiking conditions. *(continued on Page 6)*
- Due to the volume of hikers, which often reached over 10,000 per month, people frequently walked on the street rather than the trail alongside Cholla Lane. Hikers on the street created obvious safety concerns which led the Phoenix Parks and Recreation Department (Parks) to begin planning a safer trail alignment.

#### Trail Realignment

- Recent efforts by Parks focused on finding a solution that allows hikers to access Cholla Trail without walking up Cholla Lane. In the past several years, the redevelopment of the Phoenician golf course property has provided the opportunity to consider an alternative trail alignment. Parking access will continue to be limited to on street parking on the west side of Invergordon. Access to the trail will now be directly from the sidewalks on the west side of Invergordon to a pedestrian entry gate.
- An alternative route has now been designed that reroutes the trail off of Invergordon, south of Cholla Lane, thereby avoiding Cholla Lane.
- This new alignment provides a more natural hiking experience, away from City streets.
- Special consideration provides visual screening with plant material between the trail and adjacent residences.
- Chilled drinking water and restroom facilities are available for hikers, by utilizing the existing restroom building that had been part of the golf course.

## Park Steward Program

We are happy to announce that the City of Phoenix Preserve Park Stewards and PMPC will be working closer together for the protection of our Preserve for the future.



Article Provided by Park Steward, Carla Gunn

The City of Phoenix Preserve Park Stewards are volunteers that help in protecting, monitoring, and improving our Desert Mountain Preserves. They are the eyes and ears of the Park Rangers, assisting in educating visitors, and reporting areas in need of attention. The over 600 volunteers can be seen at all the Preserves throughout the city. They have a hike patrol to monitor the trails. The bike patrol does the same while riding. The Desert Defenders team is mapping and removing invasive species and placing seeds to help restore native flora. They are currently working to remove cattails from Papago Park, build back drains on Echo Canyon Trail, and building steps in parts of the new section of the Cholla Trail. Other trail maintenance work is being done at all the Preserves where attention is needed the most. At South Mountain, they staff the gatehouse during busy months. They can now be seen at the South Mountain Environmental Education Center. For more information about becoming a Park Steward contact go to: [volunteer.phoenix.gov](http://volunteer.phoenix.gov) and search for Park Stewards:

- Preserves trail maintenance
- Hike patrols
- Bike patrols
- Greenhouse attendant
- Invasive species removal
- Visitor Center attendant
- Trash clean ups
- Graffiti removal



## A Deadly Invasive Species: Buffelgrass

Buffelgrass (*Pennisetum ciliare*) is an invasive (non-native) nuisance species forming dense infestations, crowding out our beautiful native Sonoran Desert plants. Characteristics of Buffelgrass:



- Immune to droughts, survives long time without water, prolific seeds. Windstorms spread seeds easily over large areas, to new locations.
- Depletes native species resources (water, nutrients and space). When Buffelgrass is dry - it burns very hot and spreads wildfire quickly.
- Manual removal is effective; remove entire root mass, bag, seal and dispose in landfill.

The Central Arizona Conservation Alliance (CAZCA) began the Piestewa Buffelgrass Pilot Project, in 2019 - partnering with Intel, and the Parks and Recreation Department. For more additional and more detailed information, please check out these resources:

CAZCA <http://www.mymountainparks.org>

AZ Native Plant Society : <http://www.aznps.com/documents/buffelgrass.pdf>

Arizona Buffelgrass: <http://www.aznps.com/invasives/BuffelGrass/Buffel%20Brochure%20061611.pdf>



**Buffelgrass on Cholla Trail.**

## The '20-5-3' Rule -- How Much Time to Spend Outside

Biologist E.O. Wilson says: "Nature holds the key to our aesthetic, intellectual, cognitive, and even spiritual satisfaction."

- |              |                     |                    |  |
|--------------|---------------------|--------------------|--|
| ○ 20 minutes | Outside in nature   | Three times a week | Boosts cognition, memory, feelings of well-being |
| ○ 5 hours    | In semi-wild nature | Each month         | Happier and less stressed                        |
| ○ 3 Days     | Off-grid in nature  | Each year          | Boosts creativity and problem-solving abilities  |

The more time you can spend in nature, and this article indicates that the wilder the better, the better your overall health will be. It was interesting to note that cell phone users in nature received no little to no benefit from their hikes and walks.

This story originally appeared in the June 2021 issue of Men's Health with the title *The 20-5-3 Nature Cure*.

## North Mountain Visitor Center: News and Upcoming Events

**SAVE OUR MOUNTAINS FOUNDATION** presents:  
**COFFEE HOUSE AT NORTH MOUNTAIN VISITOR CENTER**

### Stewart MacDougall

Saturday, December 17, 2022  
9-11 A.M.



Stewart MacDougall is a Canadian singer/songwriter. He began his musical journey over fifty years ago in Fredericton, New Brunswick. He ventured west in 1980 and relocated in Edmonton Alberta where continues to be one of Alberta's most diverse performers. Before pursuing a solo career in 1997 he was best known for his keyboard and vocal work with Laura Vinson, k.d. lang, Ian Tyson, and Great Western Orchestra. His songs have been recorded by all of these artists and a number of others including Sneezy Waters and Randy Travis. He now winters in Arizona City, Arizona and performs his unique brand of western music throughout the Valley of the Sun.



**Coffee House:** Coffee and refreshments will be served.

Donations made to Save Our Mountains Foundation are much appreciated.

### North Mountain's: Volunteer in the Spotlight

Bill McCall, our Volunteer in the Spotlight, comes to us from many places: Detroit, Michigan; Denver, Colorado; Evanston, Wyoming; Tucson, Arizona; Novato, California; Cherry Hill, New Jersey; Overland Park, Kansas; Buffalo, New York, and for the past three years, now resides in Phoenix, Arizona. And are we ever glad he does! Bill is an outstanding volunteer, giving 663 hours of his time to the Center since starting in September of 2019.

Bill enjoys hiking and has participated in numerous NMVC Hikes. Helping to get the word out about our hikes, Bill set up a Hiking Group on Facebook, that advertises and describes the upcoming hikes. He has had cards printed up with information for our volunteers to pass out to visitors.

Besides sharing his hiking expertise with so many of our visitors, Bill is also a wonderful mentor volunteer, having had many of our new volunteers shadow him at the Front Desk. They all agree he is a treasure trove of information.

Along with volunteering at North Mountain Visitor Center, Bill also volunteers at the St. Mary's Food Bank, The Nash, and is a Phoenix Park Steward.

Bill likes talking to our visitors, bringing his dog, Taco, to work with him, and enjoying the music performed at Coffee House Saturdays. It is our good fortune that Bill has chosen NMVC to share his time and talents!

### OCTOBER 2022 Issue of *The Park Steward Post*

Phoenix Mountains Preservation Council is featured in this edition with a two-page article. Quoting from this newsletter: *"Park Stewards have a wide range of backgrounds, interest areas, and activities we participate in. But one thing we all have in common is a dedication to Phoenix parks and preserves, and a desire to contribute to the well-being of our community. Park Stewards looking to increase or broaden their work to preserve and protect natural areas in Phoenix may be interested in opportunities available with the Phoenix Mountains Preservation Council (PMPC)."* The PMPC website has a link! Enjoy!



Phoenix Mountains Preservation Council

## Annual Holiday Get Together



Saturday, December 10  
3 to 5 PM

We hope you can join us at our annual holiday get together at the  
North Mountain Visitor Center  
12950 N. 7<sup>th</sup> Street

Welcome to all PMPC members and guests

Come meet others who love and enjoy the Preserves

Learn what PMPC is doing to protect the Phoenix and Sonoran Preserves

We will be providing Pizza but hope that you will bring one of the following:

Side dish  
Dessert

Salad  
Beverage

Please **RSVP** if attending by **December 7**  
[pmpcaz@gmail.com](mailto:pmpcaz@gmail.com)



# JOIN The Phoenix Mountains Preservation Council

Your membership helps us to protect the Phoenix and Sonoran Preserves

Thank you for your 2023 PMPC Membership

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Street Address: \_\_\_\_\_

City, State, Zip: \_\_\_\_\_

E-mail address: \_\_\_\_\_

Please contact me with opportunities to participate in PMPC activities: \_\_\_\_\_

MEMBERSHIPS: Family/Individual: \$35 Organization \$45. \$ \_\_\_\_\_

### ADDITIONAL FINANCIAL SUPPORT:

Tortoise Protector	\$25	
Slope Protector	\$50-\$100	
Cliff Protector	\$100-\$500	
Peak Protector	\$500+.	\$ _____

**TOTAL:** \$ \_\_\_\_\_

MAKE CHECK PAYABLE TO: Phoenix Mountains Preservation Council, Inc. (PMPC, Inc.)

MAIL TO: Phoenix Mountains Preservation Council, Inc.  
12950 N. 7<sup>th</sup> Street,  
Phoenix, AZ 85022

JOIN PMPC ONLINE: [www.phoenixmountains.org](http://www.phoenixmountains.org)

## Thank you for supporting PMPC!

### PMPC CONTACT INFORMATION

PMPC website:	<a href="http://www.phoenixmountains.org">www.phoenixmountains.org</a>	and calendar information.
PMPC email address:	<a href="mailto:pmpcaz@gmail.com">pmpcaz@gmail.com</a>	
PMPC mailing address:	12950 N. 7th ST Phoenix, AZ 85022	<b>Keep in Touch!!</b>

Please check our website for information about PMPC