

etober 21 & 22, 20 5:30-8:00pm

Night Hike Notes

Station I: Snakes

Gophersnake

- Often mistaken for a rattlesnake, but is non-venomous
- Imitates rattlesnakes by flattening its head, hissing, and vibrating its tail
- Eats rattlesnakes, rodents, rabbits, birds, eggs, and other reptiles
- Can reach a length of 6 feet or more Arizona's biggest snake!
- Beneficial to humans because it controls rodent and rattlesnake populations

Rattlesnake

- Scientists have identified 36 species of rattlesnakes, 13 of which you can find in Arizona more than any other state!
- Rattlesnakes only live in North, Central, and South America
- Rattlesnakes use the "loreal pit," a heat-sensing organ between the nostril and eye to locate prey and potential predators
- These snakes have glands that make venom, much like human saliva glands make saliva
- Rattlesnakes are venomous, not poisonous. Venomous things inject venom. Poisonous things are dangerous when eaten. So, there's actually no such thing as a poisonous snake!
- The rattle is made of keratin, the same material found in human hair and fingernails
- The age of a rattlesnake cannot be determined by counting the segments of its rattle
- Rattlesnake prey may include small mammals, birds, reptiles, amphibians, and centipedes
- According to Arizona Poison Centers, less than 1% of rattlesnake bites result in human deaths
- The Eastern Diamondback Rattlesnake can get up to 6 feet long and is the largest rattlesnake in the United States. They are larger than Arizona's Western Diamondback Rattlesnake
- Other snakes at Station are the Desert Coral Snake and Sidewinder Rattle Snake.



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Night Hike Notes

Station 2: Coyote and Ringtail Cat

Coyote

- Native to North America
- Eats a variety of rodents, birds, reptiles, fish and your dog's food!
- Live in burrows.
- Active Night & Day
- The most vocal north American mammal 11 different calls
- Social unit formed around female. Some times form packs.
- Sometimes form close hunting relationships with badgers.

Ringtail Cat

- Arizona's State mammal.
- Not a cat, but related to the raccoon.
- Grooms itself, sleeps during the day.
- Stalks and pounces on its prey like a cat.
- Mostly solitary.
- Lives in rocky crevices and along steep, rocky stream beds.
- Eats insects, scorpions, small rodents, birds, eggs and some cactus fruit.
- Known as the "miners cat"; used by miners to control rodents and other vermin in their homes.



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Night Hike Notes

Station 3: Badger and Skunk

Badger

- Very short powerful legs with large claws for digging.
- Eats a variety of food from rodents, reptiles, & insects to roots and fruit. Get most of their food underground.
- Lives in underground burrows
- Nocturnal

Striped Skunk

- Common over much of the United States
- Usually lives in burrows abandoned by other animals
- · Eats vegetation, fruits, berries, eggs, carrion, insects and rodents
- Can deliver 5 to 6 jets of spray up to fifteen feet
- Very protective of their young and will fight off other predators
- Most common predator is the Great Horned Owl (they can't smell!)
- Black and white coloration advertises, "don't mess with me!"
- There are four species of skunk in Arizona striped, spotted, hog-nosed, and hooded



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Night Hike Notes

Station 4: Owls

Great Horned Owl

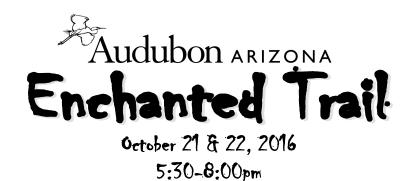
- Most common owl in North America.
- Primarily eats rabbits & mice and sometimes reptiles.
- Wings are 3-5 feet and have special feathers so they can fly quietly.
- Claws or talons can crush the skulls of its prey.
- Center talon has serrated edge like a steak knife.
- Sometimes called the "hoot owl" because of its haunting "hoot, hoot, hoot" calls at night.

Barn Owl

- Lives over most of the world's continents except Antarctica.
- Nocturnal and eats small mammals/rodents.
- Mate for life.
- Average Life span is 4 years.
- Only one in four chicks usually survive.
- Call is a loud screeching sound.

Elf Owl

- Nest and roosts in tree cavities and Saguaro Cactus.
- Nocturnal and eats insects i.e. centipedes, scorpions, etc.
- North America's smallest owl at 5.75 inches.
- Call series of whistled notes and also a sharp high bark.
- Migrate from Central and Southern Mexico.



Night Hike Notes

Station 5: Insects and Arachnids

Desert insects and arachnids such as scorpions, centipedes, spiders and crickets are food sources for many of the animals you have seen this evening.

The venom that Scorpions, Centipedes and some spiders use to kill their prey is sometimes toxic to humans. If you or a child has been stung or bitten by one of these and is having trouble breathing or in sever pain seek medical care or call 911 if urgent.

Scorpions

- There are over 40 species of scorpion in Arizona.
- Bark, Stripe-Tailed, and Giant Desert Hairy scorpions are the most common in Phoenix.
- In Arizona, only one scorpion is known to be "medically significant" the Bark Scorpion.
- The Giant Desert Hairy scorpion is the largest in the United States.
- When put under ultraviolet light (black light) scorpions glow a bright bluish green.
- Nocturnal.
- Spend the day under rocks, in cracks and crevices, or under debris and sand.

Tarantulas

- One of the largest spiders in Arizona (Crab and Wolf Spiders can be just as big!).
- Have a fairly mild bite often compared to a bee sting.
- Spend most of their lives in underground burrows.
- During the breeding season, males come to the surface and can be seen in large numbers.
- Males live only a few years, but females can live over 20.

Centipedes

- Have existed for over 400 million years making them one of the oldest land-dwelling animals.
- Common centipedes in Phoenix include the House Centipede, Varied Centipede, and Giant Desert Centipede
- Arizona Centipedes do not have a dangerous bite, but they are very, very painful.



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Night Hike Notes

Station 5: Toads

People are often surprised to know that several toads live in the Desert. Their behavior and life cycle is often tied to the Two Monsoon seasons in Arizona. Many emerge at the beginning of our summer monsoon season. They seek out temporary pools to find a mate and breed and their offspring must transform from an egg, to a tadpole, to an adult toad before the puddles dry up. Once the desert goes dry, these toads burrow deep underground until the summer rains return. They have many adaptations, including the ability to secrete a water-saving slimy coat, to keep them alive and well during this long hibernation. When caught or handled, some toads will swell up, void their blatter (pee - a lot!), or secrete poisonous oils from their skin.

Woodhouse Toad

- One of Arizona's most common toads
- Has a loud, scream-like call

Sonoran Desert Toad

- Arizona's largest toad
- Is known for the poisonous secretions it releases from it's large, obvious white glands

Red-Spotted Toad

- One of Arizona's smaller toads.
- Named for the many red spots, or tubercules, on its skin.
- Has a call that sounds similar to a finger running quickly over a plastic comb.