



# PHOENIX MOUNTAINS PRESERVATION COUNCIL LOOKOUT

*Fall 2024 Newsletter*



*Courtesy of MTB Project/C.R. John*



## **SOUTH MOUNTAIN PARK/PRESERVE**

The City of Phoenix purchased the land we know as South Mountain Park/Preserve 100 years ago. Throughout 2024, the City has been celebrating this milestone by posting 100 things we love about the park/preserve on social media. In November, there will be a celebration open to the public at the South Mountain Visitors Center (formerly known as the South Mountain Environmental Education Center). Keep reading for more information about the celebration and the park/preserve!

# SOUTH MOUNTAIN SPEEDWAY



SHOULD I STAY OR SHOULD I GO NOW?

Courtesy of KNXV

It's not clear when the land set aside as a park 100 years ago was first used as a track. Racing has been going on since at least 1949 according to the 15-cent program pictured. We do know an oval track was built in the early 1960s that was operated by various organizations since 1974. The latest organization to operate the track with

an agreement to cover all maintenance and repair costs track was Valley of the Sun Quarter Midget Association, a 501c(3) organization. They held competitive racing events for 5 to 17-year-olds eight to ten weekends a year. For the remainder of the year, the racetrack sat unused. That operating agreement ended last year after the City of Phoenix paid for a 3rd party assessment of the facilities and electrical conditions.

The report found imminent unsafe and hazardous conditions, requiring nearly \$1 million in repairs. The electrical system, safety barriers around the track, bleachers, restrooms, and air conditioning were in all failed condition. In response to this report, the Parks and Recreation Department ceased all track operations and disconnected the power for the safety of the community, and reconsidered if a track was appropriate at South Mountain Park/Preserve.



Courtesy of AbeBooks

The 1989 South Mountain Master Plan stated the racetrack was "an inappropriate preserve use" and recommended "the facility should be converted to a compatible use and/or restored to natural desert". Since the 3rd party reports release, the Phoenix Sonoran Preserve and Mountain Park/Preserves Committee, the Salt River Pima-Maricopa Indian Community, the Gila River Indian Community, and a majority of the Parks & Recreation Board members have all issued statements supporting the removal of the racetrack.

The Valley of the Sun Quarter Midget Association is actively trying to get community support for saving the racetrack. They have an online petition with over 1,400 signatures that will be presented to various City of Phoenix officials. They are also requesting their supporters contact the mayor's office, the Parks & Recreation Board members, City Council members, and the South Mountain Village Planning Committee Board.

The PMPC will be writing a letter to the Parks Board supporting the removal of the racetrack to restore the 2.15 acres back to its natural preserve. You can personally support removal of the racetrack and restoration of the land to preserves by contacting the following:

Mayor Kate Gallego and City Council members: Contact via email by going to [www.phoenix.gov/mayorcouncil](http://www.phoenix.gov/mayorcouncil).

Parks & Recreation Board: Meet on the fourth Thursday of the month at 5pm. Go to [www.phoenix.gov/parks/board](http://www.phoenix.gov/parks/board) for how to attend in-person or virtually.



Courtesy of Arizona State Library, Archives and Public Records

## References

- Bontke, J. (September 9, 2024). Uncertainty surrounds future of South Mountain Speedway. Scripps Media, Inc. <https://www.abc15.com/news/region-phoenix-metro/south-phoenix/uncertainty-surrounds-future-of-south-mountain-speedway>.
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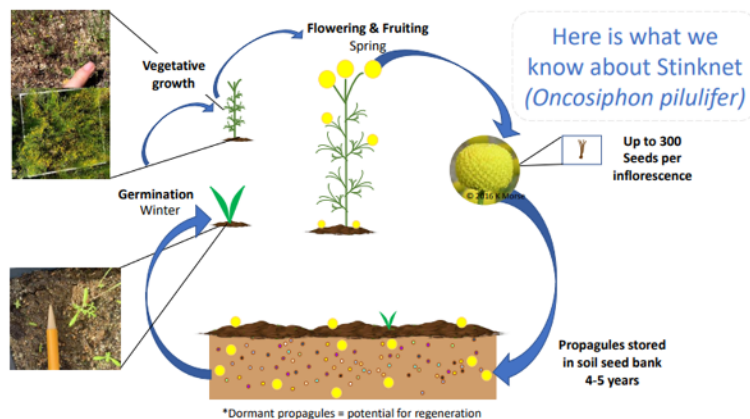
PMPC

# STINKNET

## THE INVASION ISN'T OVER

Stinknet, *Oncosiphon piluliferum*, has made its claim on the Phoenix metro area and their return is nearly as certain as death and taxes. Even though the plants are now dead and the “beautiful” yellow flowers are now tan, that’s all part of the lifecycle of this annual invasive species.

Those tan spheres around the preserves and neighborhoods that were once bright yellow globes are now clumps of seeds. Tiny yellow flowers makeup the sphere and have now become a fragile clump of stinknet seeds, waiting to be disturbed so the seeds can be dispersed. Each seed is less than 0.5 millimeters long with an attached dried flower petal up to 2 mm in length. Each stinknet plant produces an average of 3,000 to 5,000 seeds. Very large plants (those reaching 3 feet tall) can produce up to 100,000 seeds. These seeds can germinate up to 5 years after being produced. For this reason, if there’s an area of outbreak, mitigation efforts will need to take place multiple times per year every year for 3 – 5 years.



Life cycle of *Oncosiphon piluliferum*  
Courtesy of The University of California

This is a winter annual so all those seeds from last year and the previous four years will start germinating in late October or November, likely after a rainstorm. Germination of new plants continues through May (hence mitigation efforts must be done multiple times per year). New plants begin growth as a basal rosette of dark green



Flowers, not seeds  
Courtesy of iNaturalist/andybridges

leaves that look like carrot leaves. As they grow, they will send out shoots horizontally and vertically. They grow horizontally to fill in the open spaces between native vegetation. If growing in crowded areas, they send their shoots up vertically. After two months of growth, small flower heads begin appearing at the tips of the bolting stems. Seeds on the flower head will mature in April and continue into May, usually corresponding to the drying out and death of the plant.

Since the life cycle of stinknet is getting ready to begin, now is a good time to apply preemergent herbicides around your home and neighborhoods. Seedlings won’t emerge, but neither will other seeds such as desert wildflowers. Use caution with where you use it and certainly do not apply on preserves land. Once you start seeing plants popping up, they can be pulled from the ground. Wear gloves as the oil produced by the leaves has a pungent,





unpleasant smell. If removing stinknet from around your home, applying a postemergent herbicide will kill the plant when small and actively growing. In the spring when the plant has sent up bolts and starts to flower, the bolts can be pulled or weed-whacked. The flower heads will not mature into seeds after being removed from the plant.

According to the Sonoran Desert Cooperative Weed Management Area, if a stinknet population is allowed to spread for two years, manual removal becomes impossible. The best solution after years of uncontrolled growth is herbicide. This is unfortunately true in our preserves. While the seeds and new growth of native vegetation would also be killed, stinknet is just one of many invasive species that needs to be controlled so our native vegetation has the chance to grow in the future. Stinknet has shallow roots that steal precious moisture from native vegetation who typically have long tap roots. Stinknet isn't a food source for any native fauna, forcing them into other areas where they are not distributing native seeds and they are eating the limited vegetation that is left. Stinknet will fill in open spaces, leaving no space for new native vegetation to sprout. In those open spaces, the dead plants can easily ignite leaving our preserves vulnerable to fires that will spread quickly since stinknet bridges the gaps between native vegetation.



Courtesy of iNaturalist/Chris-McCreedy

Studies have been done on the effectiveness of using herbicide to manage stinknet. A good one, *Seasonal herbicide management for invasive plant control: insights from stinknet* (Rodriguez, C., McDonald, C. J., Larios, L.), was done by the University of California in 2022. What do you think about the use of herbicide in the preserves? Could this photo of Cave Creek be the future of our preserves if we don't?



Courtesy of Zach Driscoll

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Chamberland, M. (2020). *Arizona joins California in battling stinknet*. The University of Arizona Cooperative Extension. [https://www.cal-ipc.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/12/Cal\\_IPC\\_Symposium\\_2020\\_Michael\\_Chamberland\\_Arizona-joins-California-in-battling-stinknet.pdf](https://www.cal-ipc.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/12/Cal_IPC_Symposium_2020_Michael_Chamberland_Arizona-joins-California-in-battling-stinknet.pdf)

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# YOU'RE INVITED

## SOUTH MOUNTAIN 100 YEAR CELEBRATION

DATE: NOVEMBER 8  
TIME: 9AM  
LOCATION: SOUTH MOUNTAIN VISITORS CENTER

The Phoenix Summit Challenge is an annual hiking event to raise funds for our trails in the preserves. Hikers get to choose between completing seven, five, or four summits in one day. At the end, there's a UROCK Festival at South Mountain with food, music, beer, and massages!

If you haven't taken part before, you can skip the hiking part and join members of the PMPC at the UROCK Festival where we'll have a booth! You can stop by or volunteer to help any time between 12:30 and 6:30. Email [pmzcaz@gmail.com](mailto:pmzcaz@gmail.com) to volunteer.

If you do want to hike, you can still register at [www.phoenix.gov/parks/trails/psc](http://www.phoenix.gov/parks/trails/psc).

To help celebrate South Mountain's 100th anniversary, the hikes this year have changed so there's more time spent at South Mountain Park/Preserve. Here are the routes of this year.



**NOVEMBER 16TH**

VOAZ Summit @ Dreamy Draw Recreation Area

Piestewa Peak Summit @ Phoenix Mountains Preserve

Ridgeback Overlook Summit @ Apache Wash Trailhead

Lookout Mountain Summit @ Lookout Mountain Park

Alta Summit, Ranger Summit, Dobbins Lookout Summit (Holbert Trail), Gila (Pyramid) Summit, and Hau'Pal Summit @ South Mountain Park/Preserve

The All Abilities Challenge includes the following hikes.

Apache Wash Vista @ Apache Wash Trailhead

Papago Park 5k Fitness Loop @ Papago West Park

Cholla Flats Loop and Max Delta Trail @ South Mountain Park/Preserve



The petroglyphs of South Mountain Park are some of the most studied in the

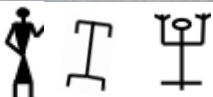
# SOUTH MOUNTAIN PETROGLYPHS

Southwest. In 2007, there was a joint research, education, and preservation initiative called the South Mountain Rock Art Project (SMRAP). There were three main goals of the project. First was to inventory and research the park's archaeological landscape. The second was to engage the public with educational opportunities through volunteering, attending lectures, and publications. The third goal was to assist in developing a management plan that would mitigate future impacts to the petroglyphs and other historic artifacts found throughout the park.


Focusing on the northeast section of the park, volunteers systematically surveyed sections, documenting multiple data points each archaeological features and artifacts. They


recorded 3,333 petroglyphs. 3,055 were categorized as prehistoric. The other 278 were historic. Historic petroglyphs were considered to be names, initials, dates, writing, and designs.

The prehistoric designs were categorized into 17 classes. The number of occurrences (in the SMRAP areas, not the entire park) are in parenthesis below. Using pottery designs popular in different Hohokam periods and light meters, they tried to estimate dates the petroglyphs were created. The oldest designs may be concentric circles and miscellaneous representational, created between 600 and 650 CE. Rectilinear scrolls are the youngest, estimated to have been created from 1380 to 1430 CE.


**ANTHROPOMORPHS (542)** 

**MISCELLANEOUS DESIGNS (514)** 


**QUADRUPEDS (445)** 

**CIRCLE DESIGNS (409)** 

**LINEAR DESIGNS (248)** 

**MISCELLANEOUS CURVILINEAR (197)** 

**REPTILES & AMPHIBIANS (169)** 


**CONCENTRIC CIRCLES (108)** 

**CURVILINEAR SCROLLS (100)** 


**ZIG-ZAGS (80)** 

**RECTILINEAR SOLIDS (70)** 

**CROSSES (59)** 

**MISCELLANEOUS LIFEFORMS (41)** 

**MISCELLANEOUS REPRESENTATIONAL (20)** 

**RECTILINEAR LINES (20)** 

**RECTILINEAR SCROLLS (20)** 

**BIRDS (13)** 



How does one describe a legend, icon, trendsetter, woman, mother, daughter, friend, and human?

# MAXINE LAKIN AN ARIZONA ICON

BY JULIA TAGGART

Maxine Lakin is all of those things and more. Maxine Lakin inspires all who choose to help preserve the beautiful mountain landscape in our home in Phoenix. It is hard to describe her in words as you can't fit her in just one word. She is more than words, she is the movement to save the mountain preserves to this day. I have enjoyed researching her, Penny Howe, Dorothy Gilbert, and Ruth Hamilton for an upcoming project. From what I have found all of these women were

instrumental in saving the mountains in Phoenix but the best part was they did it together. If you ever get the honor to speak to Maxine you will see how humble she is as she mentions her friends who helped her along the way. Their story is one I hope to write in the future for you all to hear but right now I want to tell you about Maxine. She continues to inspire me the more I learn about her. I am trying to follow in her footsteps and have no clue how she did it all. The number of city meetings she had to go to and the public comments spoken are incredible to read. If you have not gone to a City Council or Parks and Recreation Board Meeting please do because it will be a learning experience you won't forget. Maxine went to them all and made her concerns heard about what the future of the mountains needed to be. My favorite quote of hers is, "Everybody can't belong to a country club and everybody can't play golf and everybody can't swim but everyone can come and sit in the outdoors and see and breathe the fresh air." She said that in a PBS segment featuring the Phoenix Mountain Preservation Council in 1999 and that rings true to this day. PMPC is the legacy of Penny Howe, Ruth Hamilton, and Dorothy Gilbert. As Maxine is the only one of the remaining women she has not slowed down one bit. She continues to fight to preserve the mountains we have to this day in honor of her friends and city. I know her friends are proud of her and smiling down at all she has accomplished since they passed. I am proud to be a part of PMPC and continue the fight to save the beautiful mountain landscape I call home. From the bottom of my heart thank you, Maxine Lakin, Ruth Hamilton, Dorothy Gilbert, and Penny Howe for never giving up no matter what.



From your battles, millions of Phoenicians have been able to experience the beauty and joy of the Phoenix Mountain Preserve. There will be more battles to come but because of you all, we know now how to handle them the PMPC way with grace and poise. I look forward to meeting my fellow PMPC members this year to continue this important legacy here in Phoenix, Arizona.



# SACRED MUHADAG DO'AG

The City of Phoenix is celebrating 100-years of stewardship of South Mountain this year, but other groups have been taking care of the mountains for much longer. On the eastern side of the mountains, evidence of farming still exists. On the western side, the home of the creator of the Akimel O'odham people is a sacred place. The Akimel O'odham were created by I'toi, also known as Elder Brother. For these people, their creator lives atop Muhadag Do'ag, meaning Greasy Mountain. That may sound familiar as it is the native name of South Mountain Park/Preserve. These mountains are where Elder Brother lives to watch over them and where the O'odham get their strength. The home of Elder Brother is visited by the Akimel O'odham to this day as a sacred, spiritual place.

"...the O'Odham and Piipaash believe all mountain(s) are significant, but none is more sacred than Muhadag (Greasy [South] Mountain), the home of Elder Brother"

Shane Anton, Tribal Historic Preservation Officer Salt River Pima-Maricopa Indian Community

The mountains are not only spiritually significant as being the home of their creator, but also as an aspect of himdag, the O'odham traditional way that binds the O'odham together. Himdag is the

interconnectedness of all things – animals, plants, fire, water, humans, and the earth. Himdag is also a path, a way of life, given to them by their creator. This links the spiritual and material worlds, making them indistinguishable.

Maintaining himdag is essential to the O'odham. This is done by teaching the values, practices, and traditions to new generations, visiting traditional places, and protecting things and places of O'odham cultural patrimony.

We can help the O'odham maintain their himdag by protecting Muhadag Do'ag. Taking action to encourage the City of Phoenix to demolish the South Mountain Speedway will honor the O'odham. We can also pick up trash to keep the mountain pristine. We can remove invasive species to help the native plants and animals. We can smile and say hello to visitors to spread kindness. If we respect the beliefs of others and everything about the world around us, we can make our community, and the world, a better place.

**Renew your PMPC membership for 2025 today by going to our website!**

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