



# HIGHLANDS *Vision*

## How to Choose the Perfect Boulder

Looking for an activity perfectly in tune with the Hiking Spree adventure? Then perhaps boulder sitting is for you.

Admittedly this is not an activity that has received much press. Tourist guides and brochures make no mention of boulder sitting, while the travel industry blithely ignores its vast economic potential. This is unfortunate, since boulder sitting is a sport eminently suitable for those adventurous souls who wish to taste the stony marrow of Arizona's backbone.

As with any activity, however, boulder sitting must be approached from the proper perspective. It is a sport approached from behind, and no special equipment is required, though some form of protective clothing for at least the lower part of the anatomy is advisable in summer and winter. Cushions, padding or chairs are generally considered in poor taste. No fees are charged. One of the most attractive things about this fast-growing sport is its rock-bottom cost.

Though deceptively simple, boulder sitting does require a certain amount of planning and preparation. Those who abandon the sport fail for one of two reasons: either they have spent too little time in choosing the right boulder or they have not found the method of sitting most appropriate to their needs and ability levels.

Choosing a boulder is not as easy as it sounds. The bewildering array of sizes and shapes of boulders here can be confusing for the neophyte sitter. (Incidentally, the term "boulder" was recently clarified at the last convention of LOBS—Loyal Order of Boulder Sitters—as "a large rock, usually rounded, which has been transported from its point of origin by some natural process or which has been weathered in place to its present form." An arbitrary minimum standard of 10 inches in diameter was adopted by majority vote of those in attendance.)

Through the relentless action of water, wind, sun and ice, the mountains of Prescott and the Central Arizona Highlands have been whittled down to their ancient core. Here sitters can find boulders dating back one to two billion years old. This igneous and metamorphic rock—primarily granites, gneisses and schists—is some of the oldest on the planet, something to think about against our puny human time frame of existence. The most common boulders in the Prescott area formed from broken blocks of Precambrian



*Photo by Ann Haver-Allen*

granite, and have been nicely rounded down for your sitting comfort by a process called "spheroidal weathering."

Though some people prefer the Granite Dells, for some truly great boulder sitting, the area around Granite Mountain can't be beat. The numerous trails in this area offer landscapes strewn with boulders suitable for every sitting ability. If giant rocks are your game, take the Granite Mountain Trail all the way to the summit, where you will find great, lichen-covered boulders fit for a Titan's throne. As you scramble up the sides of one of these ancient giants, do so with reverence and be silent as you ponder the forces at work beneath your butt—the same forces that shaped the continents and wore down the mountains and that

*See Perfect Boulder, page 2*

*By Gene Twaronite  
The Absurd  
Naturalist*

# Take A Hike!

## 'Take a Hike' Hiking Spree Coming This Fall

**H**CNH, in partnership with Prescott National Forest, is launching the first "Take a Hike" Hiking Spree. This event will become an annual tradition in our community. The goal of this program is to get children, adults and families outside hiking the trail system of PNF, discovering the joys and benefits that outdoor recreation can provide.

The need for a program of this type is greater today than ever before. A 2007 study funded by the Nature Conservancy confirmed the evidence of a growing and

disturbing trend. American families are spending more time in front of the television set and computer screen and less time outdoors pursuing active recreational activities, such as hiking, camping, bicycling and fishing.

Numerous other studies have shown very similar trends. A University of Illinois study found that the percentage of Americans involved in outdoor related activities has fallen 18 percent to 25 percent since 1980 and that per capita visitation to our country's

*See Take a Hike, page 3*

## Perfect Boulder *continued from page 1*

will one day break apart this boulder and carry it down to the sea.

Though your taste may run to a smaller, more intimate boulder, it should be big enough to accomplish its function. A boulder that is too small can be the source of much frustration. Despite recent claims made in the literature concerning the presumed benefits of greater maneuverability and handling of smaller models, most experienced sitters agree that a 10-inch boulder is just too small for comfortable sitting. It must be stressed that boulder sitting is a contact sport in which the basic aim is to achieve a certain closeness with a particular location, thus moving them to have a better view or more comfortable surroundings (such as your living room) is frowned upon. It is also highly recommended that the boulder chosen be stationary at the time.

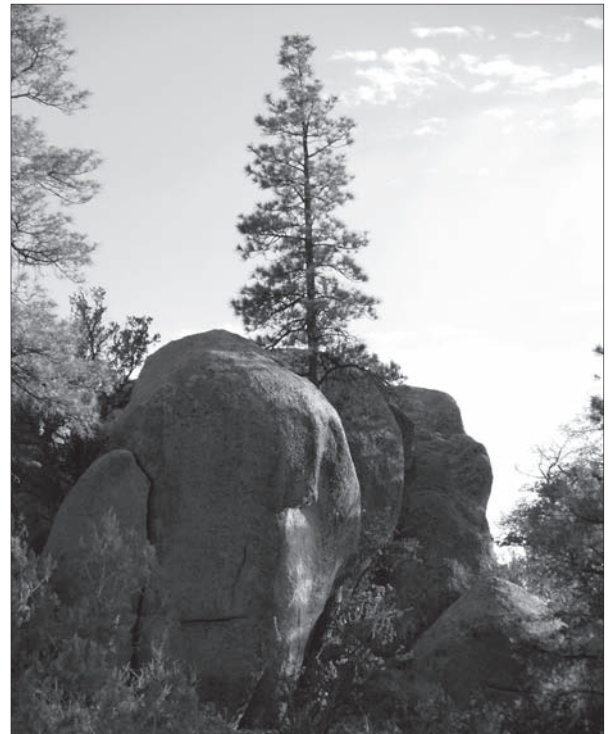
Beginners should choose a boulder with a gently rounded or flat surface for sitting that is readily accessible. While some individuals might go in for a steeper, more challenging perch, it must be emphasized that the whole point of this sport is not in getting there, but in being there. Some people have even found that sitting under a boulder has certain advantages, especially during the heat of the day.

Selecting the appropriate sitting method is also important. The method best for you will most likely evolve and emerge in the unhurried flow of ideas so typical of this activity. Though there is no one best method, the various styles of sitting fall into main groups: Specialized Boulder Sitting and Generalized Boulder Sitting.

S.B.S. adherents approach the sport with a single-minded goal, such as to observe as many birds, wildflowers or UFOs while sitting on a boulder, or to see how many poems or songs they can compose at one sitting. G.B.S. people, on the other hand, approach their chosen boulders with no set goals. While they might begin by focusing on a particular aspect of

the environment—a favorite tree or scenic vista, for instance—it is the total experience they seek: the hard but secure feeling of native rock, the wind playing softly on the face, the mind moving effortlessly through time and space back to when the continents moved and the earth belched forth its molten blood and far into the future when all that remains of us and this rock is dust.

While a good book, binoculars, or perhaps a picnic lunch might be nice, none is essential. It requires only a good boulder and a little time—time to sit and take a leisurely look at one small corner of the world. Chosen with care, a boulder is just about the perfect place to really see this part of Arizona we call home.



*Photo by Ann Haver-Allen*

# Take a Hike *continued from page 2*

national parks has been declining each year since 1987. A University of Maryland study found a 50 percent decline in the portion of children 9 to 12 years of age who spent time in such outside activities as hiking, walking, fishing, outdoor play and gardening.

On average, an American child spends four hours per day watching television and less than 30 minutes per week in unstructured outdoor play.

Researchers have also found that “videophilia,” as they call it, can have disturbing implications for children’s mental and physical health, educational achievement, well-being, and their personal values and priorities later in life. Children who do not have regular interactive contact with the natural world are more prone to a range of childhood problems that include obesity, depression and attention disorders. They also miss out on the spiritual, emotional and psychological benefits that outdoor activity provides, which includes reduced stress, improved cognitive development, greater creativity, and increased self discipline and confidence. It has also been shown that children who have more direct contact with nature are much more likely to take steps to preserve and protect it as adults.

The “Take a Hike” Hiking Spree will be one of many programs offered this year by HCNH to reverse these alarming trends and encourage people of all ages to discover the wonders of nature and become wise caretakers of the land. We want to make it easy for youth groups and families to find these trails and provide them a little motivation and incentive to get outside and enjoy our National Forest. We are so fortunate to be surrounded by a National Forest, yet so many children and adults have never experienced it firsthand or only know a few selected areas.

This is how the Spree will work. A brochure will be



*Photos by Fiona Reid*

developed this fall, which will highlight 12 different hiking trails in PNF. The length, difficulty and location of each trail will be described carefully in the brochure. Specific trails are still being identified, but the trails will all be located throughout the Prescott National Forest. Some will be well-known and others may be new to many. Brochures will be available at HCNH, PNF and other locations around town and online at our Web site ([www.highlandcenter.org](http://www.highlandcenter.org)). Hikers will have eight weeks to complete at least eight of the 12 hikes. Once a hike is completed, they will check it off by entering the date on the brochure. The Spree will “kick off” Sept. 27, on Public Lands Day, with an optional gathering at HCNH. Representatives from HCNH, PNF and our financial sponsors will be on hand to welcome participants. All will then go on one hike together, one of the loop trails at the Center. Everyone will be on their own schedule after that first hike.

PNF will also provide free parking access to trail heads for Spree participants. The Spree will conclude officially Nov. 15. Hikers who have completed eight hikes will turn in their brochure at HCNH. As a reward and incentive, each will then receive a wooden hiking stick and a specially designed metal shield that will be mounted to the stick. The shield will be stamped with a design that reflects the beauty of our local ecosystem and the words “Take A Hike Hiking Spree 2008.” In future years, trail listings will be modified and participants will receive a new redesigned shield to add to their hiking sticks.

So let your friends, family, church groups, and civic organizations know about this unique way to get outside together to discover the beauty of our local National Forest!

All members of HCNH will receive a brochure for the Hiking Spree in the mail in September. There will also be a series of guided hikes on many of these trails offered through the Center. If you would like to know more about this program, contact our office.



# New Format for Adult Ed Programs

The Center is excited to announce a new format for our Adult Education Programs. Please join us for a Saturday morning to learn more about a favorite naturalist topic! Two upcoming programs are described below. We hope you will join us for three hours of fun and lively education, for a reasonable tuition for you, our members. We would love your

feedback on this new format offering. We like to provide programs to adults, but we need minimum attendance requirements in order for them to take place.

These courses are fairly priced for professional quality instruction. In order to continue offering these courses, we need to fill these classes! To sign up for either course, call 776-9550.

## Sex in the Wild: Plants and Pollinators

Imagine the problem for plants—having to reproduce while rooted in soil their entire lives. Join botanist Faith Roelofs to consider “Sex in the Wild: Co-evolution of Plants and their Pollinators” on Aug. 16, at the HCNH from 9 a.m. to noon.

We’ll discuss the origin and function of flowers, then dissect some flowers to learn their basic structures related to reproduction. We’ll investigate the many adaptations that plants have to collect pollen and produce seeds, as well as attract pollinators.

Insects and birds play interesting roles in plant reproduction and have unique adaptations for pollination of many flowering plants. You will have an opportunity to see pollen grains and insect and flower structures under a microscope. We’ll throw in some fascinating OOHS! and AHHS! of pollination strategies around the world.

Then, through photos, we’ll zoom through a season as our different local plants “bloom” and transfer pollen from one to another. Starting with juniper and other conifers that decorate the air with billions of pollen grains blown on the wind in the early spring, to early spring perennials that attract flies, bees and hummingbirds. We will walk around HCNH to see annual flowering plants that pop up after the monsoon rains and bloom rapidly before cool and dry conditions set in. We will investigate their pollination strategies.



Photo by Ann Haver-Allen

Refreshments will be served.

Cost is \$25 for members and \$30 for nonmembers.

Photo courtesy of  
Mountain States  
Wholesale Nursery



## The Surprise of Grasses

The Highlands Center for Natural History is conducting a new class, “The Surprise of Grasses,” with local Prescott botanist, Cheryl Casey, on Saturday, Sept. 20, 2008, from 9 a.m. to noon.

Have you ever wondered about grasses—which is which, which are native, which are exotic and invasive?

This is the day you can at least begin to delve into the identification of this complex plant.

Never easy, but always fascinating and challenging, grasses and their flowers

grace our landscape providing beauty for our eyes, as well as habitat for pronghorn and many other native species.

Cheryl is a botanist with a special love for these lovely plants, and the ability to share that love and knowledge with others. Come and spend the morning with us, have fun and learn at the same time! Tuition for this three-hour class is \$25 for Highlands Center members or \$30 for nonmembers.

Preregistration is required. Call 776-9550 for more information, or visit the Center’s Web site at [www.highlandscenter.org](http://www.highlandscenter.org).

# Highlands Center for Natural History receives \$15,000 grant from Arizona Community Foundation

Yavapai County Community Foundation's parent organization recently awarded \$70,000 to four Prescott nonprofit organizations.

Working under the advisement of YCCF staff and the ACF Programs and Distribution Committee, the Arizona Community Foundation awarded Prescott funding based upon applications received during ACF's 2007-2008 Open Competitive Grant Cycle.

Grants were awarded to the following organizations:

- **Yavapai College Foundation**, \$30,000 to develop a computer numerical control machinist-trained workforce in Yavapai County
- **Highlands Center for Natural History**, \$15,000 to develop an educational native plant arboretum
- **Yavapai Big Brothers Big Sisters**, \$15,000 for the mentoring program at Lake Valley Elementary School
- **Granite Peak Unitarian Universalist Congregation**, \$10,000 for Qsquared Youth Inc., a program dedicated to Yavapai County's lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and questioning youth.

"The board, staff and I are very pleased that the Arizona Community Foundation awarded funding to these four organizations," said Kristi Edwards, Yavapai County Community Foundation director. "They are all exceptional organizations, which greatly add to the value of Yavapai County through the impact of their programs."

ACF—together with YCCF—is the largest public charity funding source in Yavapai County. As one of ACF's 13 affiliates statewide, YCCF staff and board members act as community liaisons, identifying and communicating local needs to donors and grant makers. Like other affiliates, YCCF benefits from centralized financial and investment management, training and marketing and administrative resources provided by ACF.

YCCF is a 15-year-old permanent philanthropic



*Photo courtesy of YCCF*

*The Arizona Community Foundation awarded \$70,000 to four Prescott nonprofit organizations. Representatives from those organizations, pictured above from left, are Cindy Scott, Highlands Center for Natural History outreach coordinator; Traci Corey, Yavapai County Community Foundation grants and operations coordinator; Paul Border, Yavapai Big Brothers Big Sisters chair-elect; Kyle Ryan Willis, Qsquared Youth Inc. youth coordinator; Steve Walker, Yavapai College executive director for college advancement.*

endowment for the enduring benefit of the community. It secures, manages and allocates donors' gifts for charitable purposes in the county, while working to improve the quality of life for local residents. For additional information, visit [www.yavapafoundation.org](http://www.yavapafoundation.org).

The Arizona Community Foundation is a statewide nonprofit organization with four regional offices serving 13 affiliate community foundations. Established in 1978, ACF is among the top 30 community foundations in the nation with more than \$550 million in endowment and trust assets. Last year, ACF granted more than \$70 million to other nonprofit organizations, schools and government agencies. Visit [www.azfoundation.org](http://www.azfoundation.org) to learn more.

The Highlands Center is excited to start the development process for a native plant arboretum on the Center's campus.

This project will demonstrate many types of native plant gardens and showcase many of the species we sell at our Grow Native! Plant Sales. Look for more updates on this project over the next year. Thank you Arizona Community Foundation!

# Sharing the Wonder

## Message From The Director Dave Irvine

### Dear Friends,

One of the most exciting things about being new to the Central Arizona Highlands is that there are so many opportunities for new, first-time experiences. There is nothing more invigorating than taking your first steps on a new trail that you have never hiked before.

Of course, you have your map at your side to guide you, good shoes and gear to support you, and food and water in your pack to sustain you. But as you take each step, make each turn and climb each hill there is always something new to discover.

A world of wonder unfolds; tall ponderosa pines, sprawling alligator junipers, ancient granite boulders, surprising mountain springs—and if you are really lucky—the chance face-to-face encounter with a javelina, bobcat or mule deer.

Oh, sure, there are some dangers. You have to keep your senses alert for that stray rattlesnake or those loose stones under foot. But even these serve to sharpen one's senses and to keep your thoughts truly focused in the moment, fully attuned to the life that is pulsating through and around you.

Ah, you know that you are truly alive, communing with this unique ecosystem because you are a part of it!

As we prepare to launch the first "Take a Hike" Hiking Spree this fall, I am trying to make it a priority to pre-hike every trail in the Spree.

Our partners with Prescott National Forest have recommended these wonderful trails to us, so I thought it would be a wonderful way for me and my family really to get to know our new home.

I have not been disappointed. Every trail I have hiked so far has been just spectacular. I would not be surprised if many of these trails will be new to many of you as well.

Our hope also is that the Spree will appeal to many new and novice hikers, young families, working adults and retirees, who just need a little encouragement and motivation to go "Take a Hike." Once they set foot on these trails, I know they will feel the same sort of vigor and excitement I have.

Even if you are a veteran PNF hiker, you know as well as I that no two hikes are ever the same. Nature is always wonderfully unpredictable.

As I reflect about this organization, Highlands Center for Natural History, the analogy of setting off



on a new trail also resonates deeply with me.

In many ways, HCNH is about to take a step onto a new trail. Oh, yes, we have come a long way on this journey already. It has resulted in the creation of the James Learning Center and this beautiful campus here in the heart of Prescott National Forest.

Yet, the question that is constantly asked of me is "so, what's next?"

It is a great question and not unlike setting foot on a new trail head. Your Board of Directors is about to engage in a new round of strategic planning.

The outcomes of this process will provide the trail map as to where our journey will go. You, the members, donors and volunteers of this organization will provide the food, water and gear that will support us on this journey.

Your gifts, membership renewals and hard work are what make everything here possible. We are also about to re-establish a functioning committee structure that enables many more of our members to share their time, talents and wisdom with us in a meaningful way.

This is not a solitary journey, but one of collective energy, insight and vision. There will be risks and surprises along the way, but our mission will drive us farther down the path, searching for creative and innovative ways to help children and adults discover the wonders of nature and become better caretakers of the land.

So come "Take a Hike" with me. Yes, on trails of Prescott National Forest this fall during our hiking Spree, but also on a larger, more difficult trail of building a sustainable future for this organization and the Central Arizona Highlands. It will be a great trip!

Sharing the Wonder,

Dave Irvine  
Executive Director

# Grow Native! Fall Plant Sale coming in September

Grow Native! Plant Sale and Educational Festival this past April was our most successful plant sale yet. In case you missed it, or maybe you are just an avid gardener, we will be offering a nice selection of native plants this fall. Grow Native! Fall Plant Sale will be Saturday, Sept. 13, Member's Preview sale is 7:30 a.m. to 9 a.m. and the sale is open to the General Public 9 a.m. to noon. Come early; last fall we sold out and it was rainy! Rain or shine, this fundraiser supports the Center.



Highlands Center for Natural History  
**Grow Native!**  
Fall Plant Sale  
Sept. 13 2008  
Members Preview 7:30-9 a.m.  
General Public 9 a.m.-Noon  
1375 S. Walker Road, Prescott (928) 776-9550  
Free Admission

## Benson Family Nature Store



Gifts for your children, grandchildren, nieces and nephews!

Educational books, puppets, toys and puzzles focused on nature.

- Highlands Center Insignia—help spread the word with a Highlands Center t-shirt, cap or water bottle. Coming soon: fleece vests.
- Newest title to hit the shelves—I Love Dirt! 52 activities to help you and your kids discover the wonders of nature.
- Check out our latest selection of natural history books and field guides.
- Selection of wildflower and grass seed available.
- Local retailer of Soil Secrets products [www.soilsecrets.com](http://www.soilsecrets.com).
- Coming soon: Highlands Center apparel for the youngest members of the family—infant and toddler sizes.

All proceeds from the Nature Store support the Center and HCNH campus.

The Benson Family Nature Store is located at the Highlands Center, 1375 Walker Road, Prescott. (928) 776-9550

# Music Under the Stars Returns to HCNH

Magical summer nights return to the Kiwanis Amphitheater for great folk music. We are very pleased to announce a new partnership with "The Folk Sessions" for two evening concerts. D Squared kicks off on Saturday, Aug. 9. D Squared is a local duo that has toured nationally and has opened

for noted folk performers, such as Robin and Linda Williams and Cosy Sheridan. A second concert will occur Sept. 6, artist to be announced soon. Concerts begin at 7 p.m.; cost is \$10 at the door. Advanced tickets may be available soon, so stay tuned. Come out and enjoy the stars, enjoy the music and enjoy the company!

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## Highlands Center for Natural History

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## Mission Statement

*The Highlands Center for Natural History helps children and adults discover the wonders of nature and become wise caretakers of the land. We believe that everyone has a fundamental need to connect with the natural world. This connection is fostered by the Center through outdoor science education based on observation and discovery of the Central Arizona Highlands.*



ANN HAVER-ALLEN, *Vision* designer

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