

PINEWOOD

THE GOOD LIFE, COMMUNITY, AND MOUNTAIN LIVING IN MUNDS PARK SINCE 1993

VOL. 33 NO. 2 FEBRUARY 6, 2026

COMPLIMENTARY



CELESTIAL EVENTS

Look up on a clear night in Munds Park and it becomes obvious, fast, that we are not running the show. The sky does not care about our deadlines, our opinions, or what we forgot at the store. It just keeps going, quietly and endlessly, and that is the point. Under a dark sky, you feel your size. Not in a depressing way, more like a deep exhale. The worries shrink. The ego takes a seat. You remember you are one person on one small patch of ground, lucky enough to watch a universe that has been doing its thing for a very long time.

We can see it so well here because we have something rare now: darkness. Higher elevation, clear mountain air, and fewer artificial lights mean your eyes can adjust, and the stars show up in full force. When porch lights are lowered and outdoor lighting is aimed down, the night gets its power back. The reward is simple: a sky that humbles you, steadies you, and reminds you to be grateful you live in a place where wonder is still overhead, every single night.

Cosmic Calendar: What to watch for in the night sky.

FEBRUARY

Six-Planet Alignment: Late February

(best around February 28) Mercury, Venus, Saturn, Jupiter, Uranus, and Neptune gather on the same side of the sky after sunset. Venus and Jupiter are easiest. Uranus and Neptune generally require binoculars and darker skies.

MARCH

Total Lunar Eclipse: March 3, 6:38 A.M. ET.

A total “Blood Moon” lunar eclipse visible from Arizona, when a full Moon turns a deep copper-red as it passes through Earth’s shadow.



APRIL

Lyrid Meteor Shower

The Lyrids peak on the night of April 21–22, 2026, when you can expect to see an average of 10 meteors per hour in dark, clear skies. This meteor shower is visible from both the Northern and Southern Hemispheres, but it is much more active in the Northern Hemisphere, where the meteors’ radiant is high in the sky.

MAY

Eta Aquariid Meteor Shower: Peak: May 5–6

Fast meteors before dawn. It’s stronger farther south, but Northern Arizona can still catch plenty of bright streaks under dark skies.

Blue Moon: May 31

A Blue Moon is when there are two full moons in one calendar month. The second full moon is called the Blue Moon.

It doesn’t usually look blue. It’s just a name for something that doesn’t happen very often. That’s why people say “once in a blue moon” when they mean something is rare.

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR & STORY TIPS!

The *Pinewood News* welcomes feedback and story tips from our readers. We encourage comments on any subject or article we publish. We will consider publishing received letters, except those that invade privacy or are libelous.

All letters must be signed and include an address and phone number for verification. Note that letters may be edited for space and clarity.

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The next issue of the *Pinewood News* will hit the stands, **Friday, March 6**





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MUNDS PARK

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REDUCED



\$475,000
17165 ELK PL

Tucked beneath the towering pines, this cozy mountain retreat blends rustic charm with modern comfort. Vaulted ceilings, open living, wood-burning fireplace, and a large deck create the perfect space to relax and enjoy.

SALE PENDING!



\$475,000
17380 CRYSTAL BROOK PL

Move-in ready Munds Park cabin with modern upgrades, vaulted ceilings, and cozy charm. New roof, floors, kitchen appliances, and more. Ideal for weekends or year-round living. Great community amenities.

SOLD!



\$400,000
1170 E COUGAR ST

Cozy 2-bed, 2-bath home among pines and oaks, bonus room, private deck overlooking Munds Canyon, fenced yard, gazebo, bunkhouse, garage, granite upgrades, mostly furnished. Peaceful mountain retreat.



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PINEWOOD

THE GOOD LIFE, COMMUNITY & DESERT MOUNTAIN LIVING

COMMUNITY CALENDAR

AA Meetings - Feel Better!

Munds Park Community Church
Every Monday, 6 pm
17670 S Munds Ranch Rd

Munds Park Community Church Services

Services Sunday, 10:45 am
17670 S Munds Ranch Rd • Munds Park

Munds Park Town Hall

All residents are encouraged to attend.
Stay informed. Your presence and participation is essential!

Thursday, May 21, 2026
6:30 pm • Pinewood Country Club

Pinewood Fire Department Auxiliary meeting

The Community is Welcome!

Tuesday, February 3
6:30 pm • 17670 S Munds Ranch Rd
Munds Park

Pinewood Fire District Board Meeting

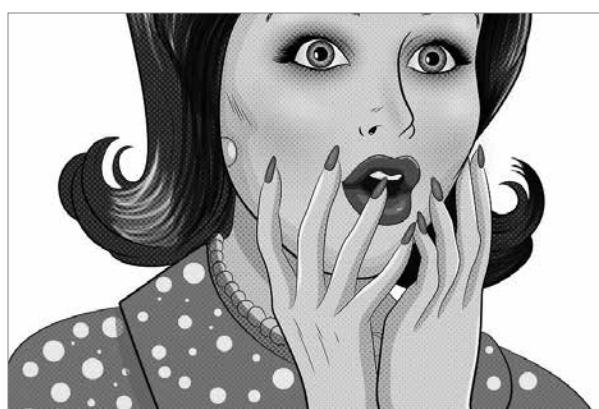
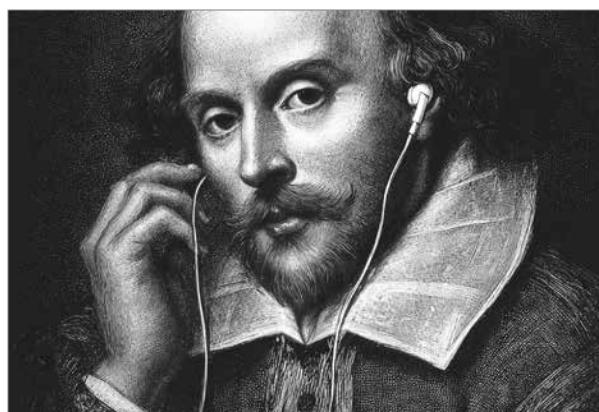
Public Welcome

Tuesday, February 17
3 pm • 18075 Fairway Dr • Munds Park

Pinewood Sanitary District Board Meeting

Public Welcome

Thursday, February 12
3 pm • 18075 Fairway Dr • Munds Park



LOCAL HIGHLIGHTS 6A

Stay in the loop with everything local: public notices, community updates, and helpful info that keeps our community connected.

LOCAL LORE 10A

A centennial look at Route 66, from its unlikely beginnings to the Arizona stretches that keep it alive.

THINGS TO DO & SEE 12A

Local events, holiday activities, and outings to make the most of your time in the pines.

HOMEMADE & WONDERFUL 15A

Valentine's dinner, made easy: "Marry Me Chicken" delivers golden chicken and spaghetti in a creamy sun-dried tomato sauce that tastes like a love note.

ALAS, POOR READER 17A

What Shakespeare might notice about reading, attention, audiobooks, and a culture trained to look away.

SHAKEN & STIRRED IN PINEWOOD 20A

The Pomegranate Mimosa, a refined Valentine's Day toast with a touch of history and myth.

GARDENS IN THE PARK 1B

Simple winter ideas to help your garden grow better all year.

TRAVEL 4B

Don't Forget This: A simple packing list that saves trips (and swimsuits).

PINEWOOD NEWS KIDS 8B

Turkey Vulture Gross-Out Facts, then Spot the Difference with a great horned owl..

SCIENCE & NATURE 11B

The Grand Canyon's rock squirrel is cute and famous for turning snacks into injuries. It's a quick reminder for Munds Park: don't feed wildlife.



YOUR LINK TO WHAT'S HAPPENING IN MUNDS PARK

NORTHERN ARIZONA WEATHER OUTLOOK

How Winter Ends, What Spring Brings, and Why Summer Depends on Both

By early February, winter in Northern Arizona has shown its hand. Snow has fallen, but not often or cold enough to build the kind of snowpack that quietly carries the region through spring. The result is a season that feels unfinished. Not a total loss, but not the slow, steady winter the high country relies on.

Late Winter: February Still Matters, but Time Is Short

February is not a throwaway month. Cold storms can still arrive, and one good system can improve conditions at higher elevations. But the margin for error is shrinking.

Most mid-elevation areas around 6,500 to 7,500 feet remain well behind normal snowpack levels. That means any storms that come in warm, or break as rain, won't do much long-term work. To change the overall picture, Northern Arizona would need multiple cold storms, not just a single snowy weekend.

The realistic expectation for the rest of winter is mixed: occasional storms, more variable temperatures, and snow that helps locally but struggles to rebuild a deep regional reserve.

Spring: Likely Earlier, Drier, & More Sensitive to Wind

Spring is where a thin winter starts to show consequences.

With limited snowpack to melt slowly, soils dry sooner and forests lose their natural cooling buffer earlier in the season. If temperatures run warm into March and April, grasses are likely to green up early, then cure out early. That creates a longer window of dry, flashy fuels.

This doesn't mean spring will be nonstop fire danger. It does mean the calm stretch between winter and fire season could be shorter than usual. Windy, low-humidity days will matter more, and conditions can change quickly.

Summer: Heat Is Likely, Monsoon Timing Will Decide the Outcome

Summer always brings heat. What determines whether it becomes a rough fire season is how spring ends and when the monsoons arrive. A warm, dry spring sets the table. If early summer stays dry and lightning arrives before steady rain, fire risk climbs fast. If monsoon moisture settles in on time and sticks, it can reset the season.

That part remains unknowable in February. But history is clear: summers that start dry after thin winters tend to be more volatile until proven otherwise.

The Practical Takeaway

For mountain communities like Munds Park, late winter is the calm before decisions matter.

February is the window to do the unglamorous work: clearing needles, reducing fuel close to homes, and preparing properties for wind-driven fire days later in spring. None of it depends on how the rest of winter turns out. All of it pays off if conditions stay warm and dry.

Winter isn't over yet. But from here on out, every week without sustained cold snow makes spring arrive a little sharper.

Source: USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service Arizona SNOTEL basin index reports; Drought.gov snow drought updates; NOAA Climate Prediction Center long-lead climate outlooks; National Interagency Fire Center seasonal fire outlooks.

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"Midtown has made caring for our dog so easy - from reminders and the friendly front desk staff, to caring techs, to time with the Dr. Holly. We feel like he couldn't be in better hands as he grows up!"

-Caitlin O.

5 stars

"This is my favorite vet I've ever taken my dog to! My dog is very shy but they were so accommodating and sweet to him, Dr. MacKenzie really took the time for my dog to get comfortable with him, it was so sweet and they go above and beyond not only to provide great veterinary care but also an environment my dog won't be scared of. They also offer free visits without veterinary care, called a Victory Visit, for socialization for shy dogs. I will definitely be doing that with my pup. I'm so appreciative of the staff at Midtown, could not recommend them more!"

-Shanna N.



QUICK NEW YEAR CHORE THAT SAVES YOUR BACON.

If you get Coconino Emergency Alerts, you are already in the Smart911 universe. Coconino County's Emergency Notification System runs on alerts powered by Rave Mobile Safety's Smart911, and their sign-up path drops you right onto Smart911.

So here's the deal for cabin country: log in to www.smart911.com and update your profile. Even if you swear nothing has changed. "Nothing changed" is how we end up with an old phone number, the wrong email, or alerts going to the landline you have not heard ring since 2004.

In Munds Park, this matters because when wildfire, flooding, closures, or evacuations happen, you want official notices to reach you fast, not after your neighbor texts "Are you seeing this?"

What to do in 3 minutes:

1. Go to www.smart911.com and sign in.
2. Confirm your address info, phones, and emails.
3. Check your notification preferences so alerts actually come to the devices you use.

And yes, even if you live somewhere else in Arizona, Smart911 is still the right place to start. Many Arizona public safety agencies use Rave-powered alerts (and more have been switching to it), and having your Smart911 profile current is useful where it is supported.



PROPOSED APS RATE CHANGES

APS has asked the Arizona Corporation Commission to approve new electric rates in a case filed June 13, 2025. In its public notice, APS says its request would raise base rate revenue by about \$662.44 million per year, a 15.99% increase.

At the same time, APS is also asking to shrink or fold two existing bill items into base rates: a test year adjustor revenue transfer of \$48.55 million and a Court Resolution Surcharge transfer of \$34.37 million. With those two changes included, APS says the net change customers would experience is smaller, about \$579.52 million per year, or 13.99%.

APS says that, if approved as proposed, a typical residential customer using 1,000 kilowatt-hours would see a net monthly bill impact of about \$20, though bills can vary based on usage, weather, rate plan, and billing days.

The ACC notice also states that final rates could be higher, lower, or different than what APS proposed. Public comment meetings are scheduled for Feb. 18 (two sessions), and May 18, 2026, with call-in comments accepted at 1-877-309-3457 using passcode 801972877#;. Written comments can be submitted by mail or through the ACC's "Make a Public Comment in a Docket" tool under Docket No. E-01345A-25-0105.

ADEQ OKAYS PHASE 2 OF PINEWOOD SANITARY REPAIRS

Pinewood Sanitary District (PSD) is pleased to announce that Phase 2 of its repair project has received approval from the Arizona Department of Environmental Quality (ADEQ). This approval marks an important milestone in PSD's continued efforts to maintain and improve wastewater infrastructure serving the Munds Park community.

With ADEQ authorization now in place, construction for Phase 2 is currently estimated to begin in the summer of 2026. Project planning and coordination will continue in advance of construction to minimize impacts and keep residents informed as timelines are finalized.

A significant portion of the Phase 2 work will take place in the four major washes within Munds Park, where critical infrastructure improvements are needed. While these areas represent a major focus of the project, not all construction activities will occur within the washes, and work will be distributed across multiple locations as required by the scope of repairs.

PSD recognizes that construction in and around wash areas may raise questions for residents and property owners. The District is committed to careful planning, environmental compliance, and ongoing communication to reduce disruption and protect the surrounding community.

Additional details, including construction sequencing, public access considerations, and community notifications, will be shared closer to the start of the project. Pinewood Sanitary District appreciates the community's patience and support as it continues working to ensure a reliable and environmentally responsible wastewater system for Munds Park.

For future updates, residents are encouraged to monitor official PSD communications and announcements.

UPDATES FROM OUR LOCAL SPOTS

Pinewood Restaurant and Bar will be closed February 9 through February 25 for its annual deep clean and a family break. From all of us at the Pinewood News, we're wishing Ludy, David, Angelica, Jesus and the waitstaff a truly restful breather, and we'll be glad to see the lights back on when they reopen February 26.

Wine Tasting and More is taking a winter pause and plans to reopen in April for the summer season. They're sending a big thank-you to the community for the support and patience, and they're looking forward to welcoming everyone back as they roll into the 2026 season.

*...Local Highlights
Continued on page 9A*



"It will be population season again before we know it."



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PWCC PICKLEBALL REUNION!



The PWCC Pickleball Club recently held a winter reunion in Scottsdale and more than 60 members attended to enjoy pickleball and a potluck dinner. Shelly Seeger coordinated the event on behalf of the membership.

The pickleball players are eagerly awaiting the summer season when a new pickleball complex is expected to open. Demolition of the existing courts took place in the fall and construction is under way of a new, enhanced pickleball complex. The new complex will include 12 pickleball courts and one tennis court with areas for gathering and socializing, improved court surfaces, new permanent nets on all of the courts and more.



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FEWER BOOTS, FEWER BURNS

What Federal Cuts Mean for Arizona Forests

Arizona does not get to ignore what happens on federal payrolls. About 38.6% of the state's land is federally owned, and the Bureau of Land Management alone manages 12.1 million surface acres here. When federal agencies get leaner, Arizona feels it on the ground, not just on paper.

In December, 161 city and county leaders from across the West signed a letter to state attorneys general urging them to investigate the legality of what they called "reckless and potentially illegal cuts" to the U.S. Forest Service, National Park Service, and Bureau of Land Management. The letter argues the reductions have hampered both hazardous fuels work and the broader wildfire response system. The staffing numbers cited are not small.

The National Parks Conservation Association reports the National Park Service has lost 24% of its permanent staff since the Trump administration took office.

For the Forest Service, internal staffing data obtained by ProPublica found that more than 4,500 wildland firefighting jobs, as many as 27%, were vacant as of July 17, 2025. The Mountain Pact letter points to that figure and also notes fewer "red-card" qualified employees, meaning fewer staff who can be pulled into wildfire assignments when things go sideways.

Funding disruptions also hit prevention work. Reuters reported that a Trump administration funding freeze halted some wildfire prevention efforts and paused hiring of seasonal firefighters while agencies reviewed grants tied to prior laws such as the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law and Inflation Reduction Act.

Arizona's mitigation work is a team sport, and several of the biggest players wear federal badges. Projects like forest thinning and prescribed burning on national forests often require federal planning, staffing, and approvals. That matters in northern Arizona, where decades of fire suppression have left many ponderosa stands overgrown and primed to burn hot.

Arizona has not been sitting on its hands. The Arizona Department of Forestry and Fire Management reported treating 35,000 acres for fuel reduction in fiscal year 2025, a 40% increase from fiscal year 2024. Coconino County has also committed local dollars, including a \$7.6 million wildfire prevention allocation approved in 2024. And long-running efforts like the Four Forest Restoration Initiative report more than 1.27 million acres treated from 2010 to 2024 across four northern Arizona national forests.

Still, the federal role remains central, and right now it is complicated by a major reorganization attempt. The Interior Department has launched a new U.S. Wildland Fire Service, and its fiscal year 2026 budget documents show a request totaling about \$6.55 billion. At the same time, reporting in January indicates Congress passed funding without specific appropriations for the new service, keeping the federal firefighting structure in flux.

In Arizona, that combination has a plain meaning. More land than most states. More responsibility than any single layer of government can carry. And a wildfire system that works best when staffing and funding are steady, not scrambled.

Sources: Mountain Pact letter (Dec. 17, 2025), NPCA staffing report, Reuters on the 2025 funding freeze, ProPublica staffing analysis, BLM Arizona acreage, DOI USWFS FY26 budget overview, AZ DFFM FY25 fuels report, Coconino County wildfire prevention funding, USFS 9FRI accomplishments.

GET YOUR KICKS ON ROUTE 66

Celebrating 100 Years

Route 66 turns 100 in 2026, which is remarkable for a road that has been pronounced dead for four decades and still refuses to lie down. It exists now in fragments and memories, in sun-bleached pavement and hand-painted signs, in the way people lower their speed without meaning to when they realize they are on it. You do not drive Route 66 so much as you fall into step with it.

When it was stitched together in 1926, Route 66 was never meant to be famous. It was practical, opportunistic, a long handshake between local roads that happened to line up just right. Chicago to Los Angeles, farm to factory, dust to ocean. The number itself was chosen with the same blunt efficiency. Sixty-six was available. It sounded good. That was enough.

The road found its voice because America was learning to move. Cars grew reliable. Maps grew bolder. People grew curious about what waited past the next county line. Route 66 answered with diners that smelled like coffee and grease, motor courts that promised vacancy, and gas stations that doubled as gossip exchanges. Towns bloomed because travelers needed reasons to stop, and those reasons came wrapped in pie, postcards, and neon.

Hard times followed the road, too. During the Depression, Route 66 carried families west with everything they owned tied down under tarps. Later it carried soldiers and supplies during World War II, and then, almost without warning, it became the road of vacations. Station wagons hummed. Kids pressed faces to windows. Freedom



looked like a full tank and a long horizon.

Arizona learned Route 66 the hard way and the lasting way. Long before it wore the 66 shield, the road through Flagstaff got a tiny but telling upgrade: a single paved block laid in 1914, considered a milestone at the time.

Change did not wait for the interstate era. In 1952, a safer western alignment rerouted traffic around Oatman, leaving the old mining town quieter and oddly more itself. In Williams

and Winslow, Route 66 traffic grew so heavy that engineers split the highway into parallel one-way streets, a practical fix that still shapes how those towns move today.

Then came the interstates, wide and fast and uninterested in scenery. Route 66 was bypassed, renamed, and finally erased from the official map in 1985. But maps are not the same thing as memory. Arizona still holds more than 385 miles of the old road, including long, uninterrupted stretches where the desert presses close and the sky does most of the talking.

That is why the centennial matters. Not because Route 66 is old, but because it still works. It slows you down. It makes room for detours. It reminds you that travel used to be an act of attention, not efficiency. At 100, Route 66 remains what it has always been: a road that rewards those willing to take their time.

See where to celebrate! Continued on page 9A



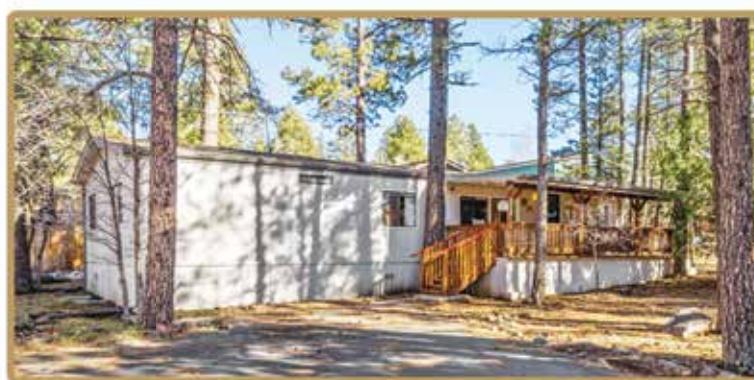
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This three bedroom, two bath house sits on an oversized lot at the end of a quiet cul-de-sac. There are two separate living areas, a split floor-plan and plenty of room to spread out. The covered porch is the place to be with lots of room for outdoor fun. Upgrades include new central air conditioning, water heater, remodeled bathrooms, interior paint, window coverings and a paved driveway. This is your perfect Munds Park getaway!



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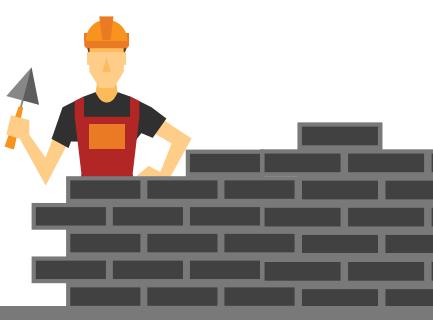
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GET YOUR KICKS ON ROUTE 66

...Continued from page 8A

Where to Celebrate Route 66 at 100

Arizona is the natural place to mark Route 66's centennial, with events up and down the old highway inviting people to stop, linger, and join in.

JANUARY 31: OATMAN BED RACES

Five-person teams race beds down Oatman's main street. Free to watch. Team registration begins at noon, race start is listed at 1:00 PM.

Website: bullheadcity.com/2026/01/31/396612/oatman-bed-races

APRIL 2026: ROUTE 66 FESTIVAL & CAR SHOW

Holbrook festival listing for April 2026. Check for the finalized weekend, schedule, and entry details.

Website: historic66az.com/events

APRIL 20 - 26: ROUTE 66 BIKE WEEK

Motorcycle appreciation week recognized as the last full week in April. 2026 dates listed as Apr 20-26.

Website: route66bikeweek.com

APRIL 30: SELIGMAN CENTENNIAL CELEBRATION

Seligman's Route 66 centennial celebration, including the unveiling of centennial monument signs and a community party.

Website: historic66az.com/event-seligman-centennial-celebration

MAY 1 - 3: ROUTE 66 FUN RUN

Three-day classic car rally covering about 140 miles from Seligman to Kingman to Topock, with activities in communities along the way.

Website: historic66az.com/fun-run

MAY 16: ASH FORK HERITAGE ON ROUTE 66 DAY

Community celebration noted to include a parade, classic car show, chili cook off, craft fair, and family activities.

Website: facebook.com/AshForkRt66HistoricMuseum

JUNE 5 & 6: WILLIAMS HISTORIC ROUTE 66 CAR SHOW

Downtown Williams car show with a published schedule and event details (schedule subject to change).

Website: williamshistoricroute66carshow.com

JUNE 6: FLAGSTAFF ROUTE 66 CENTENNIAL CELEBRATION

Free, day-long centennial celebration with reenactments, classic cars, art installations, and festival programming.

Website: flagstaffarizona.org/things-to-do/route-66/route-66-centennial

AUGUST 15: MOTHER ROAD CLASSIC CAR SHOW

Centennial-year charity car show in Flagstaff hosted by the Route 66 Car Club.

Website: route66carclub.org

SEPTEMBER 25 - 27: STANDIN ON THE CORNER CENTENNIAL FESTIVAL

Centennial version is listed as a three-day festival in 2026.

Website: visitwinslow.com/route-66



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MARKETS & FESTIVALS

THURSDAY, FEBRUARY 12- 16



I HEART PLUTO FESTIVAL

Lowell Observatory hosts its annual celebration of Pluto with talks, programs, and events that mix science with a sense of wonder. You may leave knowing more than you expected.

Time: Varies**Location:** Lowell Observatory, Flagstaff, AZ**Details:** iheartpluto.org**Admission:** Varies (see website)

SUNDAYS THROUGH MAY 31



SEDONA COMMUNITY FARMERS MARKET

Stock up on local produce, baked goods, and treats, then call it lunch with a coffee and something delicious you did not have to cook. Winter season runs weekly on Sundays.

Time: 11:00 am – 3:00 pm**Location:** Wells Fargo Bank parking lot, 2201 W State Route 89A, West Sedona**Details:** sedona-farmers-market.com**Admission:** Free

FRIDAY, MARCH 6 – 8



ARIZONA WINE COUNTRY ARTISTS VILLAGE FINE ART & CRAFT FAIR

Stroll Old Town Cottonwood's juried art and fine craft fair, featuring local and regional artists, a free scavenger hunt and raffle, and a kids' art activity tent. Family- and pet-friendly, with free admission.

Time: Friday-Saturday 10:00 am – 6:00 pm; Sunday 10:00 am – 5:00 pm**Location:** Old Town Activity Park, 187 E. Pima Street, Cottonwood, AZ**Details:** artists-village.com**Admission:** Free

SATURDAY, MARCH 21 – 22



CAMP VERDE PECAN & WINE FESTIVAL

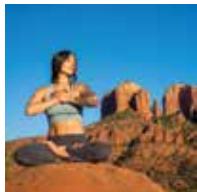
Downtown Camp Verde turns into a two-day snack-and-sip stroll with vendors, live music, and plenty of pecan goodness. General admission is free, and wine tasting tickets are available. No pets, service animals only.

Time: Saturday 11:00 am – 7:00 pm; Sunday 11:00 am – 4:00 pm**Location:** Downtown Camp Verde, 75 E. Holloman Street, Camp Verde, AZ**Details:** visitcampverde.com/pecan-and-wine-festival**Admission:** Free

FRIDAY, APRIL 17

OPENING DAY! PINEWOOD COUNTRY CLUB

FRIDAY, APRIL 23 – 26



SEDONA YOGA FESTIVAL

Soak in four days of yoga, meditation, workshops, music, and mindful experiences set among Sedona's stunning red rocks. All levels can explore breathwork, kirtan, excursions, conscious talks, kids yoga, and more in this immersive wellness gathering.

Time: Varies by session (festival runs daily)**Location:** Sedona (various outdoor sites)**Details:** sedonayogafestival.com**Admission:** www.sedonayogafestival.com

LOCAL EVENTS

MUNDS PARK 4TH OF JULY PARADE

The Munds Park 4th of July Parade is a tradition we look forward to every year. But this one carries extra meaning.

In 2026, America celebrates her 250th birthday, and that makes this year's parade a special moment in a long, shared story.

If you've ever thought about participating in the parade, this is the year to start early. Talk it over with family, neighbors, or your favorite group of volunteers. Simple or elaborate, big or small, it's all part of what makes the parade special.

The best float design will be featured on the cover of The Pinewood News, a keepsake moment for a celebration that only comes around once.

Mark your calendar. Start planning now. Let's make this 4th of July parade one to remember, and one worthy of America's 250th birthday.

THE ARTS

SATURDAY, FEBRUARY 14



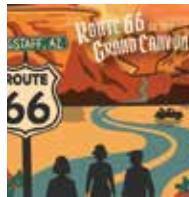
ARTS & CRAFTS AMERICAN STYLE

Browse pottery, woodworking, jewelry, paintings, photography, and stained glass at this classic arts and crafts show. It's a local favorite for finding something original and handmade.

Time: 9:00 am to 4:00 pm**Location:** Clemenceau Heritage Museum, 1 N. Willard Street, Cottonwood**For information:** clemenceamuseum.com**Admission:** \$1.00

SUNDAY, FEBRUARY 15, 2026

ROUTE 66 TO THE GRAND CANYON – LIVE THEATER



A funny, slightly wild Mother Road adventure where Route 66 shows up as a character and turns a busted car into a Flagstaff-to-Grand-Canyon detour with plenty of jokes and audience-friendly fun.

Time: 1:00 pm**Location:** Doris Harper-White Playhouse (Theatrikos Theatre Company), 11 W Cherry Ave, Flagstaff**Details:** theatrikos.com, Box Office: 928-774-1662**Admission:** See website for ticket prices.

THURSDAY, APRIL 9 – 12



NORTHERN ARIZONA BOOK FESTIVAL

Four days of readings, workshops, performances, and literary mayhem across downtown Flagstaff, with a walkable Saturday takeover in Heritage Square packed with publishers, makers, and live sets.

Time: Varies by event. See website for the full schedule.**Location:** Heritage Square, Flagstaff, AZ**Details:** noazbookfest.org**Admission:** See website for details.

THURSDAY, FEBRUARY 5 – 19



OIL PAINTING FOR BEGINNERS COURSE

Verde Valley Archaeology Center & Museum offers a three-week beginner oil painting course where you'll learn basics like mixing color, using brushes and materials, and creating a still-life painting to take home.

Time: 9:00 am to 1:00 pm (Thursdays)**Location:** 460 West Finnie Flat Rd, Camp Verde**Details:** verdevalleyarchaeology.org**Admission:** \$145 per person (course fee)

MUSIC & NIGHTLIFE

SATURDAY, FEBRUARY 21



THREE DOG NIGHT WITH AMBROSIA

Three Dog Night teams up with Ambrosia for a classic rock show packed with familiar hooks and sing-along moments. If you know the radio hits, you already know the words.

Time: 7:00 pm

Location: Findlay Toyota Center, Prescott Valley

Details: findlaytoyotacenter.com

Admission: Ticketed (see website)

SUNDAY, MARCH 22, 2026



BRENTANO QUARTET

Spend your Sunday afternoon with one of the best-known string quartets around, bringing Schubert, Beethoven, and a modern twist to Sedona.

Time: 3:00 pm

Location: Sedona Hilton, 90 Ridge Trail Dr, Sedona

Details: chambermusicsedona.org

Admission: See website for details

SATURDAY, APRIL 18



AMERICA 250 CELEBRATION WITH SEDONA SYMPHONY

A red-white-and-blue Pops night featuring mezzo-soprano Abigail Fischer and conductor Desmond Siu, with classics from Gershwin, Copland, Bernstein, and Joplin, plus Grofé's Grand Canyon Suite and a singalong "America the Beautiful" encore. Tickets go on sale March 1.

Time: 7:00 pm (see website for details)

Location: Sedona Performing Arts Center, 995 Upper Red Rock Loop Road, Sedona

Details: sedonasymphony.org

Admission: Tickets on sale March 1, 2026

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ARIZONA SNOWBOWL



Grab your gear and hit the slopes at Arizona Snowbowl, where lift tickets for the 2025–26 season are now available online—some deals start as low as \$10 if you buy early and pick offseason dates.

Time: Daily

Location: Flagstaff-area resort

For information: www.snowbowl.ski

Admission: Prices vary by date; online early purchase gets the best rate.

Pro Tip: Purchase your ticket in advance online, pick a weekday if your schedule allows, and you'll likely get the best value.

SATURDAY, FEBRUARY 14

TOUCH A TRUCK



Climb in, look around, and ask questions while big rigs, emergency vehicles, and heavy equipment roll into the Sports Complex. Catch live demos, hit the kids' play zone, and grab a free hot dog lunch from the Kiwanis Club.

Time: 11:00 am - 3:00 pm

Location: Camp Verde Sports Complex, 990 E. Champion Trail, Camp Verde

Details: visitcampverde.com/events

Admission: Free

SATURDAY, MARCH 14



ST. PATRICK'S DAY PARADE

Sedona hosts its annual St. Patrick's Day parade with local groups, floats, and plenty of green on display. A lively morning tradition that draws a friendly crowd.

Time: 10:30 am

Location: Jordan Rd in Sedona,

Details: sedonaaz.gov

Admission: Free

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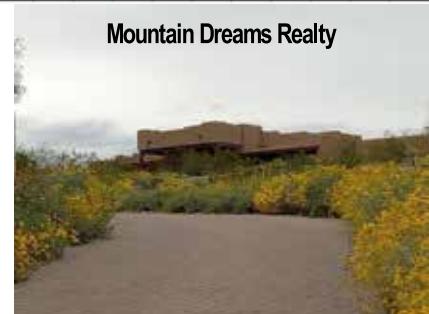


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HOME MADE & WONDERFUL

MARRY ME CHICKEN

A Valentine's chicken dish that tastes like a love note and eats like a feast.

Some recipes earn their names by making everyone at the table go quietly for seconds. Marry Me Chicken is one of those. It started in 2016 on a Delish video set, when a producer took one bite and laughed, "I'd marry you for this chicken." The joke stuck, because the food backed it up: golden chicken tucked into a rich, tangy sauce with sun-dried tomatoes, herbs, and Parmesan, the sort of flavor that turns a plain Tuesday into "should we open a second bottle?"

And that's why it feels perfect for Valentine's Day in the mountains. This is the cozy kind of romance: a warm kitchen, a simmering skillet, and a sauce that smells like comfort with love. Serve it over spaghetti, let the steam fog the windows, and call it what it is: love, with garlic.

- Easy to make, only takes 30 minutes of love
- Serves 4

Ingredients

Kosher salt and freshly ground black pepper
8 ounces spaghetti
3 tablespoons olive oil
Four 6-ounce boneless, skinless chicken breasts
1 large shallot, halved and thinly sliced
2 cloves garlic, minced
1 cup low-sodium chicken broth
One 6.3-ounce jar sundried tomatoes in oil, drained and roughly chopped
One 0.4-ounce chicken bouillon cube
1 cup heavy cream
1 teaspoon dried oregano



1/4 teaspoon crushed red pepper flakes
1/2 cup freshly grated Parmesan (about 2 ounces)
1/4 cup thinly sliced fresh basil

Directions

1. Bring a large pot of water to a boil over medium-high heat. Salt it generously, then add the spaghetti and cook until al dente, following the package directions. Drain, set aside, and keep warm.
2. Heat 2 tablespoons of the olive oil in a large skillet over medium-high heat. Season the chicken breasts generously on both sides with kosher salt and freshly ground black pepper. Carefully place the chicken in the hot skillet and let it cook undisturbed until the bottom is golden brown, about 5 minutes. Flip with tongs and cook until the other side is golden brown, about 5 minutes more. Transfer the chicken to a plate.
3. Add the remaining 1 tablespoon olive oil and the sliced shallot to the same skillet. Cook, stirring occasionally, until the shallot is just tender, 1 to 2 minutes. Add the minced garlic and stir continuously until fragrant, about 1 minute.
4. Pour in the chicken broth and scrape up the browned bits from the bottom of the skillet. Add the chopped sun-dried tomatoes, the chicken bouillon cube, heavy cream, dried oregano, crushed red pepper flakes, and 1/4 teaspoon salt. Stir until the bouillon cube dissolves.
5. Bring the sauce to a boil, then reduce the heat to medium-low and let it settle into a simmer. Nestle the chicken breasts back into the sauce. Cook until the sauce has thickened slightly and the chicken is cooked through, 5 to 10 minutes, with the chicken registering 165°F internally.
6. Stir in the Parmesan and fresh basil. Divide among 4 dinner plates and serve with the warm spaghetti.



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WORD SEARCH

CREATED BY PAUL MASON • SOLUTION PAGE 14B



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Bleak	Frigid	Mittens	Sneeze
Boots	Gale	Muffler	Snow
Brisk	Gust	Nippy	Storm
Cap	Heat	Parka	Stove
Chill	Ice	Polar	Thaw
Coat	Icy	Raw	Turtleneck
Cocoon	Insulation	Scarf	Windy
Cold	Jacket	Skate	Wool
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ALAS, POOR READER

On Shakespeare, Screens, & the Quiet Disappearance of Being Well Read

BY SANDEE CAVINESS

*If you read a book in 2025—just one book—you belong to an endangered species. Like honeybees and red wolves, the population of American readers, *Lector americanus*, has been declining for decades. The most recent Survey of Public Participation in the Arts, from 2022, found that fewer than half of Americans had read a single book in the previous 12 months; only 38 percent had read a novel or short story. A recent study from the University of Florida and University College London found that the number of Americans who engage in daily reading for pleasure fell about 3 percent each year from 2002 to 2023. —TheAtlantic.com*

Faced with numbers like these, it is hard not to wonder what Shakespeare would make of the modern reader.

If his work is any guide, he would not tiptoe around the figures. He would read them once and ask who taught a nation to grow bored so quickly.

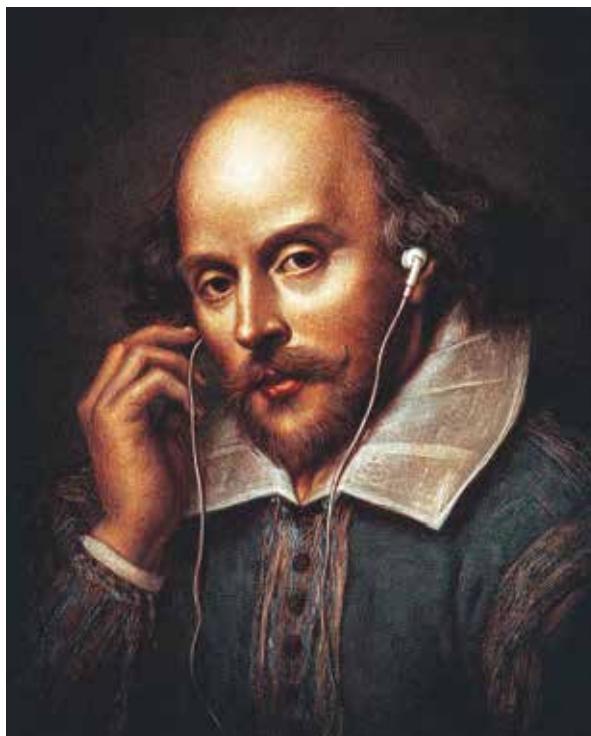
More than half of American adults did not read a single book of any kind in a year. Not one. When the question narrows to novels or short stories, fewer than four in ten remain. Being well read was once an expectation, even a dream. Now it is a rarity.

But yearly tallies tell us only who crossed the threshold at least once. They do not tell us whether reading still lives in daily life.

And if we take Shakespeare's work as our guide, he would not stop with what people say they do. He would look instead at what they do, day after day.

On that measure, the decline is starker. Over the last two decades, the share of Americans who read for pleasure on an ordinary day has fallen from roughly one in four to closer to one in six. That is not a fluctuation. It is withdrawal.

Sustained narrative reading now finds refuge with a small and devoted few. This is not a statistical curiosity. It marks a cultural turn away from depth and toward screens engineered for endless distraction.



Shakespeare on Audiobooks

We cannot know what Shakespeare would make of audiobooks, but we can make a fair guess from what he built his life around: spoken language, performed aloud, experienced through voice and presence long before it appeared on the page. His plays were written for voices and ears first. The text was the score; the performance was the point.

It is hard to imagine him sneering at listening as second-rate. He would recognize what anyone who has sat in a theater knows: spoken language carries meaning, rhythm, emotion, and memory. In his own time, most people met stories that way.

Still, he would notice what changes when the page disappears.

Listening is receiving. Reading is doing.

An audiobook carries you forward at its pace. A printed page makes you set the pace yourself. You choose when to stop, when to reread, when to slow down and wrestle a sentence into clarity. You are not only taking in meaning; you are practicing the act of making meaning from marks.

Shakespeare would not call it "decoding," but he would understand the difference immediately: it is the difference between following a voice and commanding the words yourself. Print asks for a kind of

...Continued on page 19A

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... *Continued from page 17A*

attention that is active, not merely present. It trains patience, focus, and the ability to move through a thought without being dragged or distracted away from it.

So he would likely arrive at the same conclusion reading research has since reached: audiobooks can deliver comprehension.

Print reading builds comprehension and the skill of reading itself: fluency, stamina, independence.

If we keep our assumptions modest, we can still sketch his likely posture. He was a practical man, not a fragile purist. He would probably grant adults audiobooks as a sane way to stay in touch with ideas in crowded lives. He might even urge them to make room for print too.

Where children are concerned, his tolerance would likely narrow. Not because listening is “bad,” but because childhood is where the basic machinery is built. A child who never practices reading on the page may still love stories, yet remain dependent on someone else’s voice to reach them.

Children & the Page

If we take Shakespeare’s work as our guide, he understood something modern life keeps trying to forget: people are made. Not in a day, but by repetition. His plays are full of characters shaped by what they rehearse, what they dodge, and what they do when no one is applauding.

So it is easy to imagine him unmoved by the comfort that a child “loves stories,” as if love alone carried skill in its pocket. He would likely see love as the spark and practice as the firewood. One without the other burns out fast.

A child can listen to a hundred stories and still stumble over a page. That is not a failure of imagination. It is a missing apprenticeship. Print asks the eyes to learn their work: to recognize words quickly, to hold a line, to move forward without losing the thread. That effort, repeated, becomes fluency. Fluency becomes ease. And ease is what makes reading something a person returns to, rather than something they endure.

Print also ties the reading mind to the writing hand. Children who spend time with words on the page quietly absorb spelling patterns, sentence shapes, and the feel of language made visible. Listening gives meaning. Print builds the machinery that lets a child reach meaning alone.

Audiobooks, in that view, are not the enemy. They are often a gift. But they are best treated as scaffolding: useful for reaching higher, dangerous only when mistaken for the building itself. A child can be carried by a voice and still need, daily, to learn how to walk.

An Age Built to Distract

His work gives little support to the idea that laziness is the chief cause of decline. In play after play, characters fall not from idleness alone, but from appetite, pressure, temptation, and environments that make restraint harder to sustain.

He would likely look at the world we have built around attention and recognize it as a rival theater: brighter, louder, cheaper, and open every hour. Screens do not merely entertain. They compete. They offer constant novelty, instant reward, and the feeling of movement without effort.

Print offers none of that. It offers no spectacle. It offers only the slow pleasure of staying with a single mind long enough to finish a thought.

In Shakespeare’s world, silence was common and distraction had to be sought. In ours, distraction hunts you. So the question is not simply, “Why don’t people read?” It is, “How often does modern life allow anyone to be undisturbed long enough to want to read?”

What’s at Stake

Shakespeare believed language is not decoration. It is power. In his plays, words seduce, deceive, crown kings, start wars, end marriages, and save lives. The characters who cannot master attention are the ones most easily mastered by others.

So the decline of print reading would matter to him for reasons larger than books.

A population that rarely practices sustained reading grows less patient with long arguments, less comfortable with ambiguity, and less able to follow a thought from beginning to end without reaching for escape.

That changes what can be governed, what can be sold, and what can be lied about successfully.

For Shakespeare, reading was never only “culture.” It was interior life: the ability to enter another mind and stay there, to hold a line of thought steady long enough for judgment to form.

That is why his work gives reason to defend it. Not because it is old. Not because it flatters the reader. But because without sustained attention, reflection thins, and a society that cannot reflect is easily led.



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POMEGRANATE MIMOSAS

A Touch of Elegance for Valentine's Day



Let us speak plainly. Valentine's Day carries a great deal of expectation. Roses arrive at a premium, chocolate is a matter of personal taste, and restaurant reservations can test even the most composed dispositions. Yet a thoughtfully chosen cocktail, prepared with care and served with quiet confidence, remains one of life's more reliable pleasures.

The pomegranate mimosa offers exactly that, refinement without pretense.

This is no ordinary brunch mimosa, the sort that appears in casual company before noon. This version carries a certain sophistication: still light and effervescent, yet it exchanges the bright, uncomplicated charm of orange juice for the deeper, more contemplative character of pomegranate. Where orange is cheerful and forthright, pomegranate is poised, slightly mysterious, and quietly self-assured.

A brief note on origins, as every fine tradition has its story.

The mimosa began not as an all-you-can-drink affair, but as a graceful solution: how to enjoy Champagne in the morning hours without raising eyebrows in polite society. In 1921, the Buck's Club in London introduced the Buck's Fizz—Champagne and orange juice, elegant yet spirited. A few years later, in Paris, the Ritz perfected the drink we now recognize as the mimosa, named for the golden mimosa flower: sunny, celebratory, and impeccably proper.

Valentine's Day, however, invites something a little more knowing.

Pomegranate has long carried symbolic weight. In Greek myth, those few seeds bound Persephone to her fate, an act both tender

and irrevocable. Across cultures, the fruit has signified love, abundance, and devotion. It is rich in color, generous in flavor, and leaves an impression that lingers. For a day devoted to matters of the heart, it feels entirely fitting.

Ingredients (serves one)

- 1/4 cup sweetened pomegranate juice, thoroughly chilled
- Champagne or dry sparkling wine, very cold
- A few pomegranate arils for garnish

The Method

1. Chill your flute; warmth has no place here.
2. Gently pour the pomegranate juice into the glass.
3. Top slowly with the sparkling wine, allowing the bubbles to rise with composure.
4. Finish with a scattering of pomegranate arils—they drift upward like tiny jewels catching the light.
5. Serve promptly, to someone who appreciates subtlety as much as celebration.

For a drier profile, select a crisp brut or extra brut and allow the pomegranate to remain understated.

This is a drink of balance: restrained yet generous, composed yet inviting.

In the end, Valentine's Day passes, fashions change, and expectations evolve. But a beautiful glass filled with delicate bubbles, especially when they carry the deep crimson of pomegranate, endures as one of life's small, perfect gestures.

And if love is intricate, at least this cocktail is gracefully straightforward.

Cheers, darling.

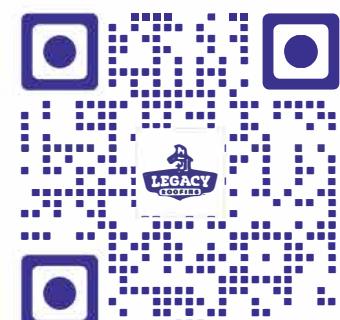


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ROOT CAMP GARDENING CLASSES BEGIN FEBRUARY 28

BY MISTI WARNER-ANDERSEN

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Whether you're a first-time gardener eager to learn the basics, an experienced grower looking to overcome persistent challenges, or simply hoping to refresh your gardening knowledge, you'll find information and inspiration at Root Camp, Warner's Nursery's series of classes starting Saturday, February 28.

This comprehensive educational series will be led by experts on Warner's staff as well as certified Master Gardeners who have completed extensive education and training through the University of Arizona Cooperative Extension program. They are all well-versed with the unique challenges of gardening in Northern Arizona's distinctive climate and conditions.

Each Root Camp class is priced at just \$10 (plus applicable taxes and fees), making professional gardening education accessible to everyone. But here's the best part: every participant receives a \$10 certificate redeemable for plants or supplies at Warner's Nursery. This means your class essentially pays for itself while providing you with valuable skills and knowledge that will benefit your garden for seasons to come.

This year's Root Camp features an impressive lineup of topics designed to address the full spectrum of gardening needs:

Soils 101 gives you the 411 on the foundation of your garden's success.

Composting Basics teaches you how to transform kitchen scraps and yard waste into nutrient-rich soil amendments that will supercharge your garden.

Pruning demystifies one of gardening's most intimidating tasks, showing you how to trim trees and shrubs with confidence to promote

healthy growth and proper structure.

Garden Planning helps you design a productive garden tailored to Northern Arizona's unique growing conditions, teaching you how to select varieties that will thrive in our climate.

Seed Starting demonstrates economical methods to grow long-season crops like tomatoes and peppers that would otherwise struggle in our short-season climate.

Plants and Pollinators explores the critical relationship between native plants and the bees, butterflies, and hummingbirds that depend on them, while showing you how to create a pollinator-friendly garden.

Rainwater Harvesting provides practical instruction on collecting and utilizing rainwater to irrigate your garden sustainably, making the most of our limited precipitation.

While Root Camp was originally conceived as a Gardening 101 series for beginners, it has evolved into something much more comprehensive. Experienced gardeners consistently report gaining valuable new insights and discovering innovative techniques. Whether you're planting your first tomato or you've been gardening for decades, these sessions offer something for everyone.

With limited space available and Root Camp's growing popularity each year, spots fill up quickly.

Visit warnersnursery.com for complete schedule details, class descriptions, and easy online registration for Root Camp 2025.

This spring, invest in yourself, your garden, and your community. Your journey to gardening excellence starts February 28!

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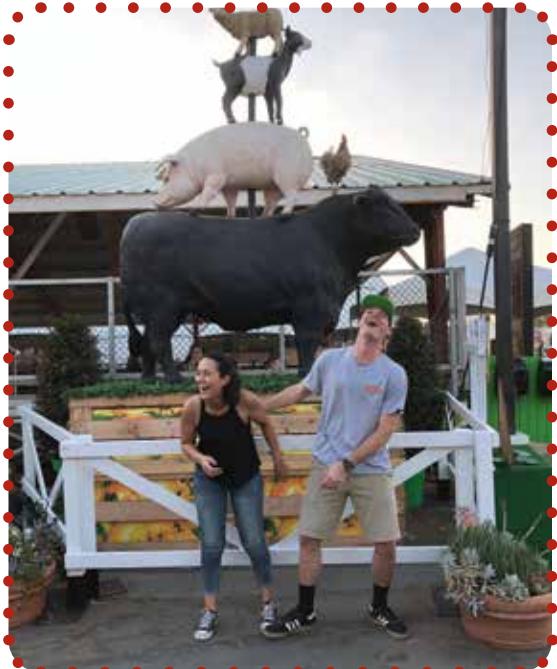


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Happy Valentines Day



My life changed back in July 2019 when I met you, and I wouldn't change a single thing! You drive me mentally crazy (in the best way), but life with you guarantees I'll never be bored. You make me laugh like no one else, and I love our life together in Munds Park. Here's to many more years of laughs, home projects, and adventures with SR and Mae by our sides.

My love, I love you. — ML



*Matthew
I want to write you a love song
But not sure how to begin
I want to tell the world how much love
I hold in my chest
But it feels lost when put into words
I love you
Your existence is crucial and important
and you need to know that
I want to write you a love song
But not sure I want it to end
With love and gratitude,
Diane*

*Sending love to all those living
with/in grief. Losing someone you care
about is not easy. May you know that
today you are not alone.*

— Anonymous



Daddy loves you both to the Moon & back.



*For my children
Let it be known
right here
right now
in this very moment
You are both so loved
for who you already are
and what you will become
My unconditional love
will live long after I die
You'll see me
in the Aspen groves
Hear me
in the wind
Sense me
as the shadows cast in the eve
Because
love never dies
it lies inside our souls
I love you both more than words,
Mama*



KOTA'S COFFEE HOUSE

Happy Valentine's Day, Munds Park!

This Valentine's Day, we want to share just how grateful we are for you. We have felt incredibly welcomed by this community, and it has meant more to us than we can properly put into words.

Thank you for supporting us, stopping in, sharing stories, and allowing us to become part of your daily rhythms and traditions. Kota's is special because of the people who fill it with warmth, kindness, and connection—and we're truly honored to be here with you.

Whether you're celebrating love with others or enjoying a quiet moment to yourself, know how thankful we are to serve this community and grow alongside it.

With heartfelt appreciation,
Kota's Coffee House



Happy Valentine's Day to my two favorite people in the world! You both make my day and world. I love you. — love Mommy/Em



Dear Larry,

Thirty-six years ago, we went on our first date.

Thirty-three years ago, we promised to keep choosing each other.

In between those two moments, we built a life.

Not the picture-perfect kind—but the real kind.

A life filled with babies and teenagers, late nights and early mornings.

With layoffs and losses, surgeries and grief.

With friends divorcing, kids growing up, and adult children occasionally doing dumb things (and us loving them anyway).

A life layered with vacations and memories, hikes and LEGO builds, game nights and charcuterie boards.

With wine poured, laughter shared, tears held, and hands never fully letting go.

You have been my steady in every storm and my fun in the calm.

My partner in parenting, in grief, in joy, and in becoming parents and then grandparents.

You've stood with me when life felt heavy and celebrated with me when it felt light.

We didn't just grow old together—we grew up together.

Again and again.

Thank you for choosing me on our first date, on our wedding day, and every ordinary day since.

I would say yes to you all over again—without hesitation.

Happy Valentines Day, my love.

Still you. Always us.

To My Valentine, Branden,

As we celebrate our 20th Valentine's Day together, I find myself feeling more grateful than ever to walk through life with you. I am so proud to be your wife, and I feel lucky every single day to be your Valentine—not just on February 14th, but in all the little moments you create throughout the year.

You make me feel cherished in ways big and small: opening my car door, whisking me away on spontaneous adventures, finding joy in the simplest moments together. But what fills my heart the most is watching you pour yourself into your new career with such determination and heart. You work tirelessly every day, not just for your own success, but for us—for the life we're building and the time we want to share. That kind of love is rare, and I never take it for granted.

You are the best husband, the most loving uncle and godparent, and the kind of friend anyone would be lucky to have. Your kindness, your humor, your steady strength, and your inner light—they make our world better in ways you may not even realize.

Thank you for choosing me, for loving me, and for making every day feel like Valentine's Day. Here's to 20 years of celebrating together... and to at least 200 more.

With all my love,

Your Valentine, Mindy



WHY THE THINGS YOU FORGET TO PACK MATTER MORE THAN YOU THINK

BY "UNSTOPPABLE STACEY" WITTIG

I could just faint.
I left my swimsuit
at home!

Packing isn't about perfection, but about reducing the little frustrations that can distract from the joy of travel.

I just returned from a fun getaway to Tucson, and my travel companion forgot her swimsuit.

Yep, it happens.

She packed three bags for a two-night stay at a hotel with a pool, and somehow that one small but important item didn't make the cut.

We laughed about it later — because travel has a way of doing that to even the most capable people. Between planning, packing, and simply getting out the door, it's easy to overlook something obvious.

I know this scenario well. Before I ever created my go-to packing list, I ended up with a drawer full of cheap Walmart swimsuits, proof that forgetting your swimsuit once is a mistake, but forgetting it repeatedly becomes a pattern.

That moment in Tucson reminded me how overwhelming travel can feel, especially when routines are disrupted, and your brain is juggling a dozen details at once. It also reminded me why I keep a simple "Don't

Forget This" packing list tucked in with my suitcases and travel gear — a list built from real trips, real mistakes, and lessons learned along the way.

Save this for later. It might just spare you a little frustration on your next trip — and help keep the focus where it belongs: enjoying the journey.

Tech & Documents

Tech and documents aren't just about convenience, they're about continuity. When your phone is charged, your confirmations are accessible, and your paperwork is in order, your trip keeps moving forward. Forget them, and suddenly you're troubleshooting instead of traveling.

Chargers top the list of commonly forgotten items, usually because they're unplugged at the last minute and left behind. I avoid this by keeping all my cords, chargers, and headphones in a single pouch that never gets unpacked. It lives in my suitcase, not in a drawer at home.

Before zipping the bag, I do a quick check for:

- Phone and device chargers
- Travel adapter to plug and power devices
- Headphones or earbuds
- Portable battery pack
- ID or passport
- Printed or saved confirmations



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There's one item many travelers don't think about until it's too late. If you take prescription medications, bring the pharmacy information sheet that comes with them — the one that lists your doctor's name, your home pharmacy, and dosage details. If your medication is lost or forgotten, a pharmacy at your destination can often call your home pharmacy to help arrange a refill.

It's not about expecting something to go wrong, it's about knowing that if it does, you're not stuck. Prepared travelers don't panic. They problem-solve.

Toiletries & Health

Health and hygiene items matter because they affect how you feel in your own body. A forgotten toothbrush, missing medication, or lack of sunscreen may seem minor, but discomfort has a way of coloring an entire day — or an entire trip.

Toiletries are easy to forget precisely because we use them every day. That's why they deserve a moment of attention before every trip:

- Toothbrush and toothpaste
- Deodorant
- Sunscreen and lip balm
- Moisturizer or lotion
- Prescription medications

I also pack a small, simple health kit with pain reliever, allergy medication, a few Band-Aids, and hand sanitizer. These aren't glamorous items, but they quietly prevent small issues from becoming bigger ones.

When you take care of the basics ahead of time, you remove unnecessary friction. You sleep better. You feel better. And when you feel better, you're far more likely to enjoy where you are.

Comfort & Convenience

Comfort items don't take up much space, but they can dramatically improve your experience — especially on travel days. These are the quiet helpers that don't show up in glossy travel photos but make all the difference behind the scenes.

A few of my never-forget items include:

- Reusable water bottle
- Snacks or protein bars
- Light rain jacket or wrap
- Sleep mask, earplugs or neck pillow

Comfort matters because travel already asks a lot of us — early mornings, unfamiliar beds, long days, and changing schedules. Small comforts act like anchors, helping your body and mind settle in.

Then there are the activity-specific items — the ones we think we won't need. Swimsuits. Walking shoes. A rain layer. Pool sandals. If the hotel has a pool, pack the suit. Even if you're not sure you'll use it.

Trust me on this one.

The Takeaway

We all forget things sometimes. A swimsuit. A charger. A small detail that felt obvious at home.

A good packing list won't make you a perfect traveler, but it will make you a calmer one. When you travel with a little less stress and a little more grace — for yourself and for the people you travel with — the journey has a way of becoming the best part.

Safe travels.

"UNSTOPPABLE Stacey" Wittig is a travel writer and publisher of UnstoppableStaceyTravel.com, focused on making travel feel more accessible and less stressful. Find her packing list with links to her favorite products at <https://bit.ly/PackThese>



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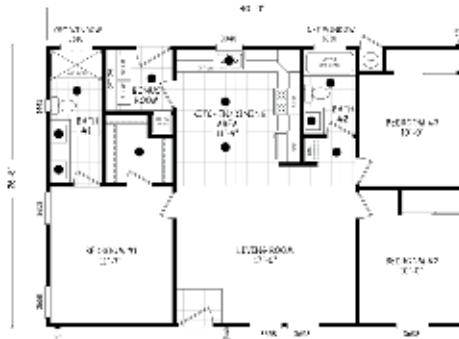


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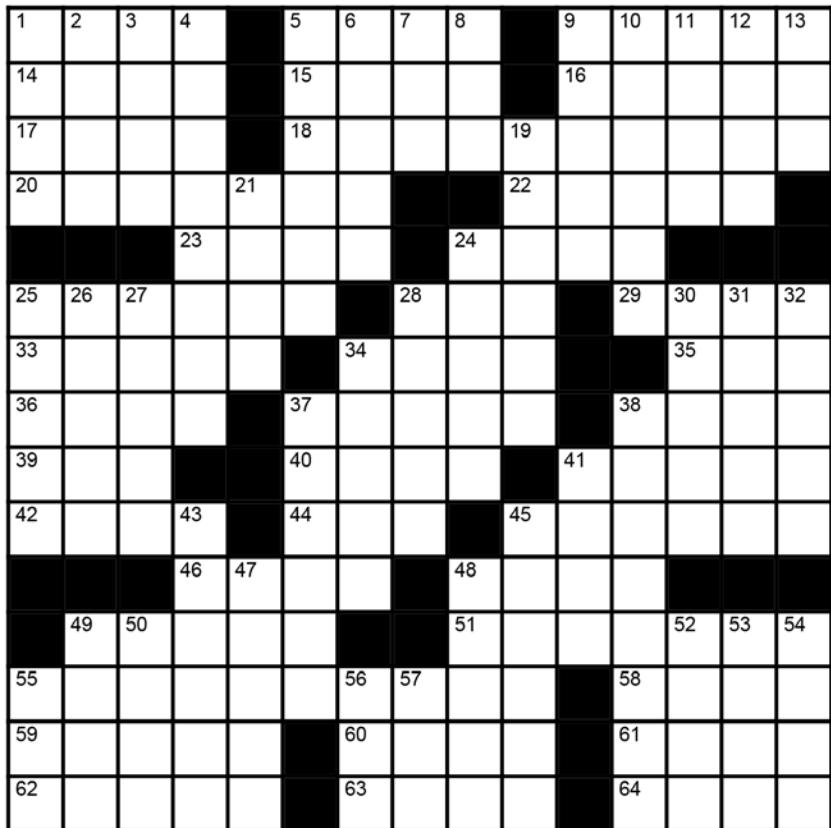
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CROSSWORD

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ACROSS

- 1. Catchall abbr.
- 5. Stare open-mouthed 9. Run-of-the-mill
- 14. Old world buffalo
- 15. Sunburn soother
- 16. Think the world of
- 17. Glance over
- 18. 1987 movie starring Cher
- 20. Desert nomad
- 22. Washing machine sound
- 23. Take out
- 24. Vegan's no-no
- 25. Longing
- 28. Realize
- 29. Be inclined
- 33. Twiddled one's thumbs
- 34. Present
- 35. Like sushi
- 36. Bridle strap
- 37. Agra attire
- 38. "How ___!"
- 39. Clock standard: Abbr.
- 40. Top-notch
- 41. Task
- 42. Sunrise direction
- 44. 2,000 pounds
- 45. Winged child
- 46. "Once ___ a time..."

DOWN

- 48. 60 minutes
- 49. Of the soft palate
- 51. In agreement
- 55. Lampooning
- 58. Poverty-stricken
- 59. Not suitable
- 60. Bright thought
- 61. Informed about
- 62. Unkempt
- 63. Gentiles, to Abraham
- 64. Intense
- 1. Religious ceremony
- 2. Early Peruvian
- 3. Fly high
- 4. Member of a hockey team
- 5. Reproductive cell
- 6. "Home ___"
- 7. Seek the affection of
- 8. Barbie's beau
- 9. Wash oneself
- 10. Aimless
- 11. We, to Henri
- 12. St. Louis landmark
- 13. Albanian currency
- 19. Gummy bears and such
- 21. Blackjack request
- 24. Suit
- 25. Dreary sound
- 26. Swelling
- 27. Narrow incisions
- 28. Ambulance alert
- 30. Boo-boo
- 31. World's smallest island nation
- 32. Dork
- 34. Libreville's land
- 37. Zen enlightenment
- 38. Bipedal carnivorous dinosaur
- 41. Great Lakes fish
- 43. Dutch export
- 45. One-two-three-kick" dances
- 47. Shindig
- 48. Sweetie pie
- 49. Barn topper
- 50. Terminal info
- 52. Top-of-the-line
- 53. Memorization method
- 54. Plunge
- 55. Bottom line
- 56. ___ and zag
- 57. Words said at an altar

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THE GROSSEST BIRD IN THE SKY!

The turkey vulture looks like it's thinking deep thoughts.

It sails over the treetops in slow circles, wings stretched wide, wobbling slightly. If you didn't know better, you might assume it's some wise, ancient creature keeping watch over the forest.

You would be wrong.

LUNCH, UNFORTUNATELY

A turkey vulture is not up there for poetry. It is up there for lunch. And lunch, in the turkey vulture world, is whatever is dead.

Not "oops, I dropped my sandwich" dead. More like "the desert has claimed this unfortunate creature and now it's beginning to smell worse than your brother's sweaty sneakers" dead. The turkey vulture is nature's cleanup crew, the kind that shows up when everyone else has already backed away holding their noses and saying, "Nope."

THE NOSE KNOWS

Here is the first horrifying talent: it can find its meals by smell.

Most birds are all sharp eyes and quick glances. Turkey vultures come with built-in stink detectors. They drift along, calmly sniffing the air like a floating garbage inspector. Somewhere below, something has stopped being alive, and the turkey vulture is thinking, Perfect. I'll take it.

DO NOT STARTLE THE BIRD

And if you think that is the grossest part, don't get comfortable.

Turkey vultures have a truly disgusting defense move!

If one feels threatened, it can vomit. Not a little polite cough-into-a-napkin moment. An actual, weaponized blast of partly digested nastiness. It is meant to shock predators, and it works extremely well on humans too, especially the sort of humans who are about to do something foolish, like walk too close and wave their arms.

Imagine being a coyote, feeling very confident, thinking, That bird looks slow. That bird looks like dinner.

Then the bird turns its head and says, with its whole body, Absolutely not.

And suddenly you are running away, screaming and gagging, reconsidering every decision you have ever made.



BALD FOR A REASON

Now for the next grim detail: turkey vultures are bald.

People sometimes think it's to look tough, like a biker. It isn't. It's because feathers on your face are a terrible idea when your face goes into things that are rotting. A bald head is easier to keep clean, which is not a sentence you expect to say about a bird whose hobbies include eating roadkill.

THE LEG SITUATION

Heat is another problem. On hot days, they poop and pee on their legs on their own legs. So gross. Yes. On purpose.

It helps them cool down because the liquid evaporates, and it may also help kill germs. Nature has many clever inventions, and quite a few of them are disgusting.

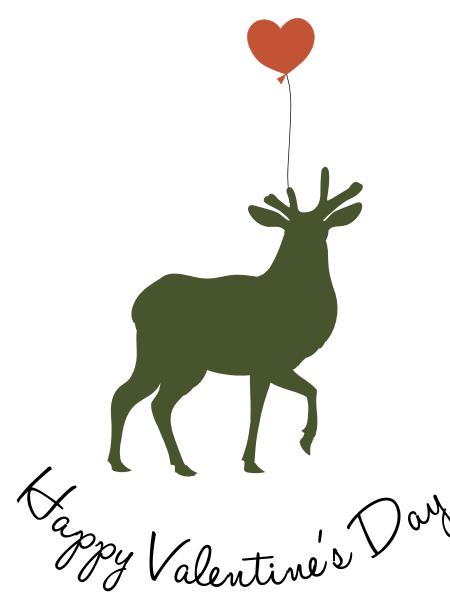
So if you ever see a turkey vulture standing on the ground looking strangely calm, like it's meditating, there is a chance it is actually giving itself a personal air conditioner and a cleaning treatment at the same time.

GROSS, BUT USEFUL

And yet, as foul as they are, turkey vultures are important.

They remove dead animals from the landscape. They keep things from rotting for too long in the open. They do the job that no one else volunteers for. Without them, the forest and desert would be a much smellier place, and that is saying something.

So the next time you see one circling high above Coconino County, congrats. You just found the buffet.





GREAT HORNED OWL

As you play Spot the Difference, you're learning to look closely, just like scientists and artists do. This game teaches you about the great horned owl and an art style called American Folk Art.

The great horned owl is one of the most powerful birds in Northern Arizona. It hunts at night using excellent hearing and sharp eyesight. Special feathers help it fly almost silently, so prey does not hear it coming. Its strong talons can grip tightly, and once they lock, they do not let go. These owls can live in forests, deserts, and even near towns. If you hear a deep "hoo hoo hoo" echoing through the trees after dark, a great horned owl may be nearby.

American folk art is art made by people who taught themselves, not artists trained in schools. It often reflects community traditions, daily life, faith, and cultural identity. Folk artists created both useful and decorative objects, like quilts, furniture, carvings, and paintings, and each piece told a personal story.

This kind of art is known for bold colors and simple shapes, not perfect realism. What matters most is meaning, not rules. American folk art gives a voice to everyday people and reminds us that art can come from lived experience, not just museums.

WANT TO DRAW YOUR STORY IN THE STYLE OF AMERICAN FOLK ART?

Create an illustration that shows a moment, a place, or something important to you. Use bold colors, simple shapes, and clear details to help tell your story. Ask an adult to help you send a photo of your artwork to [Hello@ThePinewoodNews.com](mailto>Hello@ThePinewoodNews.com). We may feature it in a future issue.

N	G	D	Q	I	C	K	X	O	S	G	B	R	P	E	J	R
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WORD SEARCH

Search up, down, forward, backward, diagonal to find the hidden words. Answers page 14B.

Owl	Forest	Quilt
Horned	Desert	Painting
Night	Hoot	Nature
Silent	Art	Traditions
Hearing	Folk	
Eyesight	Colors	
Feathers	Shapes	
Talons	Story	



SUDOKU

CREATED BY PAUL MASON · SOLUTION PAGE 14B

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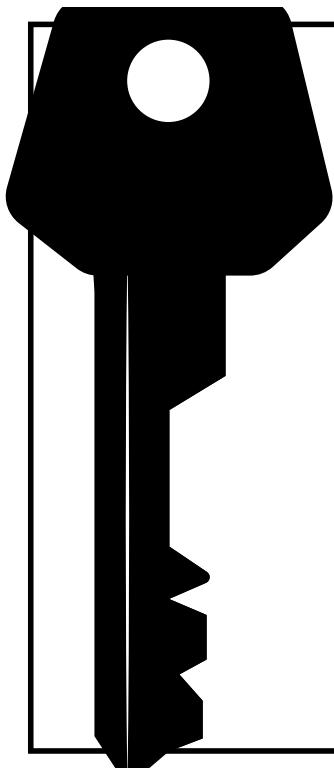
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THE CUTEST CRIMINAL AT THE GRAND CANYON & WHY MUNDS PARK SHOULD CARE



If you've ever been to the Grand Canyon, you know the cast of characters: big views, big skies, big feelings... and one very small animal with the confidence of a bouncer and the morals of a pickpocket.

Meet the rock squirrel.

It looks like a plush toy that got promoted to "outdoor mascot." Big eyes. Fluffy tail. Tiny hands that seem

specifically designed to unzip backpacks and steal your sandwich.

And here's the part nobody expects: rock squirrels have a reputation for causing more visitor injuries than the "scarier" animals. Not the coyotes. Not the rattlesnakes. Not the big mammals people whisper about on trails.

Nope. The chunky little canyon gremlin.

Why rock squirrels are "dangerous"?

Rock squirrels aren't dangerous because they're powerful. They're dangerous because they're smart and completely unimpressed by humans. Over time, they've learned a simple truth: people are snack dispensers that panic.

They hang around busy areas during peak visitor hours. They creep closer. They act adorable. They stare at you like you're a Disney princess about to sing to the woodland creatures.

Then they go for your food.

And if you hand-feed them or get too close, they can bite. Their teeth are built to crack nuts and seeds, which means they have no trouble cutting into fingers. Any wild animal bite carries a real risk of infection, or rabies and suddenly that "cute moment" turns into an urgent care visit.

But the bigger issue isn't what they do to us. It's what we do to them.

Feeding wildlife feels kind. It isn't.

When visitors feed rock squirrels at the Grand Canyon, the squirrels stop acting like wildlife and start acting like bold, demanding regulars. They lose their fear of people, and they get aggressive when food doesn't appear fast enough.

Wildlife managers call this food-conditioning. It's what happens when animals learn to associate humans with easy meals. Once that happens, the animal's behavior changes permanently.

Those animals spend more time around people and roads, less time foraging naturally, and far more time getting into trouble. Animals that become too aggressive or too comfortable around humans often have to be removed, and sometimes euthanized. What starts as a well-meaning snack can end an animal's life.

So why does this matter in Munds Park?

Because the exact same thing happens here.

Munds Park isn't just near wildlife. It's part of our neighborhood. The squirrels, deer, javelina, raccoons, foxes, coyotes, birds, and the occasional bear aren't passing through a Park for a day. This is home.

Arizona Game and Fish has been clear about living in areas like ours: wildlife should stay wild. Feeding them, intentionally or not, teaches them to linger around homes, roads, and people. That's when problems begin.

It usually starts small. Someone tosses a few peanuts. Someone leaves pet food outside. Someone thinks the deer "looks hungry." Someone enjoys the feeling of being chosen by a squirrel.

Over time, those animals start returning more often. They get bolder. They stop avoiding people. They wander into driveways and streets. They approach other homes expecting the same treatment. Even if the original feeder stops, the behavior doesn't reset. The animal has learned the pattern.

That's when conflicts rise. That's when animals get labeled as nuisances. And that's when the outcome is almost never good for the animal.

The bottom line.

Rock squirrels at the Grand Canyon are funny right up until the moment they're not.

And in Munds Park, our wildlife deserves the same respect. Not because they're villains or threats, but because the fastest way to harm a wild animal is to turn it into something dependent on people.

Enjoy watching them. Take photos. Talk about them.

Just don't feed them.

The goal isn't to make wildlife friendly. It's to make sure they stay alive.



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—Sandee, Editor, The Pinewood News

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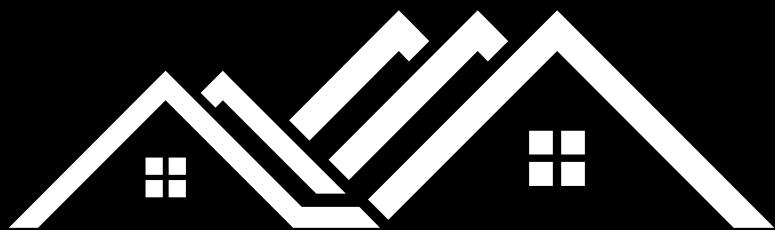
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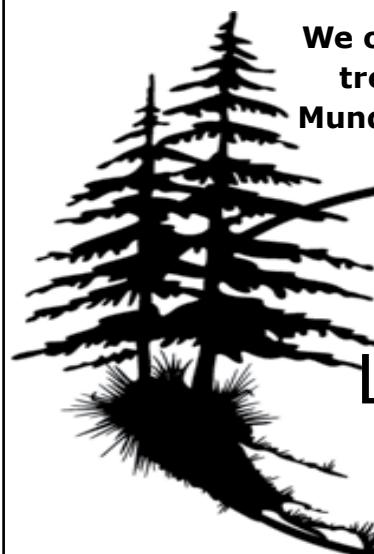
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FROM CRISP PINES TO INSTANT FUNK

Welcome to Munds Park Skunk Season

In the pine-scented paradise of Munds Park, “skunk season” isn’t marked on any calendar; striped skunks are full-time Arizona residents. But locals notice them way more from late winter into spring, when the adults get extra roam-y during mating season (think February through April). Sightings spike again in late spring as proud skunk parents start parading their little striped squads around. It’s nature’s version of “bring your kids to work day,” except the kids are armed and opinionated.

Why do these black-and-white bouncers keep showing up in Munds Park yards and under cabins? Simple: opportunism. Skunks are basically the ultimate foodies. Sure, they’ll munch insects, grubs, and whatever else the forest provides, but nothing beats the siren call of unsecured trash, outdoor dog kibble, or spilled birdseed. If your deck, shed, or cabin foundation has a cozy gap underneath, congratulations, you’ve accidentally listed prime Airbnb real estate on SkunkZillow.

Skunks aren’t out to ruin your day; they’re just very serious about personal boundaries. They want snacks, shelter, and zero drama. Your job? Don’t give them a reason to defend their turf.

How to Avoid Becoming Skunked

- Walk your dog on a leash at night. No off-leash “let Fido explore his inner wolf” moments after dark. Not to mention, we have leash laws in the Park.
- Carry a flashlight and scan ahead like you’re in a horror movie (because you kind of are).
- If you spot one, give it an escape route. Back away slowly. Do NOT run, shoo, poke, or try to negotiate. Skunks do not respond to “Hey buddy, we can talk about this.”
- If it starts stomping its little feet (think tiny angry tap dancer), raises its tail like a warning flag, or turns its rear toward you... retreat with dignity. You’ve been put on notice.

Prevention is 90% of the battle.

Remove the temptations:

- Bring pet food indoors at night.
- Secure your garbage cans (bungee cords are your new best friend).
- Clean up fallen fruit or birdseed piles. Don’t leave a buffet on the ground.
- If you suspect a skunk has set up shop under your deck or porch, wait until you’re sure it’s out foraging, then block the entrance. You want eviction, not a trapped, terrified skunk turning your foundation into a perfume factory.

Got Skunked Anyway?

The gold-standard home remedy (vetted by wildlife pros) is a fresh mix of:

- 1 quart 3% hydrogen peroxide
- 1/4 cup baking soda
- 1 teaspoon liquid dish soap (Dawn works great)

Mix it right before use, work it into the fur immediately (avoid eyes, nose, and mouth), let it sit a few minutes, then rinse thoroughly. Repeat if the funk lingers. Important: Do NOT store the mixture in a closed bottle. It can build pressure and explode.

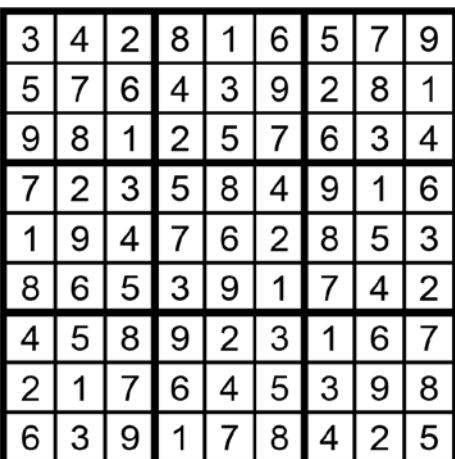
Finally, if you see a skunk acting weird, unusually bold, stumbling around in daylight, disoriented, or just not giving a hoot about humans, keep your distance and call local animal control or wildlife pros. That’s not a “quirky personality.” That’s a potential rabies flag. Better safe than sorry (or foaming at the mouth). You can find Animal Control phone numbers right here... look to the next page on the right.

So next time you’re out enjoying the pines, remember: fresh air is great, but fresh air with a side of striped drama is optional. Lock up the snacks, and leash the pup.

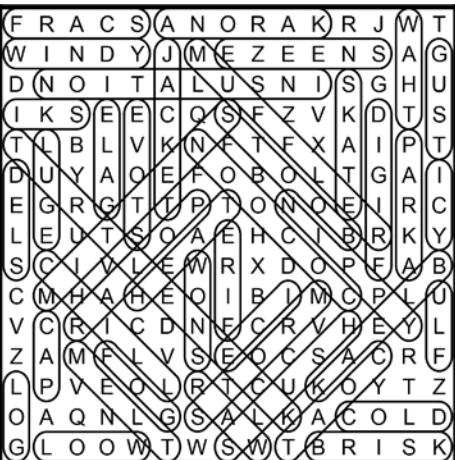
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Coconino County offers Support for Keeping Our Sky's Dark

Lighting Inspection

Request an inspection of your exterior lighting. It includes a written report. Fees are \$55/hour plus mileage, two-hour minimum. Email Mark for details at mstento@coconino.az.gov.

Code Violation Report

Notice illegal lighting? File a report here at www.coconino.az.gov and search for Code Violations and Enforcement.

Fixture Review

Not sure if a light is compliant? Send it in for review at mstento@coconino.az.gov.

Still Have Questions?

Email or call Mark Stento, Code Enforcement Compliance Manager, at (928) 679-8856 or mstento@coconino.az.gov

Domestic Animal & Wildlife Services

Loose Dogs, Nuisance Complaints, or Dog Bites

Coconino County Animal Management (928) 679-8756

For serious attacks or issues, call the Sheriff's Office (928) 774-4523

Rabies Concerns (Pets or Wildlife)

Report sick or aggressive animals immediately—especially if foaming, staggering, or behaving unusually.

Coconino County Animal Management (928) 679-8756

Found a Stray?

Do not approach if the animal appears aggressive. If safe, confine the animal and call Animal Management for pickup or next steps.

The Pinewood Fire Department has microchip scanners. You can bring the animal to the firehouse or call (928) 286-9885

High Country Humane (928) 526-0742

Note: Coconino County has leash laws. Dogs must be under control at all times—even in rural areas.

Injured or Dangerous Wildlife

Arizona Game & Fish (Flagstaff Region) (928) 774-5045

Weekends & after hours call 911

Don't feed wildlife. Keep trash secure. Report encounters with bears, mountain lions, or sick animals.

Loose Livestock

Department of Agriculture (press 1) (800) 294-0305

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Environmental & Emergency Services

Illegal Dumping in Forests or Waterways

Environmental Quality Reporting Line (928) 679-8886
(press 1 to leave a message) Reports can be made anonymously.

Flooding Concerns

Coconino County Call Center: (928) 679-8525
Emergency Planning and Real-Time Updates
Coconino County Emergency Management (928) 679-8311
Email: emergencymanagement@coconino.az.gov

Fire-Related Concerns

Illegal Campfires on National Forest Land

Coconino National Forest Dispatch Center (928) 527-3552
Coconino County Sheriff's Non-Emergency Dispatch (928) 774-4523
(press option 1) Provide detailed location information, such as forest road numbers or GPS coordinates, when reporting.

Illegal Campfires (private property) during Fire Restrictions

Coconino County Sheriff's Non-Emergency Dispatch (928) 774-4523
(press option 1) Applicable to unincorporated areas of the county.

Fire Restrictions Information

www.coconino.az.gov/2595/Fire-Restriction-Information

Off-Highway Vehicles (OHVs)

Reckless Driving, Trespassing, or Noise Complaints

Coconino County Sheriff's Non-Emergency Dispatch (928) 774-4523
(press option 1) to report OHVs off designated routes, speeding near homes, or damaging property.

Short-Term Rental Questions & Complaints

Loud Parties, Parking Issues, Trash or Other Nuisances

Coconino County Sheriff's Non-Emergency Dispatch (928) 774-4523
(press option 1) For immediate issues with noise, trespassing, blocked roads, or safety concerns.

Ongoing STR Violations or Registration Questions

Coconino County Short-Term Rentals Compliance Officer,
Tristan Dowse (928) 853-5340

Know Your Rights: Short-Term Rental owners must give their contact details to Coconino County and provide them in writing to adjacent neighbors. If you live next door and never received this information, call the County STR Compliance Officer to confirm the property's registration. For unresponsive owners, recurring disturbances, or suspected unregistered rentals, report the issue to the County or the Sheriff's Office.



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