



National Park Service
U.S. Department of the Interior

Montezuma Castle National Monument
P.O. Box 219
Camp Verde, AZ 86322

First Class Mail
Postage and Fees
PAID
City, State
Permit Number

Park News

National Park Service
U.S. Department of the Interior



The Ranger Review

Montezuma Castle, Montezuma Well, & Tuzigoot National Monuments

A Culture of Food

By Ranger Laura Albert

Many people come through the Verde Valley, and Arizona in general, and see a desert environment. A dry, inhospitable place where only cacti grow and reptiles roam. It leaves room for your imagination to wonder why prehistoric people such as the Sinagua wanted to live here.

But these people not only survived in this seemingly inhospitable environment, they thrived! Before they settled in this area, they had working knowledge of the plants that were growing all around them. They used this knowledge of the local flora to assist them in developing this thriving culture that lasted for several hundred years.

The preparation of food was labor intensive for these people. They didn't just go to the store and pick up supplies they needed or call up for take out. They were involved heavily in their food preparation, starting with the growing and gathering of food items. Women would go out in groups and gather in their own fields and also further afield with wild plants growing all around them. The men would be out chopping and collecting wood for the fires in order to cook. It was a time of work, but also for building community.

Gathering in the fields is a tedious job and gets monotonous pretty fast. But with others working near by, you have an opportunity to talk and catch up while doing much needed work. It was in the fields, around matates, and cook fires that women would exchange gossip from within the community.

There would be one woman making one item of food, such as piki bread, and another woman preparing beans. They would make more than needed to feed their family and trade with another woman in the community to have a more diverse diet.

When it was time to eat the food, everyone sat and waited their turn. Men would be served first and choicest of the vegetable food items prepared. If there was meat, that was first given to women of the family. In years of short supplies, it was the elderly of the community who would give up their portions to the young often for several days at a time.

The Sinagua's entire culture was food oriented. Not unlike our own today. We gather over food with friends and family. We make business deals over food. We celebrate life over food. And we even grieve at loss of life over food. There are even religious ceremonies focused around food. Food is an integrated part of our culture and for the Sinagua, it was no different.

Food is necessary for all people, ancient and modern to survive. It is a crucial part of our culture and how we interact with one another. From growing to eating, each person is integrally linked to one another around a culture of food.



EXPERIENCE YOUR AMERICA™

Park Happenings & Funny Pages

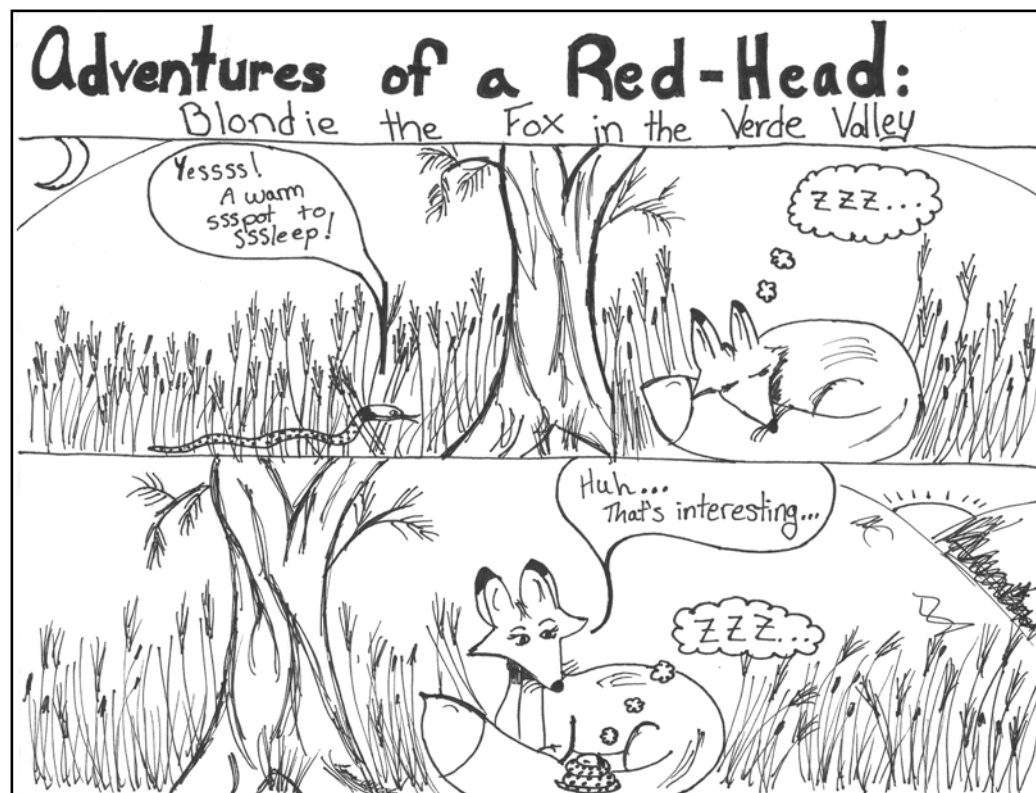
The Ranger Review is designed to give you more information about what to see and do while visiting our sites. We hope that you enjoy seeing our parks from a Ranger's point of view!

Editor

Ranger Laura Albert
Laura_Albert@nps.gov

Comments? Write to:

Montezuma Castle National Monument
Attn: Laura Albert
P.O. Box 219
Camp Verde, AZ 86322



Upcoming Events:

No new Events.

View Through the Lens



Plateau Lizard (*Sceloporus tristichus*) basking in the sun on a rock. Photo taken at Montezuma Well National Monument by Ranger Sharlot Hart.

Did you know?

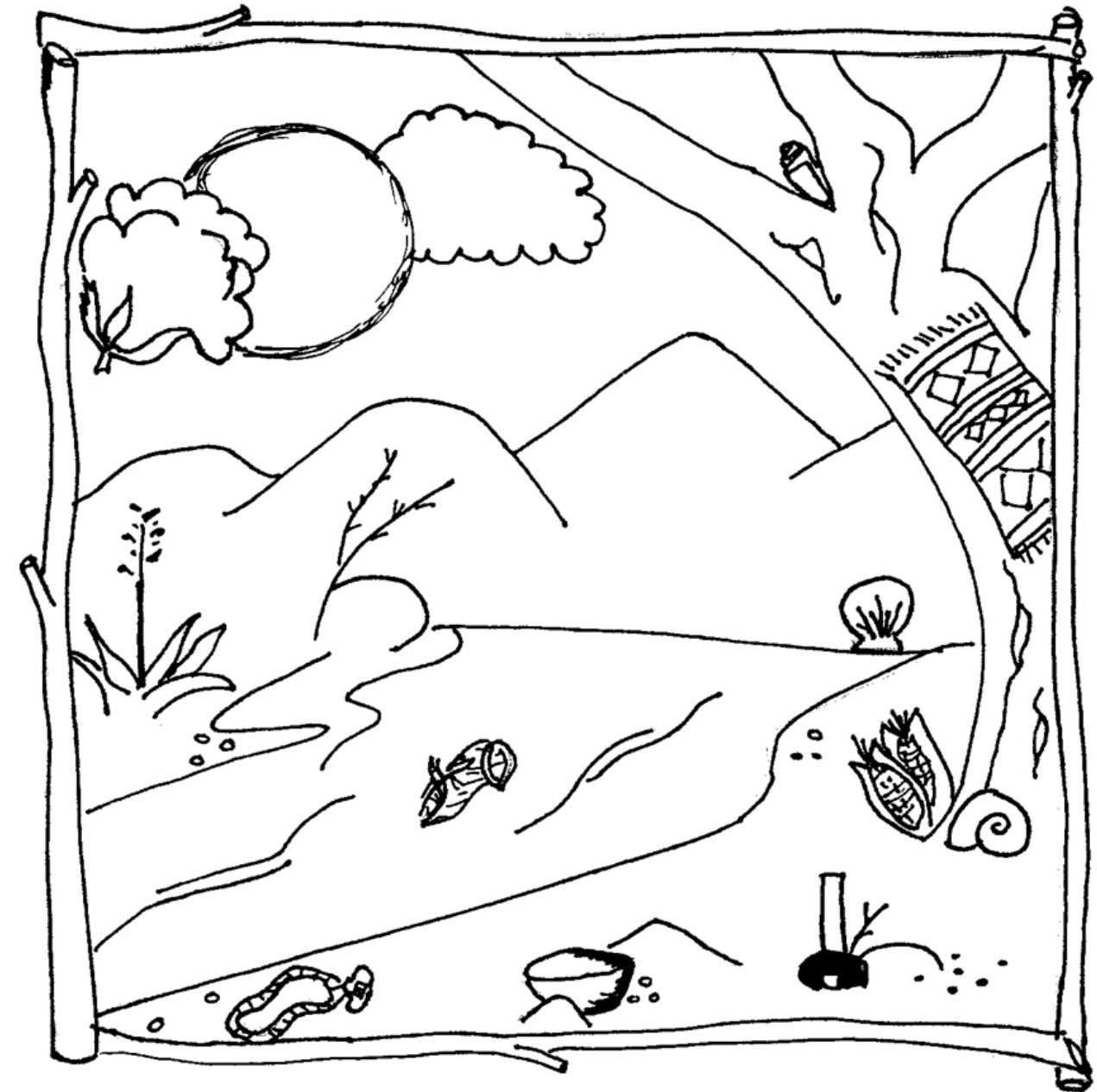


Red Velvet Ant
(*Dasyneutilla magnifica*)

The Red Velvet Ant isn't really an ant at all! It is actually a species of primitive wasp without wings! The females of this species are the ones frequently seen foraging on the ground for insects while the males have wings and are flying around foraging for nectar. Take care to leave these ladies on the ground alone, because their sting is definitely worse than their bite!

Hidden Pictures

In the shade of an Arizona Sycamore, several items have been hidden within this picture. Look at the list below and circle the items you find.



Yucca
Basket
Woven blanket

Corn
Hammer

Cotton
Sea shells

Yucca Sandal
Turquoise bead necklace