

Bullet Points/Issues

Our goal in writing these letters is twofold: to ensure visitor safety and habitat restoration in the birding area of Patagonia Lake State Park (PLSP) through the removal of all livestock and the installation of secure fencing around said area.

These bullet points are meant to be a guide or to inspire your own ideas for your letters. Use two or three of these points to support your concerns.

The entire park including the State Natural Area and the lower Railroad Trail all have similar problems, but, at this time, we need to focus our efforts only on the birding and riparian areas above the lake.

The word Livestock is used in lieu of cattle, as horses have been noted in the area and we want to exclude the potential of mules, goats, and sheep.

- The safety of all visitors in the PLSP is of primary concern.
- The presence of livestock in the birding area and upper riparian area of PLSP is contrary to the idea of a park and they should be permanently removed.
- Ensuring secure and efficient fencing around the entire riparian area above Patagonia Lake is essential to the continued safety and a healthy habitat.
- Livestock degrade the esthetic quality of the Park and thereby its enjoyment.
- The presence of livestock contributes to habitat destruction with streambank breakdown and soil compaction which results in loss of plant species.
- Livestock in the Park causes a loss of new tree growth of multiple species thereby leaving only an old growth forest of cottonwood and willows. Cattle are eating the saplings.
- Livestock in the Park graze on and eliminate flowering native plants resulting in the lost of plants favored by hummingbirds and bee species.
- Livestock presence results in a loss of plants and native grasses because of soil compaction.
- With the loss of plant diversity there is also the loss of animal and insect species disrupting the entire food chain.
- Soil compaction by livestock leads to the proliferation of invasive plants species such as Bermuda grass and cockleburrs that compete with native plants.
- Livestock presence has resulted in erosion of the entire riparian area and consequently a more rapid silting of the lake and thereby shortening its useable life.
- Livestock have contributed to documented stream head cuts, channel deepening, and straightening of, and the lack of a meandering stream system.
- The birding and upper riparian areas of PLSP have never achieved their full environmental and recreational potential due to the damage caused by livestock.
- The PLSP is a unique cultural and recreational area and a focal point of Santa Cruz County that has yet to realize its potential.
- The Important Birding Area which encompasses Patagonia State Park and the Riparian Zones of Sonoita Creek above the Lake have experienced more than two decades of excessive and largely unmanaged livestock grazing.
- The heavily overgrazing of this segment of Sonoita Creek has negatively impacted bird diversity, distribution, and density.
- Long term overgrazing has resulted in extreme degradation of the riparian habitats, stream pollution, stream bank erosion, head cutting, and deepening and narrowing of the stream channel.
- More than 315 species of birds have been recorded in these Southern Arizona habitats including resident, migratory and visiting Mexican species.
- Birding in Southern Arizona is a powerful economic engine. Birding in the area around the town Patagonia is the largest tourist draw to the community.