

Results of 2020 Saguaro Census on Plot 9, Rincon Mountains

Salpointe High School, January 30th, 2020



This Census was part of the annual service day for Salpointe High School, and the students gave back to their community by collecting data that will benefit Saguaro National Park for decades to come. The Census was led by Next Gen intern Jesús Duenas, himself a Salpointe grad. It was a busy day for work at the park, as other Salpointe students helped pull buffelgrass and improve a trail. A big thanks to the school for their help!

The bad news about plot 9 is that the number of saguaros on it has steadily decreased since 2010. The good news is that over the long run, the number of saguaros on the plot greatly increased. In 1990, plot 9 had less than 60 saguaros; in 2020 it had nearly 160. We attribute the increase between 1990 to 2010 to a period when the climate was cooler and wetter, and a steady increase in the number of nurse trees after the park was established in the 1930s. These nurse trees protect saguaros from winter cold and summer heat. The more recent decline is probably due to a return of drought conditions since the mid-1990s that have hit the flatter areas of the Rincon Mountains particularly hard, as well as the death of some large individuals due to a severe freeze in 2011.

Saguaro Plot #9

