

Why Cows?

You may see livestock grazing the hills and valleys as you enjoy this beautiful park. Why are they here?

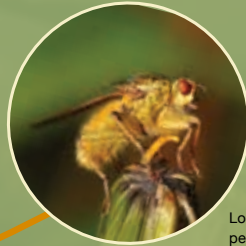
Well-managed grazing reduces the risk of fire and gives native grasses and wildflowers access to sunlight. A cow almost eats its weight in plants every month. Collectively, cattle maintain an open grassland habitat.

Many native species benefit. Western fence lizards and California ground squirrels thrive in grazed grasslands. Red-legged frogs and tiger salamanders find critical breeding habitat in stock ponds.

There may be trade-offs: large cows on the trail may be unnerving, and the byproducts of so much eating can create an obstacle course for hikers. Yet, we need the services that these livestock provide. Who else is going to mow all that grass?



The western fence lizard is a major host for larval ticks, its immune system cleanses ticks of the spirochetes that cause Lyme disease.



Look for male golden dung flies perched on fresh splat, waiting for females to arrive. Many other insect species exploit this rich resource also.



The California ground squirrel's extensive burrow system provides habitat for frogs, salamanders, burrowing owls, and badgers.

