

2003 Silversword update

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2003 was yet another year of negative growth, with a death without flowering rate of 7.77%, leaving 190 swords alive in the plots, the lowest number on record to date, presumably the result of a decade of drought. Pre 2000 there was significant death in the 5-20 cm size class, but most of the death since 2000 seems to be in the <5 cm size class, with very little death without flowering for swords >5 cm, though some have died without flowering, usually after successive years of shrinking in size. There was some recruitment in the plots this year, with 2 new seedlings. There was also 3 more seedlings from a 2001 flowering sword, but they were just outside the plot. The trend in the plots seemed to also be occurring outside the plots, with similar shrinking / dying trends and low levels of recruitment all around the crater. So, the death trend continues, with low levels of recruitment, yet the large swords seem to still be holding their ground, at least for now. Guess all we can do is pray for rain and go back next year to see how the silverswords are fairing in 2004.

Attached (.pdf) are updated graphs and tables that may be helpful in visualizing the current trends in the silversword plots.