

City may ban drones in park

8/19 **BY EMILY MIBACH**
Daily Post Staff Writer

The growing popularity of drones and other radio-controlled miniature aircraft is driving visitors to Menlo Park's Bayfront Park crazy, and City Council on Tuesday will consider banning them.

Parkgoers say the small planes are causing a lot of noise, they're marring the views and pose a danger to wildlife.

"According to a plaque at Bedwell, the Park is intended for '... passive recreation ...' and '... just plain enjoyment of the silence, the fresh breeze, and the view.' That's impossible when

drones are in the air," Peter Hart said in an email to city council.

Some of the people who emailed council said they're worried about the birds.

"I and the wildlife would very much appreciate your prohibiting drones in [See DRONES, page 50]

DRONES

Bayfront Park. The area that we humans supposedly set aside as a refuge for the exclusive use of wildlife to live, feed and raise their young, needs to be kept as THEIR living area, including especially the air space since that's the birds' main use area!" wrote Palo Alto resident Virginia Smedberg, who said she frequently visits Bayfront Park.

Assistant Community Services Director Derek

Schweigart said in a report that the city has been getting complaints about the miniature aircraft since 2013. He put together a 44-page report on the issue, giving a list of "pros" and "cons" for allowing the tiny planes to use the park on the edge of the Bay.

One "pro" was that the pilots are generally able to regulate themselves and are willing to work with the city to set up education programs for other pilots.

Fans of RC aircraft and drones argue that they have the same right to fly their planes as people who fly kites or ride their bikes in the park.

The question of whether to ban RC aircraft and drones in the park landed in the council's lap after the city's Parks and Recreation Commission wrestled with the subject for several months and wasn't able to make a recommendation. City Manager Alex McIntyre, in a report to council, is recommending a ban of unmanned aircraft. His report said there has been an increase in the number of such planes in the park, and things will only get worse without a ban.