



San Francisco Wildlife



Animals by the Bay

San Francisco is known for landmarks like the Golden Gate Bridge, Coit Tower, and Alcatraz. Few people realize however, that the San Francisco Bay Area is home to many different animal species.



Animals like the **Salt Marsh Harvest Mouse**, the **California Clapper Rail** and the **San Francisco Garter Snake** are rare animals that can be found living in the San Francisco Bay Area. For a variety of reasons, these animals are all **threatened** or **endangered species**. That means they could be, or are, in danger of becoming **extinct**. When an animal becomes extinct, it disappears forever like the dinosaurs and will never be born again. If we want to protect these animals from disappearing forever, we need to protect their natural **habitat** or home. By protecting nature in the San Francisco Bay Area, we can help save these animals!

The Salt Marsh Harvest Mouse



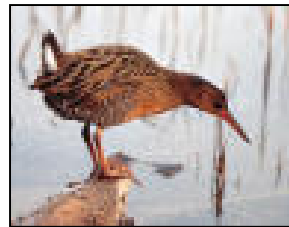
What animal is one of the few mammals on earth that can drink salt water? The Salt Marsh Harvest Mouse, of course! This tiny

rodent or mouse lives in the salt marshes around the southern end of the San Francisco Bay. It feeds on the pickleweed plant and is able to drink salt water. The Salt Marsh Harvest Mouse is sometimes known as the “Red Bellied Harvest Mouse,”

because its belly is the color of cinnamon. This mouse is a very good swimmer!

The Salt Marsh Harvest Mouse is endangered with extinction because of **development** that is happening in the area where it lives. Roads, houses and other buildings are being built near the salt marshes. This is destroying the pickleweed plant that the mouse needs to eat and, it’s also ruining the marsh where the mouse needs to live.

California Clapper Rail



The California Clapper Rail is an endangered bird that also lives in the salt marshes of San Francisco Bay. It is a secretive bird that

prefers to run and walk rather than fly. It is also a good swimmer, but will only swim when necessary. Clapper Rails look a bit like hens and are most active in the early morning and late evening. Both the male and female Clapper Rail **incubate** or sit on their eggs, and raise their young. The California Clapper Rail is endangered with extinction for several reasons. The main reason is because the salt marshes where they live are being paved over and destroyed for housing, shopping, and industry development. Another reason is because native animals like hawks and non-native animals like the red fox are eating the Clapper Rail and their eggs. The Clapper Rail is also endangered with extinction because **toxic** or poisonous materials like mercury are polluting the bay. When birds are poisoned by mercury, their eggs often won’t hatch.

Western Snowy Plover



The Western Snowy Plover is a threatened shorebird that can be found at different beaches including San

Francisco's Ocean Beach. This small bird builds its nest right on the sand and eats insects and other **invertebrates**. Hours after hatching, Snowy Plover chicks leave the nest to search for food. Adult Snowy Plovers do not feed their chicks, but lead them to areas where they can find food themselves. The chicks are not able to fly until they are about one month old. One way that the adult Snowy Plover protects its eggs and baby chicks is to pretend it has a broken wing. This lures **predators**, like crows, away from their nest. A predator is an animal that hunts other animals for food.

Because the Snowy Plover lives right on the sandy beach, people, dogs, vehicles, and other activities are destroying the delicate nests and habitat that the Snowy Plover needs to survive. This is threatening the Western Snowy Plover with extinction. The City of San Francisco is trying to protect the Snowy Plover by setting aside wildlife protection areas at Ocean Beach.

Bay Checkerspot Butterfly



The Bay Checkerspot Butterfly is a threatened insect of the Bay Area that used to live on Twin Peaks in San Francisco.

This beautiful butterfly has several rows of colorful orange, red, and black spots upon its wings. The Bay Checkerspot feeds on local, **native** plants like California plantain and purple owl's clover. It depends on these plants for survival. The reason the Bay Checkerspot Butterfly can no longer be found on Twin Peaks is because the roads,

homes and buildings that were built there destroyed its natural habitat. Other things that are threatening this butterfly include **non-native** plants that grow and crowd out the native plants the butterfly depends on for food.

San Francisco Garter Snake



Called one of the "most beautiful serpents in North America," the San Francisco Garter Snake is an endangered species

that can live to be ten years old. This colorful snake has stripes that are red, yellow, black, and greenish-blue. The San Francisco Garter Snake likes to eat frogs, fish, salamanders, slugs, birds, small mammals and earthworms, and prefers to live near water like marshes and ponds. It is a very good swimmer and will dive into the water when frightened.

Natural predators of the San Francisco garter snake include the red-tailed hawk, great blue heron, and common king snake. Other predators include non-native species like cats. The San Francisco Garter Snake is endangered with extinction for the same reason as many other endangered species; it is losing its habitat. This snake is also being taken illegally by people that like to collect different snakes and snake skins.

What can we do to help?



By protecting nature in San Francisco and the Bay Area, we can help save these animals from extinction. You can

work with local groups to restore native habitats like marshes and creeks. You can learn about other ways to protect our environment by visiting: SFEnvironment.org