



# San Francisco Wildlife



## Animals by the Bay

San Francisco is known for landmarks like the Golden Gate Bridge, Coit Tower,

Alcatraz and

Chinatown. Few people realize

however, that San Francisco—and areas around the city—are 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 homes.

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 picklebush

plant and is able to drink and survive on salt

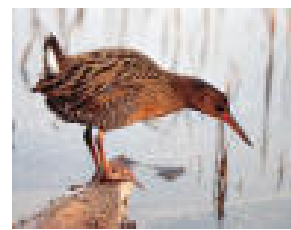
water. The Salt Marsh Harvest Mouse is

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 developed or built near the salt marshes. This is destroying the picklebush 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 development is

paving over, or otherwise destroying the salt

marshes where they live. 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.

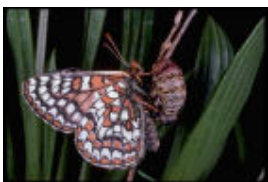
## Western Snowy Plover



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 Plovers protect their eggs and baby chicks is to pretend they have a broken wing. This lures **predators** 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 on Twin Peaks 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, common king snake, and the long-tailed weasel. 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 the environment in San Francisco and around the Bay Area, we can help save these animals from

extinction. You can work with local groups that help restore native habitats like marshes and creeks, and you can learn about other ways to protect our environment by visiting: [www.sfenvironment.com](http://www.sfenvironment.com)