



San Francisco's Endangered 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 city of San Francisco is home to many different animal species. Animals like the **Red-Legged Frog**, 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 San Francisco, we can help save these animals!

The Red Legged Frog

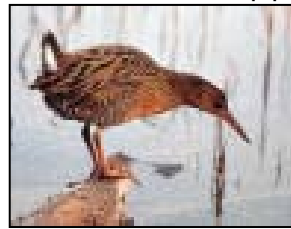


Red-legged frogs are the largest native frogs in California. The Celebrated Jumping Frog of Calaveras County, a short story by

Mark Twain, was about a California red-legged frog. The story took place in the Sierra Nevada foothills, which is famous for the California Gold Rush. In fact, hungry gold miners harvested and ate the red-legged frogs! Like other amphibians, the red-

legged frog lives in moist places like ponds, streams and wetlands. Since many of these habitats have been **developed** or built over, the frogs are rare now. That is why they are protected by the **Endangered Species Act** which is a national law designed to protect animals in danger of extinction. Red-legged frogs live in a couple of places in San Francisco, and may be **reintroduced**, or returned to Mountain Lake in the Presidio where they used to live. The red-legged frog is a favorite food of the San Francisco Garter Snake.

California Clapper Rail



The California Clapper Rail is an endangered bird that lives in the salt marshes of San Francisco Bay, including Heron's Head

Park in Bayview. 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 chemicals 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 National Park Service protects the Snowy Plover at wildlife protection areas at Ocean Beach and Crissy Field.

Mission Blue Butterfly



The endangered Mission Blue butterfly flies on Twin Peaks in the heart of San

Francisco. It also flies in the Headlands north of the Golden Gate Bridge, and in the windy hills near the San Francisco Airport. The Mission Blue lays

her eggs on lupine—a beautiful purple wildflower—and its whole life-cycle, from larva to caterpillar to chrysalis to butterfly occurs around the lupine plants. When the butterfly is in the caterpillar phase, it secretes a sugary substance that ants like to eat. The ants then protect the caterpillars from predators. City staff and volunteers protect the butterfly habitat on Twin Peaks by pulling up harmful invasive weeds that crowd out the lupine.

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, we can help save these animals! Work with local groups to restore native habitats like marshes & creeks. Learn more:

SFEnvironment.org/Biodiversity