



Wetlands are among the most productive habitats on earth. They provide essential food, shelter, nursery and breeding grounds for birds, fish, invertebrates and other wildlife. Wetlands are habitat for endangered species and basins for flood control. They improve water quality, trapping sediments and other water pollutants and they are a pleasant refuge for all visitors. Wetlands are invaluable.

As a result of the destruction and degradation of their wetland habitat, the populations of two Baylands residents, the California Clapper Rail and the Salt Marsh Harvest Mouse have seriously declined and are listed as endangered species.

Rarely observed, the Salt Marsh Harvest Mouse is nocturnal (active at night) and dines on seeds and other vegetation mostly within the Pickleweed plant community. Also elusive, the California Clapper Rail usually remains within the cover of the marsh grasses feeding on small critters including marine worms, snails and insects.



A Glimpse into the Past

Occupying thousands of acres of sloughs, salt marshes, mudflats and shallow open bay, the baylands spanned beyond the present day Bayshore freeway when the first Europeans arrived on the Peninsula in 1769. The newcomers found vast expanses of land with enormous bird flocks and plenitudes of fish and game.

For thousands of years the area had been inhabited by tribes of native people now collectively called the Ohlone. These people managed the land providing a sustainable yield of resources for many generations.

As settlers arrived, many of the wetlands around San Francisco Bay were diked for salt production or filled for agriculture and grazing. In the 1900s sprawling urban development encroached on much of the remaining tidal lands and today only 5 percent of the wetlands remain.

From the 1930s through the 1950s, several projects were constructed on the Baylands including an airport, sewage treatment plant, yacht harbor, golf course and sanitary landfill. Then, in 1965, through the tireless work of conservationists and citizens, the Baylands was set aside as a nature preserve.



SALT MARSH HARVEST MOUSE
Reithrodontomys raviventris



CALIFORNIA CLAPPER RAIL
Rallus longirostris obsoletus