San Francisco's Natural Communities of Today

Imagine the city from the sky, patterned upon the ancient wild landscapes, leaving scattered ecological islands of San Francisco's natural world. In spite of the transformation and fragmentation of this original wildlands, a remarkable diversity of birds, reptiles, amphibians, butterflies, and mammals endure in natural habitats or in or near your neighborhood.

Enduring Jewels of SF’s Ancient Wildlands

Coastal Scrub

“Coastal Scrub” is a general term for areas of little to no vegetative growth where seasonal droughts and low temperatures limit plant growth. This type of vegetation is found along the Pacific Coast and can be characterized by hardy shrubs such as manzanita and chaparral. The coastal scrub ecosystem supports a variety of wildlife, including birds, mammals, and insects. It is important to protect these areas to maintain their natural beauty and ecological value.

Wetlands

Wetlands are ecosystems that develop in areas where water accumulates. They are vital for the health of many species, including waterfowl, wading birds, and fish. Wetlands are also important for their ability to filter pollutants and contribute to the water cycle.

Riparian/Creek

Riparian areas are the bands of land along the edges of streams and rivers. These areas are important for the health of aquatic ecosystems and provide a habitat for a variety of wildlife. Riparian ecosystems are also important for their ability to regulate the flow of water and reduce flooding.

Grasslands

Grasslands are ecosystems that are dominated by grasses. They are found in many parts of the world and support a variety of wildlife, including birds, butterflies, and mammals. Grasslands are also important for their role in the carbon cycle and their ability to store carbon.

Think Globally:

San Francisco’s Nature is Interconnected

San Francisco is located at the north end of the Pacific Flyway, a strategic migration route for many species of birds. The city’s diverse habitats provide a haven for a wide variety of wildlife, including birds, mammals, and reptiles. The city’s natural areas are also important for their ability to filter pollutants and contribute to the water cycle.

Endangered Species: Wildlife on the Brink

Endangered species are those that are at risk of extinction due to habitat loss, climate change, and other threats. San Francisco is home to a number of endangered species, including the red-legged frog, the western pond turtle, and the threatened bald eagle. It is important to take steps to protect these species and their habitats.

San Francisco’s Rare and Endangered Plants

San Francisco is home to a number of rare and endangered plant species, including the red-tailed hawk and the western pond turtle. These species are at risk due to habitat loss and other threats. It is important to take steps to protect these species and their habitats.

Is there a place for nature in the City of San Francisco?

Yes, the city is home to a number of natural areas and wildlife habitats. The city has a number of parks and natural areas, including the Golden Gate Park and the Presidio, where wildlife can thrive. The city also has a number of natural habitats, including wetlands, dunes, and riparian areas, where wildlife can find food and shelter.

Volunteer!

Volunteering is an important way to protect and restore nature in the city. The city has a number of volunteer opportunities, including planting young plants in restoration sites, monitoring the results of restoration efforts, and helping to protect and restore natural habitats.

Two Ways to Help Protect and Restore Nature in the City

1. Hands-on Habitat Restoration in the City

You can help restore habitat in the city by volunteering for hands-on habitat restoration projects. These projects can help to create a more diverse and healthy ecosystem, providing a home for a variety of wildlife.

2. Invite Wildlife into Your Backyard

You can help restore habitat at home by creating a habitat for wildlife in your own backyard. This can help to support a variety of wildlife, including birds, butterflies, and mammals.

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When we see land as a community to which we belong, we may begin to use it with love and respect.

— Aldo Leopold (1886-1948)