

SHORELINE

SPECIES: WESTERN SNOWY PLOVER & SALT MARSH HARVEST MOUSE



WESTERN SNOWY PLOVER & SALT MARSH HARVEST MOUSE – *Charadrius alexandrinus nivosus* & *Reithrodontomys raviventris*

Let's play in the surf!

Western Snowy Plovers (*Charadrius alexandrinus nivosus*) scuttle along the water's edge, and in winter months, fly back and forth between Crissy Field and Ocean Beach. Snowy Plovers are here only during the winter to rest and increase their fat reserves, feeding on sandflies and other marine invertebrates, before moving on to safe nesting locations. They don't nest here in San Francisco, as they prefer to nest on quiet Pacific Coast beaches and mudflats, where the ocean meets fresh water. The nests are built out in the open with 3 to 5 camouflaged eggs inside. Nests are often lined with what they find on the beach. They have been nesting on Pacific Coast beaches for thousands of years and were listed with the federal government as a threatened species in 1993.

Hide and squeak!

Saltmarsh Harvest Mice (*Reithrodontomys raviventris*) are hard to find. They are the smallest rodents in the US, and aren't found anywhere else in the world but the Bay Area! They are nocturnal and especially active on moonlit nights, when their daytime predators are asleep. Their habitat is a dense thicket of saltmarsh herbs, grasses and reeds. They are resourceful, using the pathways of other rodents to navigate saltmarsh vegetation. They are also agile swimmers and adept climbers, and can even drink and survive purely on salt water. They eat pickleweed, glasswort, seeds, grasses, and a few insects. In winter, the mice may construct their nests in burrows and small crevices to keep them dry.

RESIDENT OR MIGRATORY

Migratory & Resident

KEY HABITAT FEATURES

Found on barren or sparsely vegetated sand beaches along the coast, and on alkaline flats and river bars farther inland. They winter primarily in coastal areas on beaches and tidal flats. Harvest Mice are heavily dependent on thick cover of plants that thrive in salt water, including salt marsh herbs, grasses and reeds.

DIET

Snowy Plovers eat insects and other invertebrates. Harvest Mice diet is composed of pickleweed and glasswort, seeds, grasses, and some insects.

ASSOCIATED PLANTS & ANIMALS

Coast Strawberry – *Fragaria chiloensis* / Pickleweed – *Sarcocornia pacifica*, Pink sand-verbena – *Abronia umbellata* / Saltgrass – *Distichlis spicata*, Mock Heather – *Ericameria ericoides* / Alkali-heath – *Frankenia salina*, Beach Evening Primrose – *Camissonia cheiranthifolia* / NA

NESTING INFORMATION

Snowy Plovers build a natural or scraped depression on dry ground usually lined with pebbles, shell fragments, fish bones, mud chips, vegetation fragments, or invertebrate skeletons. Breeds on sandy coasts and brackish inland lakes, uncommon on fresh water, and lay three to five eggs.

Harvest Mice build spherical nests of grass about 6–7" in diameter. The nests are usually built above ground in grass, low shrubs, or small trees. Some winter nests are constructed in burrows and small crevices. They do not have a high reproductive cycle as other species of mice would. They usually have around 4 offspring per litter and usually only once a year.

ADDITIONAL HABITAT PLANTS

Pink sand-verbena, Yellow sand-verbena, Beach saltbush and Beach evening primrose.

ROUTE HIGHLIGHTS

- » Candlestick Point State Recreation Area, India Basin Shoreline Park, Heron's Head Park, Warm Water Cove Park, Bay Front Park, Mission Bay Commons Park, China Basin Park, Giants Pomendade, South Beach Park, Rincon Park, Ferry Plaza, Sue Bierman Park, Levi's Plaza.

