

WINTER 2008

# AT THE PRESIDIO

A SEASONAL GUIDE TO THE PARK



*Historic Presidio Homes  
Rehabilitated (story on p. 2)*



# Nature Watch: reports from the field

## 2008 is a BIG YEAR in the Parks!

### Join a Race to See and Save the Park's Endangered Species



The Golden Gate National Parks is home to nearly three dozen endangered species, more than any other national park in continental North America - more than Yosemite, Yellowstone, Kings Canyon, and Sequoia National Parks combined.

To spread the word about the incredible diversity in our backyard and the importance of caring for our rarest plants and animals, Bay Area non-profits have created the BIG YEAR 2008 Endangered Species campaign. Big Year is a race against time to see each of the 33 endangered and threatened species found in the parks, while taking 33 conservation actions that will help prevent these species from going extinct. Anyone can participate in this competitive event. The person who sees and helps the most species between January 1, 2008 and December 31, 2008, will win the Big Year.



Explorers can report their sightings on the Big Year website and blog about exciting discoveries. Big Year also includes guided trips and walks, presentations, volunteer days, and even happy hours.

Big Year is sponsored by the Sierra Club, the SF Zoo, Nature in the City, and the Center for Biological Diversity.

**Download your checklist, wildlife viewing principles, calendar, and more: [www.ggnrbigyear.org](http://www.ggnrbigyear.org).**



*Photos from top left: Presidio (Raven's) Manzanita *Arctostaphylos hookeri* ssp. *Ravenii*; Birdwatchers, Western Snowy Plover *Charadrius alexandrius nivosus* (Crissy Field beaches in summer, fall and winter); Presidio Clarkia *Clarkia franciscana* (blooms April-July in Inspiration Point's grasslands); San Francisco Lessingia *Lessingia germanorum* (blooms July-November in Lobos Creek Valley)*





## In the BIG YEAR Spotlight

### Brown Pelican: An Endangered Species Act Success Story

A squadron of Brown Pelicans flying high over the bay in V-formation or diving for fish offshore is a thrilling sight. While its short legs, webbed feet, and incredibly long beak (at 18 inches its the longest beak of any bird) make it look ungainly on land, the Brown Pelican's seven-foot wingspan allows it to navigate the waters off the west coast of North America, from the Gulf of Mexico to British Columbia, with grace, agility, and speed. Birds returning to their feeding grounds in the north from their rookeries to the south like to roost in the Presidio.

One of two species of pelican found in North America (the other being the American White), the Brown Pelican appears to be the next big success story for the Endangered Species Act. Brown Pelicans on the Atlantic coast have already been removed from the endangered species list.

Forty years ago, these birds flew perilously close to extinction. Their numbers had been declining due to predation, over-fishing, the loss of habitat, and it was later learned, pesticides in agricultural runoff. By 1969, barely 1,100 nesting pairs were reported on Anacapa Island, an important rookery off the coast of Southern California. Typically, those birds would have produced approximately 360 fledglings, but that year, there were a mere handful. The following year, the situation was even worse: half as many nesting pairs, and just one fledgling.

This catastrophe was traced to an unexpected source—a Southern California firm was discharging the pesticide DDT directly into the sea. There, DDT levels had built up in the tissue of fish which were then poisoning the pelicans, which feed

on the sardines, anchovies, and mackerel they scoop up in their enormous pouches when they plunge-dive. The poison impaired the birds' ability to form calcium, so their eggshells became too brittle to support their weight. Once the poisoning stopped, the pelicans began to recover. There were approximately 4,000 nesting pairs on Anacapa Island in 1997.

Today, Brown Pelicans are ubiquitous along our coastline, and can be seen regularly from the shorelines at Baker Beach and Crissy Field.

~excerpted from  
[www.ggnrbigyear.org](http://www.ggnrbigyear.org)

