

## Contest to find rare species in Marin, Bay Area kicks off

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Open your eyes, it's back.

A contest to encourage more awareness of rare natural resources in Marin and other areas of the Golden Gate National Recreation Area and surrounding parks kicked off this weekend.

This is the second run of the contest; the first was in 2008 when more than 250 people participated for prize money.

Dubbed the Endangered Species Big Year, the yearlong event aims to connect visitors with endangered plant and animal species found in the Golden Gate National Recreation Area, Angel Island, Muir Woods and other parks stretching from coastal Marin through San Francisco and San Mateo County.

"It's to get people to reflect on their relationship with the environment and to get an understanding of species that have been pushed to the brink," said Brent Plater, director of the contest.

Participants can log on to the Big Year Web site - [www.ggnrbigyear.org](http://www.ggnrbigyear.org) - which features a page for 36 plants and animal species detailing their natural history, threats and likely observation locations.

In order to check a species off the list, participants must observe it alive and complete a specific conservation action item for that species. The contest is based on the honor system, although rare sightings will be verified.

Among the endangered species in Marin: Steller sea lion, humpback whale, California red-legged frog, salt marsh harvest mouse, western snowy plover, northern spotted owl, marbled murrelet, brown pelican, California clapper rail, tidewater goby, coho salmon, steelhead trout, chinook salmon, mission blue butterfly, California freshwater shrimp, Tiburon paintbrush and Marin dwarf-flax. Of the Golden Gate National Recreation Area's 80,400 acres, 44,000 are in Marin.

The Golden Gate National Recreation Area contains more endangered species than any other unit of the National Park Service in continental North America including Yosemite, Yellowstone, Kings Canyon, and Sequoia national parks combined.

Steve Price of San Rafael was a co-winner in 2008 and is participating again.

"It's really enjoyable and that it happens to be a competition is doubly fun," said Price, who won \$1,250 the first time around and even donned a dive suit to find a rare shrimp. "I'm going for it again."

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