

Monterey Bay Birding Festival 2019

Field Trip Leaders - Bios

RJ ADAMS

A native Californian, RJ has lived and birded throughout the state for nearly 30 years. He has an MS in biology from the University of Utah where he focused on the co-evolutionary history of birds and their ectoparasites. He is also the author of *A Field Guide to the Spiders of California and the Pacific Coast States*, and will soon begin working on an inventory of the spiders of Pinnacles National Park. R.J. works as a special education teacher and greatly enjoys leading field trips for beginning birders.

KUMARAN ARUL

Kumaran has led trips for the Monterey Bay Birding Festival since its beginning and is a passionate observer of birds in the Monterey Bay area. He has conducted breeding bird surveys in the Santa Cruz Mountains, taught classes on birding-by-ear, and led regular trips for local bird groups. He enjoys sea watching on the rich coastal waters of the Monterey Bay, ruminating on the beauties of bird songs, and birding foreign lands with his wife and three children. When not birding, he teaches music at Stanford University.

BIRD SCHOOL PROJECT

The Bird School Project is a local outdoor education organization that teaches the basics in birding. Each year, The Bird School Project brings birding to schoolyards and communities throughout the Monterey Bay region to help people grow their connection with the environment by making sense of all those little movements and “Chirps” from above. Birding is a life long journey, and The Bird School Project can help start the process.

PHIL BROWN

Phil turned a lifelong interest in birds into an obsession in 2004 when he joined the Santa Cruz Bird Club. He has led birding trips for the Santa Cruz Bird Club since 2006, coordinated field trip program from 2008 to 2014, and has served as club president. He participates in the bluebird birdbox program at Quail Hollow Ranch County Park, leads a section in the Santa Cruz and Moss Landing Christmas Bird Counts, and surveys bird populations for the Watsonville Wetlands Watch.

JIM BURCIO

Jim Burcio is a master carver and has competed nationally in wildfowl carving shows. For the past twenty-five years, Jim has annually taught carving seminars, and judged at the Pacific Flyway Decoy Association's Wildfowl Art Festival in Sacramento. He has also competed and judged at the Ward World Championship in Ocean City, Maryland. In addition to his carving accomplishments, Jim has written several articles for the California Waterfowl Magazine regarding how to carve and paint decoys. Jim has been involved in the leadership of the Pacific Flyway Decoy Association since 1983. He has served on the Board of Directors, held the office of Vice President, President, Secretary, and is currently the Vice President in charge of membership. In 2010 and 2012, Jim was selected by the Ward Foundation in Salisbury, Maryland to be an instructor in their National Endowment for the Arts Grant.

JEFF CAPLAN

Jeff weaves 30 years as a naturalist, stand-up comic and a teacher of communication skills, to cultivate a common language for connecting more deeply with nature and birds. He leads classes and walks for UC Santa Cruz, San Francisco Bay Bird Observatory, and Monterey Bay Audubon Society. Internationally, Jeff gives workshops and

keynotes in Malaysia and in the Amazon jungles of Ecuador. He combines story-telling, citizen science and strengthening observation skills to inspire connection and stewardship among his audiences.

RITA CARRATELLO

Rita considers Monterey County her specialty patch. She participated in the county's breeding bird atlas project, wrote species accounts, and designed the publication published in 1993. She was the voice for the Monterey rare bird alert before the automated BirdBox, and served on the Monterey Audubon Society's board of directors as the newsletter editor. She and her husband, Don Roberson, also travel the world in search of bird families, and enjoy giving multimedia presentations of these adventures. See more at montereybay.com/creagrus/trips.

HUGO CEJA

Hugo was first introduced to the world of birds during college. Since then his passion for birds has been the primary factor that determines his excursions. When he is not working with kids, he is working with the Black Oystercatchers along the southern end of Monterey Bay for Audubon California. He is "all about the outdoors" and has a strong appreciation for all biotic and abiotic things. Most of his birding is in Monterey County where he resides; however, he also enjoys birding in the Central Valley wetlands near where he grew up.

BRUCE ELLIOTT

Bruce Elliott is a retired senior Biologist Supervisor for the California Dept. of Fish and Wildlife. Bruce has conducted hundreds of natural history themed presentations at Cabrillo College over the last 30 years.

DAVE FELIZ

Dave is the manager of the Elkhorn Slough Reserve. He has been managing public lands for the California Department of Fish and Wildlife since 1988. Originally from Southern California, he graduated from Humboldt State University with a Bachelor of Science degree in Wildlife Management. Professionally, he has set up and managed a variety of active working partnerships to further the management and public use of State Wildlife Areas and Ecological Reserves. He has an avid interest in birding, finding reptiles and amphibians, and outdoor nature photography.

ERIC FEUSS

Eric has been actively birding since he was 16; he is now an empty nester. From 1992 to 1999, he worked for the Institute of Bird Populations' (IBP) MAPS Program, a long-term productivity and survivorship monitoring study. As a field biologist for the IBP, he worked in Oregon, Kansas, Missouri, and Yosemite National Park. He has birded in almost every part of the United States and, with the exception of his years with IBP, has led regular field trips for the Santa Cruz Bird Club since 1987. Because of his friendly, informative leading style, he is a much sought-after leader.

ZEKA GLUCS

Zeka was born and raised in Santa Cruz County and has been all about birds since a fateful field quarter in Costa Rica in 2008. She has studied birds across California, monitoring and banding an array of bird species from the coastline to the eastern side of the Sierra Nevada. She now leads the Santa Cruz Predatory Bird Research Group for UCSC and studies Peregrine Falcons breeding in the San Francisco and Monterey Bays. While she maintains a strong preference for birds of prey she acknowledges that other species have a lot going for them too, and not just as regular meals for Cooper's Hawks.

BILL HILL

Bill is a lifetime resident of Carmel-by-the-Sea, California. Since early childhood he has frequented the Carmel River area for fishing, birding, photographing, or just exploring. First introduced to birding in the sixth grade, he has seriously birded Monterey County for 20 years. Few spend more time birding the Carmel River mouth and

the surrounding area. He is a wealth of information on the area and all of its avian inhabitants. A real “people person,” birders always have fun when they go into the field with Bill.

ROBERT HORN

Robert Horn has been an active member of the Monterey Audubon Society (MAS) for over 40 years. For the last 23 years he has served on the MAS board of directors, first as the field trip chairperson where he coordinated the monthly field trips and special events, and currently as the treasurer of the organization. Robert has led many field trips for the local chapter and especially enjoys introducing new birders to the joys of birding in our captivating area and in providing tips and techniques for using optical equipment and field guides to enhance the experience.

BENNY JACOBS-SCHWARTZ

Benny is a professional wildlife photographer and bird guide. He is a U.C. Santa Cruz graduate and author of a “Field Guide to Birds of U.C. Santa Cruz”. Jacobs-Schwartz owns and operates his own international bird guiding and lifestyle brand based in Los Angeles called BIRDS by BIJS. With an extensive background in avian biology, wildlife guiding and leading bird trips locally and internationally, Benny will bring his enthusiasm and skillset to provide high-quality birding field trips. His most recent professional guiding experiences have brought him to Alaska, Ecuador and Trinidad and Tobago! We’re excited to have him join us this fall!

BROOKE KEENEY

Brooke Keeney is the managing editor for the [Birds of North America Online](#), and [Neotropical Birds](#), websites at the Cornell Lab of Ornithology. A lifelong naturalist, Brooke has been interested in birds since childhood -but in all honesty- her enthusiasm extends to most anything with a backbone (and many things without!). She has a Ph.D. in evolutionary biology, and has worked in museums and on various lab and field-based projects on everything from hummingbird neuroanatomy to experimental evolution in mice. Her favorite bird is the Northern Saw-Whet Owl!

SERAPHINA LANDGREBE

Seraphina is a master photographer and photographic craftsman. She holds a Master of Arts degree in photography from San Francisco State University and a Bachelor of Arts degree in Psychology from the University of California. She has devoted her photography to the art of bird photography capturing moments in time of the life of birds. She is an internationally acclaimed photographer, portrait artist, and educator who has taught photography worldwide. She was awarded “Photographer of the Year” for nine consecutive years by the Professional Photographers of the Monterey Bay area and has been honored with three Fuji Masterpiece Awards. She has studied with Ansel Adams, Imogen Cunningham, and Bret Weston.

JOHN MUIR LAWS

Naturalist, educator and artist John (Jack) Muir Laws is in love with the natural world and has lived his life sharing this passion with others. He is trained as a wildlife biologist and is a Research Associate of the California Academy of Sciences. In 2009, he received the Terwilliger Environmental Award for outstanding service in Environmental Education. He is a 2010 Together Green Conservation Leadership Fellow with the National Audubon Society. He was the 2011 artist for International Migratory Bird Day. Laws has written and illustrated books about art and natural history including *The Laws Guide to Nature Drawing and Journaling* (2016), *The Laws Guide to Drawing Birds* (2012), *Sierra Birds: a Hiker’s Guide* (2004), *The Laws Guide to the Sierra Nevada* (2007), and *The Laws Pocket Guide Set to the San Francisco Bay Area* (2009). He is a regular contributor to Bay Nature Magazine with his “Naturalists Notebook” column. He is the founder and host of the Bay Area Nature Journal Club, monthly free nature sketching workshops, field trips and events, connecting people with nature through art.

LISA LARSON

Lisa has been Editor for the Santa Cruz Bird Club since 2014. First a lover of all things nature, love ignited into an obsession for birding when she received her first pair of binoculars one year for Christmas. Upon viewing an Acorn Woodpecker, she was amazed at the incredible detail the powerful seeing device afforded. The second bird she saw through her bins was a Marbled Murrelet flying into a tall California Redwood! She spends as much time as she can birding throughout Santa Cruz, Monterey, and San Benito Counties. Steve Gerow inspired her to learn to bird by ear, an essential birding skill that she greatly admired in him and will refine in her lifetime. Lisa is never bored thanks to our feathered friends!

EARL LEBOW

Earl has been birding and leading bird trips on the Central Coast of California since he moved here from the East Coast in 1986. Though he had been birding for many years in and around NYC, his skill and passion for birding increased exponentially when he moved to California. He has birded extensively throughout the United States, Central America, Africa, and Europe. He has led trips for the Santa Cruz Bird Club for many years and enjoys leading trips locally and sharing his love of birds and birding with others.

NICHOLAS LEVENDOSKY

Nicholas was first introduced to the idea of birding while taking a natural history and ecology course at Prescott College in 2001. Although he found this idea rather silly at first, the puzzle and game of identifying birds quickly piqued his interest and he was hooked. From that point on he has worked to transform from a casual birder to an intentional observer. He most appreciates the relationship between species and habitat—believing birding lends itself to building a sense of place and physical community around one's home. He has led field trips for the Santa Cruz Bird Club over the past six years and has been the Field Trip Director since 2014.

JAN LOOMIS

Jan loves to travel and the more remote and exotic, the better! Her formal training/ background has been a thirty-five-year career in emergency medicine (RN and paramedic), but her true love has always been marine biology - in particular shore and seabirds. She currently works in the field of travel medicine - keeping everyday travelers (including birders!), as well as members of the Department of Defense, foreign governments and Homeland Security from contracting diseases while away on foreign assignments. In 1999, she took a leave from her work to live aboard and sail from San Francisco to Mexico for three years. In 2002 she published the handbook for mariners, *The Healthy Cruiser's Handbook: Prevention and Treatment Medical Resource Guide*. Locally, Jan is involved with two citizen-science projects that give ample opportunities for enjoying the Monterey Bay's amazing wildlife while contributing to local conservation efforts. She is working on her third year with both the Central Coast Black Oystercatcher Monitoring Project and as a volunteer naturalist for the Monterey Bay National Marine Sanctuary (NOAA).

BRUCE LYON

Bruce Lyon is a professor of Evolutionary Ecology at the University of California, Santa Cruz. His research focuses on the evolution of reproductive strategies and mating behavior of birds. His long-term research on the adaptive basis of brood parasitism in American coots has sought to understand why parasitism within species evolves and how the behavior influences other aspects of social behavior. Bruce has also investigated the evolution of ornamental plumage signals in a variety of species, including lark buntings, lazuli buntings and the evolution of ornamental offspring plumage in the newly hatched chicks of American coots. Most recently, he has conducted a 15-year investigation into the winter social lives of migrant golden-crowned sparrows that spent their winters on the Arboretum of the University of California, Santa Cruz. Bruce is also a professional photographer and illustrates his presentations with photographs that highlight both the research and natural history aspects of the species he studies.

JEFF MANKER

Besides recently becoming the Board President of the Monterey Bay Birding Festival, Jeff is a self-described “Ornithangelist” who loves to welcome new birders to his favorite activity. During his 30 years of teaching science he created and taught the only year-long high school ornithology class in the state of California. In retirement he is also on the board of the Bird School Project, and serves on the Advisory Board of and writes curriculum for the Cornell Lab of Ornithology’s K-12 Education program.

MELINDA NAKAGAWA

Melinda is an accomplished naturalist, scientist, educator and artist whose mission is to reconnect people to nature. As a young adult, she was introduced to bird watching and it quickly grew into a passion. She worked as a marine naturalist for Oceanic Society, as a seabird researcher on the Farallon Islands, and studied sooty shearwaters for her graduate research at Moss Landing Marine Labs. Melinda leads seabird trainings for marine sanctuary volunteers and lifelong learners. She is a natural educator and particularly enjoys guiding new bird watchers. She leads individual and group bird walks and inspires creativity through nature art classes.

ALEX RINKERT

Alex Rinkert, a native of the Monterey Bay area, is an active member of the local birding scene. He recently finished a biology degree at UC Santa Cruz and now works as a biologist studying the region’s avifauna. He leads regular birding field trips on land and at sea, and is an avid contributor to eBird. While birds remain a focus, he has a great appreciation for all aspects of the natural world.

MARILYN ROSE

Marilyn Rose is co-owner of OutofThisWorldOptics.com, located in beautiful Mendocino, CA since 1988. Out of this World is the largest optics seller in northern and central California and specializes in helping customers choose the right binocular or spotting scope. Out of this World sells only good binoculars and none of the bad (and we know the difference)!!

STEVE ROVELL

Steve is a lifelong resident of California. He escaped the hectic life of Southern California to pursue his studies at Humboldt State University where he graduated with a degree in Natural Resources and a teaching credential. He moved to Monterey County in 1990 where he now teaches high school biology and earth science. His other hobbies include native plant gardening and dragonflies. Steve lives in Marina with his wife of 26 years and two sons, Julian (21) and Marco (15).

AMANDA PREECE

Amanda Preece has been birding the Monterey Peninsula for 8 years. Her interest in birds started with being an aviculturist, then wildlife rehabilitation, and now she is pursuing a graduate degree in environmental science while working for California State Parks at Asilomar State Beach and Conference Grounds in Pacific Grove, CA, restoring native habitat and leading bird walks. Her thesis is related to songbird use of nest boxes. She is also a Black Oystercatcher Project monitor and sits on the board of the Monterey Audubon Society. Her favorite thing about leading bird walks is getting someone who never really noticed birds to start noticing birds.

LISA SHERIDAN

Lisa has combined two long-time passions—wildlife conservation and photography—to create a strong voice for bird and habitat preservation in Santa Cruz County. As President of the Santa Cruz Bird Club, she has used her photographs to do what she loves best--tell a compelling story and promote open space conservation. She finds special joy in discovering unexpected magic through her lens, finding those moments to create colorfully composed images of birds in their landscape. Lisa’s photos have been on display throughout the County

including government buildings, Santa Cruz Visitor Bureau and for special use by the UCSC's Arboretum. She also participates in juried exhibits and has been a regular participant in Open Studio tours. Some of her images can be seen on her web site: lisasheridanphotography.com.

CHRIS SORIANO

Chris Soriano is a lifelong Naturalist with extensive experience birding throughout the Western United States. He has worked with nonprofit outdoor education providers and California State Parks leading interpretive nature hikes throughout Northern and Central California, from the Sierras to the sea. He is constantly distracted by birds and wildly enthusiastic to share the experience with others. Chris has a particular obsession with raptors and can frequently be seen dashing after them for a better view. Chris lives in the Santa Cruz Mountains and works at the Santa Cruz Museum of Natural History as the Education Coordinator and one of the Resident Bird Nerds on staff.

BRIAN SULLIVAN

Brian Sullivan has conducted fieldwork on birds throughout North America for the past 25 years. Birding travels, photography, and field projects have taken him to Central and South America, Australia, Antarctica, the Arctic, and across North America. He has written and consulted on various books including popular and scientific literature on North American birds. He is a co-author of several books including: *Peterson Guide to Bird Identification—In 12 Steps*; *Better Birding—Tips, Tools, and Concepts for the Field*; *Offshore Sea Life ID Guide: West Coast*; *Offshore Sea Life ID Guide: East Coast*; *The Crossley ID Guide: Raptors*; and the forthcoming *Princeton Guide to North American Birds*. He is co-creator of the groundbreaking [Raptor Id app for mobile devices](#). He is currently Digital Publications Lead at Information Science and a project leader for [eBird](#) at the Cornell Laboratory of Ornithology. He also served as photographic editor for the American Birding Association's journal *North American Birds* from 2005-2013.