

# DAVE GALVIN



## **What got you into birding?**

My third-grade teacher praised a robin I drew in art session, and taped it up on the classroom wall. I then drew a hummingbird, which also got posted. The rest is history, and a life-long hobby.

## **What can people expect from a bird outing with you?**

Focus on beginners, or at least that everyone regardless of skill level will enjoy encountering what birds we find. All levels welcome. No emphasis on counts. A key difference I have from many birders is that I focus on bird behaviors and life histories, rather than just on I.D. and checking them off on a list. I want to describe the breeding behavior of the Mallards we see, or why the Anna's Hummingbirds are doing their odd J-dives, or how the swallows we see in spring and summer migrate all the way to Central and South America for our winter. I don't like "birding by Merlin," where people keep their sound I.D. on in Merlin and record what the machine tells them is singing or calling nearby; I want them to experience these birds and their songs more directly, so that they might remember one or two for future reference instead of relying on the cool AI of Cornell. I encourage "bird watching" not just "birding." I'm all about encounters with birds, rather than racking up checklist counts.

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## **What values do you lead with?**

Inclusivity, openness, encouragement, awareness, caring, calmness, community, gratitude, kindness, learning, respect, trust.

## **How did you acquire your knowledge? Are you self-taught, trained in a school, had a mentor?**

I was a fortunate 10-year-old who found early mentors who took me literally under their wings. One was a music scholar who taught me how to listen to bird songs and catalogue them in my brain based on musical criteria. Another was a conservationist who taught me the value of protecting nature even as I was learning about nature. I was blessed. Much later, I helped to launch the Master Birder program at Seattle Audubon in the 1980s, and finally took advantage of this resource after I retired in 2016. The MB class reinforced my life-long experience with birds but brought it to a new level, focused on behaviors, life histories and conservation issues, which now inform my local leadership.

## **What is your personal approach/mindset toward birding?**

I think of myself as a bird-watcher, not a birder. I don't keep lists and don't chase rarities. I focus on local birds and try to pay attention to their behaviors and their life histories. I greatly enjoy showing non-birders what's happening in their backyards and neighborhoods, opening their eyes to the bird and greater natural world even found right here in the city.

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**Where do you personally see the intersectionality of birding and creating safe spaces for folks who have often been left out of the conversation before (BIPOC, neurodivergent, queer folks)?**

I love to introduce people new to birds to what is right around them. I'm totally open to other people who are different from me and my privileged experience, and hope I can instill some joy as well as curiosity about nature here in the city. You don't have to be a backpacker or go to a national park to experience nature — it's all around us every day wherever we live. I love introducing people of all backgrounds to this basic awareness.

**Do you have an area of expertise or focus that you prefer?**

While I'm a lifelong birder and a Master Birder, I prefer to focus on newbies, people who have shown some interest in birds but are total novices. My field trips and outings focus on beginning birders, while being compatible with folks who have more knowledge and experience, whom I bring into the group to assist those less knowledgeable. I write a quarterly column about birds for my neighborhood's community newsletter, and I'm always pleasantly surprised by how many people, non-birders, enjoy reading about our local birds.

**What was the best advice you got when starting out as a birder?**

Every bird is special. Pay attention to details. Observe. Take notes. You don't have to know every bird right away, it is better to observe field marks, sounds and behaviors, and then go home to try to figure out the I.D. But the I.D. is not so important as observing and appreciating what this bird is doing, where it's at, what is limiting it, how we might help to protect it's habitat.

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## **What is your favorite ecosystem to bird in?**

Urban. My neighborhood in Seattle. Also the Seattle Arboretum, Union Bay Natural Area and Discovery Park — oases within the mid-city urban environment.

## **Dare I ask, what your favorite bird is?!**

Belted Kingfisher. I live on a houseboat on Lake Union in Seattle, and hear their rattling call regularly as they cruise the shoreline looking for small fish. Kingfishers are birds with attitude. Feisty. I like that about them and hope I could grow a hairdo like they have, as well as their feisty approach to life.

