



## Mary Blake- Bird Bio

I started my life without realizing birds would be such a big part of it. Of course, I loved seeing and hearing them, but my focus was elsewhere. I majored in math and economics at UC Berkeley, then worked at FICO in San Rafael for 20 years.

I inherited James, a cockatiel, from my mom in 1985. In 1986, Rose walked down the hill from some apartments up above FICO. His personality was so different from James', we just figured he had to be a girl, so we named him Rose (but he, in fact, was a male). James lived from 1985 to 2004 and Rose from 1986 to 2015. They both were very important elements in our lives.

When I retired in 1996, I wasn't sure what to do next. My husband encouraged me to take an

ornithology class at College of Marin. I learned more in that class than in any other class I've ever taken. Then, when I looked for volunteer opportunities, I found WildCare in San Rafael. I started out cleaning cages and making food. Then when WildCare started an ambassador program I joined the team. I worked with Vlad the Turkey Vulture, the ducks Willow and Wally, the cormorants Fisher and Jersey (very smart), the Swainson's Hawk, Red-shouldered Hawk, and Peregrine. I believe I'm one of the few people to crate-train a Turkey Vulture, using positive reinforcement.

More recently, I've been volunteering with The Hungry Owl Project, which is a part of WildCare. HOP's mission is to reduce the use of rodenticide poisoning. We have two ambassador birds: Buho, a Western Screech Owl, and Gazeau, a Great Horned Owl. We take our message of protecting local wildlife from rodenticides to Marin and Sonoma counties, talking to a wide variety of groups including schools, homeowners' associations and master gardeners.

In addition to working with live birds, I also paint with watercolor, with a focus on birds, water and nature. My work has been accepted in the National Watercolor Society Member Show and has been included in many exhibits. See my work at [www.maryblakewatercolors.com](http://www.maryblakewatercolors.com).

It was only luck that got me here. I never expected to have such a wonderful job.

Email: [MaryCBlake@comcast.net](mailto:MaryCBlake@comcast.net)  
Website: [MaryBlakewatercolors.com](http://MaryBlakewatercolors.com)