

# *Voices* at the *Seashore*

## Come As You Are

CARLO ARREGLO



BY DONNA FAURE



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## *Ranger Carlo Arreglo welcomes all to Point Reyes National Seashore*

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Ranger Carlo Arreglo points to the sky, but what I notice well before seeing the winged creature in the distance is the way his face lights up. “Peregrine falcon!” Carlo exclaims as he jumps up from the adirondack chair on PRNSA’s back porch. My eyes follow where he is pointing across the meadow and along the tree line of the Woodpecker Trail at Bear Valley. Carlo is an amazing birder and I always learn something from him when we chat, which is pretty often since he lives just across from our building at Bear Valley.

We sat down last week to talk about his journey to Point Reyes National Seashore and his hopes for this park that is both his home and workplace. Last month Carlo was appointed the acting supervisory ranger for the Interpretive Division



of the park, which means for the time being he is second in charge of education programs for the park and manages the day to day operations of its visitor centers. Visitor contacts, information, and interpretation of the park's natural and cultural resources, including climate education, maritime history, and natural history are part of his job.

Carlo grew up in Chicago, where he earned a degree in English before pursuing an MA in English with an emphasis on Asian/Pacific cultures in Hawaii. "I didn't get into nature till after college," he recounted. "Tell me more," I asked and he shared that as a kid, being in nature meant grilling in a park with his Filipino family. It always included lots of food and relatives coming together. While different from camping, solo hikes into wilderness, or checking off birds from a bucket list, we both agreed it is a wonderfully valid way to enjoy a day in any park.

The importance of emphasizing that this is a "come as you are" park cannot be underestimated. Nature doesn't care what you wear or how you look. Carlo laughed when I said I always feel a little out of place because I don't care for traditional hiking clothes. When out of uniform, he is most likely to be found on the trails with his binoculars birding in his black Cure t-shirt. While it's great to be able to name the plants and animals in the park, not knowing doesn't stop anyone from enjoying their beauty.

Ph.D. studies at UC Berkeley brought Carlo to California, before he changed direction and began working for the National Park Service full time. After spending a summer working in PRNSA's bookstore in 2011, Carlo was recruited by the National Park Service to work as a seasonal park guide, first at Point Reyes, then Pinnacles, and then San Francisco Maritime Historical Park. He also worked at Golden Gate National Parks Conservancy's Institute at the Golden Gate



where he supported and learned about outreach to seniors and youth. Carlo was encouraged to apply for a permanent job at Point Reyes five years ago.

As a graduate student instructor in English and Ethnic Studies at UC Berkeley, Carlo worked with Dr. Carolyn Finney, who influenced the way he thinks about place and belonging. "Ultimately, I decided I could have a bigger impact as a ranger than in academics." Carlo recently joined PRNSA's Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Committee and we talked about barriers and opportunities to mapping a park where everyone feels welcomed.

Hiring staff with diverse lived experiences is one way to demonstrate that the outdoors is for everyone. Carlo has led the park's Latino Heritage Intern Program for the last several summers. He proudly reported that the three interns he mentored all now work in public lands positions. He'd like to see more internships that support this kind of career path exploration. "I really appreciate PRNSA's support of this program and other projects that promote diversity in the park," he said.

Listening sessions to hear from different communities about what they most seek in a park is one idea. Another is promoting curiosity



*“My favorite time working with Carlo happened this winter at Drakes Beach. It was late afternoon, and it was busy. Carlo was everywhere at once, trying to keep both visitors safe and the elephant seals safe that seemed to be moving all over. At the end of the day, I was ready to collapse with exhaustion. As I was heading to my vehicle to head back to headquarters, Carlo asked for permission to go traipse down the beach just to get ‘a few more photos’. Amazing!”*

~ Christine M. Beekman, Chief of Interpretation

of all types. Carlo finds curiosity comes easiest to kids and it is important to think of programming, signage, and communication tools that promote inquiry. He also appreciates that Christine Beekman, the park’s Chief of Interpretation, enthusiastically embraces the idea of park rangers getting out of the visitor center and on the trails to interact regularly with the public.

Carlo would also like to develop new programming at the park focused on representation, even though it is a challenge as most folks want to just hear about whales and birds. Public lands are deeply connected to the stories of people. The headlines of attacks on non-white people are not new. Park lands were taken from Indigenous people. Chinese Americans built the West and then were literally burned out of settlements and had to flee to cities in the 1800s, but the place names across California show they are part of the story of this country.

“As an interpretive ranger I don’t build trails, but I build people and commitment to the park,” reflects Carlo. This effort shows up in his work as the lead for the Winter Wildlife Docent Program.



Carlo trains and manages 70+ volunteers annually in normal years. These dedicated volunteers help visitors view, understand, and appreciate northern elephant seals, gray whales, and other marine life by interpreting observed behaviors and sharing the natural history of these species. Carlo’s efforts at

inclusion show up in this work also. PRNSA board member and winter wildlife docent Seth Rosen reports, “Carlo is incredibly considerate and this shines when he works with volunteer groups and makes sure the views of folks who may not feel comfortable speaking up are heard.”

Carlo sees nature as a place that can bring people together. He admitted it is easier in urban parks because that’s where diverse cultures more naturally gather, but all parks have the potential to help us understand that access to nature is a must...a true public good or commons. The pandemic has spotlighted parks as an essential service supporting both physical and mental health. PRNSA looks forward to working with Carlo and the other enthusiastic National Park Service staff as we continue to help create a park space where everyone feels they truly belong.