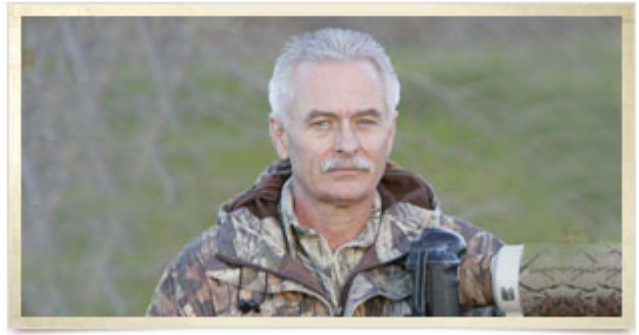


Gary Kramer

The Central Valley Habitat Joint Venture's First Coordinator

From its inception, the Central Valley Joint Venture has been singularly successful in attracting the finest talent to fill the all-important role of Coordinator. There have been only three, and the standard of excellence was set by its first Coordinator, Gary Kramer.



Gary Kramer

Gary was recruited for the Coordinator position while a Project Leader at the Salton Sea National Wildlife Refuge. Joint Ventures were a new concept, requiring unique gifts; good leadership skills, an ability to get along with strong personalities representing different organizational interests, and a solid understanding of waterfowl biology. The successful candidate also had to possess the confidence to build something for which there was no blueprint. Gary Kramer was the right man, with the right skills at the right time. But first he needed a bit of convincing...

Because his true desire was to remain in the refuge system, Gary turned down the offer to become the first Central Valley Habitat Joint Venture (CVHJV) Coordinator. But, in early 1988, with a bit of friendly persuasion, Gary agreed to take it on as a 90-day assignment. Those 90 days turned into a one year and three month tenure that established the CVHJV as a national leader in the Joint Venture movement. During his (relatively) short time as the CVHJV Coordinator, Gary led efforts to produce the first Central Valley Habitat Joint Venture Implementation Plan – the first such plan in the country. Gary spent months traveling the country, talking about the Plan, and promoting the idea of joint ventures and the benefits of partnership.

According to Kramer, the CVHJV worked because, "it was a small group of people who had a history, and who trusted each other. There were no hidden agendas. Everyone set aside their conflicts to work together for the good of the Joint Venture." His fondest memory is of walking into the first meeting and feeling the genuine pleasure of everyone in the room; pleasure to be there together, joined in common cause on a vital mission.

After an eventful 15 months, Gary left his position as Coordinator to become Refuge Manager of the Sacramento National Wildlife Refuge Complex. He'd finally landed his dream job, a role he served with his usual distinction for the next decade. Gary retired in 1999, with a record of success, and a reputation for excellence that follows him to this day. Now, happy in his retirement, Gary is a celebrated wildlife photographer, writer and naturalist travel guide.

Gary Kramer's tenure was short as the Coordinator of the Central Valley Habitat Joint Venture, but his impact was profound. He left the CVHJV with a strong Management Board, a national reputation, and the foundations of an Implementation Plan that guided the priorities of the JV for its first 15 years. The respectful, collaborative spirit that began with Gary and the first members of the Management Board, endures to this day. We can all be grateful that, in a moment of weakness, he took the job.