

Canyon Wrenderings

The Journal of the Black Canyon Audubon Society

Representing Delta, Gunnison, Hinsdale, Montrose, Ouray and San Miguel Counties of Western Colorado

Winter 2012/2013

Volume XXV Number 3

Mark your Calendar February

Great Backyard Bird Count Sat. the 15th to Sun. the 18th

Each year, birdwatchers across the country join forces in this long-running citizen science project. Led by the Cornell Lab of Ornithology, this event is in its 16th year. For more information about the count and answers to a variety of event-related questions, visit the website at: <http://www.birdsource.org/gbbc>.

Montrose Raptor Trip Saturday the 16th

Join Bill Harris on a quest for raptors in the Montrose area. This long-running event was initiated by the now deceased Audubon member Herb Probaso, and the trip is being carried on in his memory. For safety reasons, the trip is limited to twelve participants. Plan to meet at the downtown City Market at 8AM. To sign up or request information, contact Bill at (970)249-8055.

North Fork Raptor Trips Sat. the 16th & Sun. the 17th

Jason Beason and Jim LeFevre will be leading a pair of field trips in the North Fork Valley. The number of participants is limited to twelve, so sign up soon by contacting Jason at aeronautes.saxatalis@gmail.com. A donation of \$5 is suggested, and the funds will support the fall banding station in Ridgway.

Calendar continued on page 2

Gunnison Sage-Grouse proposed as Endangered by USFWS

By Bill Day

Seven years after determining that the Gunnison sage-grouse was in no danger of extinction, the US Fish & Wildlife Service has proposed listing the grouse as Endangered. The new proposal and the accompanying Critical Habitat proposal were published January 11, 2013.

Gunnison sage-grouse still survive in seven different populations in southwestern Colorado and adjoining southeastern Utah. More than 80% of the birds live in the Gunnison Basin population. The other satellite populations have declined drastically in recent years.

The new listing proposal (<http://www.fws.gov/mountain-prairie/species/birds/gunnisonsagegrouse/78FR2486.pdf>) is based on the best available science, with no apparent political interference. The Critical Habitat proposal can be viewed at <http://www.fws.gov/mountain-prairie/species/birds/gunnisonsagegrouse/78FR2540.pdf>.

The proposed decision accurately describes the major threats to the species' survival, and calls habitat fragmentation by residential and exurban development the largest overarching threat. Besides fragmenting remaining sagebrush habitat, residential development leads to increases of roads, powerlines, noise, domestic dogs and cats, and some predators such as red foxes and ravens.

Both the listing decision and the Critical Habitat document do a good job of emphasizing the importance of the six smaller populations and explaining how most, if not all of them, are in danger of not surviving. This is due to the lack of remaining genetic diversity caused by very low populations, and the small size of the habitat, caused by fragmentation both between and within the population areas. It is important that the Critical Habitat document proposes to include some habitat that is adjacent to, but not currently occupied by the grouse.



Most Gunnison Sage-Grouse live in the Gunnison Basin. This one was photographed at a lek near Crawford using a remote camera. Photo courtesy of Melissa Siders.

See Grouse Listing on Page 2

Calendar

Continued from page 1

March

Eckert Crane Days

Fri. the 15th to Sun. the 17th

This annual event is held at Fruitgrowers Reservoir in honor of Sandhill Cranes that use the area as a stopover during spring migration. Transportation will be provided from Grand Junction, Aspen, and Montrose for a fee. To reserve a seat, call (970)874-9532. See Page 7 for a tentative schedule of events.

April

Talk: Birding the Manu Road

Tuesday the 9th

For the second installment in our 2013 program series, Brenda Wright and Coen Dexter will be presenting a talk on their journey through southeastern Peru. This free event will be held at the Montrose Public Library and will begin at 5:30 PM. For more information, contact Amber Carver at caramb22@gmail.com

Gunnison Sage-Grouse Festival

Date: To be Announced

This annual event is held in Gunnison during the Gunnison Sage-Grouse breeding season. It is a great chance to learn about grouse conservation issues and view a lek.

May

Montrose Native Plant Sale

Date: To be Announced

The Botanical Society will be hosting a plant sale at the Pavilion. Amber Carver will be hosting a table at the event, distributing information about bird-friendly gardening. To get involved, contact Amber at caramb22@gmail.com



Superficially similar to the Greater Sage-Grouse, the Gunnison Sage-Grouse was recognized as a separate species in 2000. *Photo by Doug Homan, coordinator of the Crawford area Gunnison Sage-Grouse working group and former District Wildlife Manager for the Colorado Division of Wildlife.*

Grouse Listing

Continued from Page 1

The listing decision also mentions the importance of the BLM's in-progress Resource Management Plans in the Grand Junction and Uncompahgre (Montrose) Field Offices. The GJFO Draft Plan was released in January and is on their website at <http://www.blm.gov/co/st/en/fo/gjfo/rmp/rmp/docs.html>.

The GJFO includes the Pinon Mesa population of Gunnison sage-grouse as well as part of the Parachute/Piceance/Roan population of Greater sage-grouse. The UFO Draft Plan, which will cover the Crawford, Cerro/Cimarron/Sims Mesa, and part of the San Miguel Basin populations, is expected to be released later this year. Comments regarding sage-grouse or anything else in the GJFO plan may be submitted until April 25. The USFWS will accept scientific or other substantial comments regarding the listing decision, or more meaningfully, the critical habitat to be affected, until March 12.

“There’s Nothing We Can Do about It”

Landowners express frustration over potential grouse listing

By Amber Carver

Miscommunication reigned at a recent information session regarding the proposed inclusion of the Gunnison Sage-Grouse on the US Environmental Protection Agency's Endangered Species list. The event—held in Montrose on January 30th—was put on by the US Fish & Wildlife Service and was intended to clear up doubts concerning the impact that listing the grouse would have on local land-use policies.

See Missed Opportunity, Page 3

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Missed Opportunity

Continued from Page 2

Billed as an opportunity to communicate with experts and better understand the implications of listing the Gunnison Sage-Grouse as Endangered, the session began with a presentation by Patty Gelatt, Assistant Field Supervisor for the US Fish & Wildlife Service.

Gelatt outlined grouse biology, described the rationale for proposing that the species be listed as Endangered, and summarized the rules that would be imposed if the move were to go through.

Gelatt was quick to say that the proposed listing “isn’t about eliminating grazing on federal or private lands.” Yet she went on to say that 940,000 acres are being included as critical habitat, a number that is apparently difficult for some landowners to swallow. “How are you going to feel if a grouse comes onto your land,” a local rancher asked after the presentation had ended. “Are you going to like it when you have to pay for that bird to be there?”

The session was a much-needed opportunity for community members to come together and sort through disagreements and misconceptions regarding the proposed changes. Yet the potential for constructive debate was largely wasted. The question-and-answer session that followed the presentation was unstructured: experts and officials mingling with the audience, addressing concerns one-on-one instead of allowing them to be brought up in front of the audience as a whole.

This format may have been part of a strategy of non-confrontation. In her presentation, Gelatt attempted to anticipate potential objections. She said that the current range of the Gunnison Sage-Grouse is only 7% of its historic extent, but she emphasized that, “we’re not trying to get back to this.” She went on to say that the proposed listing wouldn’t create preserves or take over land. Grazing and agriculture will be allowed to continue, she said, and the primary outcome will be a limitation on the “take” of Gunnison Sage-Grouse.

According to official US Fish & Wildlife Service literature, “take” is defined as “...to harass, harm, pursue, hunt, shoot, wound, kill, trap, capture, or collect, or to attempt to engage in any such conduct.” This sounds straight-forward, until one considers the official definition of “harm”—“significant habitat modification that actually kills or injures a species through impairing essential behavior such as breeding, feeding, or sheltering.”

In an effort to reach a wider audience, the session included a repeat presentation later in the evening. During the interim lull, attendees circulated through the room, talking to experts, officials, and other community members regarding the pros and cons of the proposed change. In the opinion of one landowner, “they [the listing proponents] will always write more letters than we do. It doesn’t matter what we do.”

Whatever side one takes on this issue, we can all agree that it is important to have a voice in the decision regarding conservation actions in our backyard.

The period for submitting comments on the proposed rules for the Gunnison Sage-Grouse is currently open, and comments are due by March 12. To submit comments electronically, visit <http://www.regulations.gov>. In the keyword box, enter “FWS-R6-ES-2011-0111. Click on the “Designation of Critical Habitat for Gunnison Sage-Grouse, and go to the link “Comment Now!”

For more information about how to comment, contact Amber Carver at caramb22@gmail.com

Lessons from a Chance Encounter

By Carole Scott

Rough-legged hawks are in abundance on Scenic Mesa, near Crawford, this year. According to local ranchers and birders with whom I have spoken, they are seeing more this year than in previous years, which doesn't necessarily please the ranchers because the raptors prey on their game birds.

I had been out since before daybreak seeking opportunities to photograph eagles, and Scenic Mesa is one of my favorite spots. After several hours, as I was heading into Hotchkiss, I saw movement in the road ahead of me. I pulled over, grabbed my camera, and quietly exited the vehicle.

I recognized it as a Rough-legged Hawk, eating a rabbit, which appeared to

be road kill. This was new to me. I didn't think hawks would eat road kill like eagles, magpies, etc.

I took a few images from beside my vehicle, sure that as soon as I stepped closer, he would fly away, but he didn't. I gradually moved closer, took a few more images, moved closer again. To my amazement he allowed me to get within about ten feet of him, and still he was eating the rabbit. I ended up sitting on the ground with my feet out in front of me and my boots only a few feet from the rabbit, while he gorged on his feast.

Another photographer arrived, parked his vehicle and proceeded to photograph the hawk, during which time we spoke about the rarity of this

opportunity. Nothing fazed this bird. He was not going to leave his food.

Finally, when I couldn't keep my arm from shaking from holding up my 400mm lens for so long, I decided to move on. As I was leaving he flew to a nearby fencepost and then on to a distant ridge.

The moral to this story is to always be ready – camera loaded, batteries charged and your eyes open. Even when you think your day is over, there could still be something special around the next corner.



According to the Hawk Mountain Sanctuary Association, "Rough-legged Hawks feed on many species of carrion, particularly in winter when small mammals are inaccessible due to snow cover. *Photo by Carole*

What's Cooking?

How your chapter leaders are shaking things up for 2013

There are many great reasons to maintain your membership in the Black Canyon Audubon Society. But with such a small and widely-dispersed chapter, we often neglect one of our five chapter goals: "to provide the opportunity for the observation and study of birds(...) through our field trips." Though it is not explicitly stated, this includes a wide range of activities that might draw members together in a common pursuit of knowledge and an appreciation for birds. There are many challenges involved in planning field trips, talks, and other events. This year we are confronting those challenges head on, in an attempt to fulfill our mandate of providing you with reasons to get out of your house. Here's a sneak preview of the coming year:

MONTH	EVENT	TALK
<i>April</i>	Gunnison Sage-Grouse Festival, Gunnison	Birding the Manu Road , by Brenda Wright & Coen Dexter
<i>May</i>	Table at Native Plant Sale, Montrose Intro to Birding Class, Hotchkiss	
<i>June</i>	Annual Meeting, Montrose Outdoor Heritage Day, Delta Peregrine Field Trip	Keynote Speaker: TBD
<i>July</i>	Camping Trip to Buckeye Reservoir	
<i>August</i>	Outing to Box Canyon, Ouray	August Talk: TBD
<i>September</i>	Bird Banding at Ridgway State Park	The Dolores River Restoration Project , by Russell Norvel White-tailed Ptarmigans , by Amy Seglund
<i>October</i>		
<i>December</i>		

Where the Old Wren Went

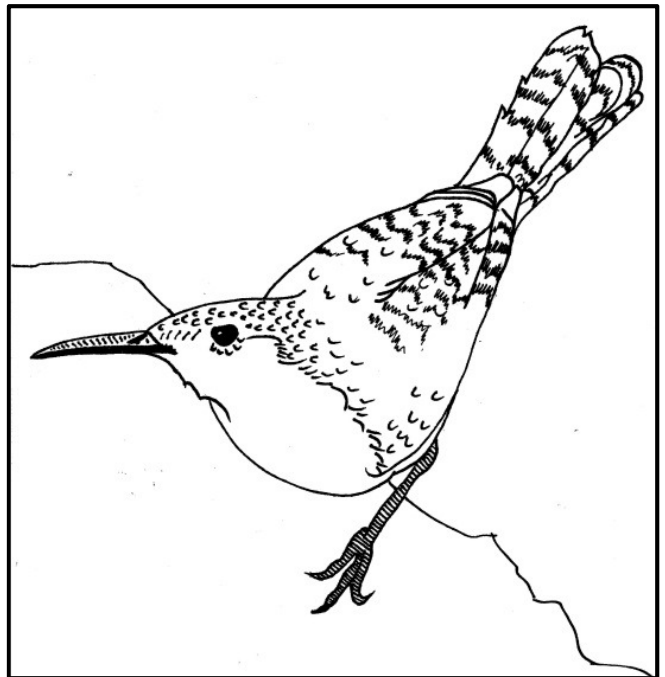
The logistics of developing a new logo

By Amber Carver

As you will have noticed, there is a new face on the newsletter banner. There is a funny story behind the old logo, but I won't publish it here. The bottom line is that we need a fresh emblem, and I am trying to get the ball rolling.

I am the first to admit that I don't know anything about graphic design. My guess is that not many of our members do, and I welcome you to prove me wrong. Until we settle on a new logo that can be used both on our publications and (hypothetically) on gear, I will be using this picture as a placeholder. Let it serve as a reminder that I am looking for ideas.

What I do know is that we have some great artists in our chapter. Me? I'm just a doodler. But I like to doodle. A lot. If you can come up with a better design for our logo, bring it on. I will be accepting designs for the next several months. Once we have a good selection to choose from, I will put it to a vote.



2012 Christmas Bird Count Results

Montrose

Species: 65

Individuals: 11,650

Participants: 14

Pied-billed Grebe-6
Great Blue Heron-3
Canada Goose-1251
Wood Duck-1
Mallard-304
Northern Pintail-8
Gadwall-2
American Wigeon-1
Canvasback-5
Ring-necked Duck-2
Common Goldeneye-6
Common Merganser-6
Bald Eagle-26
Northern Harrier-6
Sharp-shinned Hawk-2
Cooper's Hawk-3
Red-tailed Hawk-48
Rough-legged Hawk-2
Golden Eagle-5
American Kestrel-69
Merlin-1
Peregrine Falcon-1
Gambel's Quail-51
American Coot-54
Rock Pigeon-346
Eurasian Collared-Dove-452
Mourning Dove-577
Great-horned Owl-1
Belted Kingfisher-3
Hairy Woodpecker-4
Northern Flicker-56
Horned Lark-14
Steller's Jay-3
Scrub Jay-1
Pinyon Jay-3
Black-billed Magpie-137
American Crow-85
Common Raven-34
Black-capped Chickadee-13
White-breasted Nuthatch-3
Brown Creeper-2
American Dipper-1
Blue-gray Gnatcatcher-2
Western Bluebird-34
Mountain Bluebird-136
Townsend's Solitaire-1
American Robin-122
Northern Mockingbird-1
Cedar Waxwing-18

Northern Shrike-2
European Starling-5569
Song Sparrow-46
White-crowned Sparrow-73
Dark-eyed Junco-158
Red-winged Blackbird-173
Western Meadowlark-66
Brewer's Blackbird-6
Cassin's Finch-2
House Finch-432
House Sparrow-772

Delta

Species: 65

Individuals: 17,071

Participants: 11

Snow Goose-32
Canada Goose-3105
Hooded Merganser-3
Common Merganser-15
Red-breasted Merganser-1
Gadwall-2
American Wigeon-84
Mallard-635
Northern Shoveler-2
Northern Pintail-20
Wood Duck-5
Green-winged Teal-34
Ring-necked Duck-28
Common Goldeneye-9
Gambel's Quail-73
Eared Grebe-1
Western Grebe-1
Pied-billed Grebe-11
Great Blue Heron-2
Bald Eagle-6
Northern Harrier-13
Cooper's Hawk-3
Red-tailed Hawk-29
Rough-legged Hawk-1
Golden Eagle-3
American Kestrel-49
Merlin-1
Prairie Falcon-4
Gull sp.-4
American Coot-323
Sandhill Crane-460
Killdeer-5
Wilson's Snipe-1
Rock Pigeon-106
Eurasian Collared-Dove-224
Mourning Dove-430
Northern Pygmy Owl-1

Belted Kingfisher-4
Downy Woodpecker-5
Northern Flicker-70
Loggerhead Shrike-3
Northern Shrike-1
Western Scrub-Jay-2
Black-billed Magpie-47
Common Raven-28
American Crow-2
Horned Lark-9
Black-capped Chickadee-5
Brown Creeper-6
Bewick's Wren-3
Marsh Wren-18
Ruby-crowned Kinglet-5
Golden-crowned Kinglet-4
Blue-gray Gnatcatcher-1
Mountain Bluebird-969
American Robin-706
European Starling-3124
American Pipit-47
Cedar Waxwing-32
Yellow-rumped Warbler-76
Spotted Towhee-3
American Tree Sparrow-5
Song Sparrow-150
White-crowned Sparrow-156
Dark-eyed Junco-475
Red-winged Blackbird-4498
Western Meadowlark-153
Brewer's Blackbird-147
House Finch-178
American Goldfinch-12
House Sparrow-399

Gunnison

Species: 44

Individuals: 3,363

Participants: 16

Canada Goose-166
Mallard-776
Green Winged Teal-21
Northern Harrier -10
Red Tailed Hawk-10
Rough Legged Hawk-21
Ferruginous Hawk -2
Bald Eagle-17
Golden Eagle-6
American Kestrel-3
Prairie Falcon-1
Gunnison Sage Grouse-2
American Coot-2
Wilson's Snipe-12
Eurasian Collared Dove - 298
Mourning Dove-12

Great Horned Owl-3
Belted Kingfisher-9
Northern Flicker-9
Downy Woodpecker-10
Hairy Woodpecker-3
Steller's Jay-3
Black Billed Magpie-143
Common Raven-454
American Crow-49
Horned Lark-4
Black Capped Chickadee-119
Mountain Chickadee-21
White Breasted Nuthatch-21
Brown Creeper-5
American Dipper-15
Townsend's Solitaire-8
American Robin-1
European Starling-105
American Tree Sparrow-4
Song Sparrow-7
Dark Eyed Junco-9
Western Meadowlark-4
Red Winged Blackbird-29
Black Rosy Finch-2
Gray Crowned Rosy Finch-39
Brown Capped Rosy Finch-95
House Finch-43
Common Redpoll-4
American Goldfinch-1
Lesser Goldfinch-1
House Sparrow-751

Hotchkiss

Species: 70

Individuals: 5,160

Participants: 20

Gadwall-1
American Wigeon-9
Mallard-166
Northern Pintail-2
Green-winged Teal-40
Ring-necked Duck-139
Common Goldeneye-3
Common Merganser-7
Ring-necked Pheasant-5
Wild Turkey-82
Bald Eagle-59
Northern Harrier-7
Sharp-shinned Hawk-2
Cooper's Hawk-3
Northern Goshawk-1
Red-tailed Hawk-47
Rough-legged Hawk-19
Ferruginous Hawk-1
Golden Eagle-37
Virginia Rail-3
Killdeer-1

Wilson's Snipe-2
Rock Pigeon-50
Eurasian Collared-Dove-189
Mourning Dove-7
Great Horned Owl-3
Northern Pygmy-Owl-cw
Northern Saw-whet Owl-1
Belted Kingfisher-5
Lewis's Woodpecker-9
Downy Woodpecker-5
Hairy Woodpecker-2
Northern Flicker-44
American Kestrel-27
Merlin-2
Prairie Falcon-2
Northern Shrike-4
Gray Jay-1
Western Scrub-Jay-21
Black-billed Magpie-96
American Crow-6
Common Raven-84
Horned Lark-15
Black-capped Chickadee-51
Mountain Chickadee-9
Juniper Titmouse-9
White-breasted Nuthatch-7
Rock Wren-1
Marsh Wren-1
American Dipper-4
Mountain Bluebird-91
Townsend's Solitaire-11
American Robin-155
European Starling-1407
Cedar Waxwing-25
Yellow-rumped Warbler-3
Spotted Towhee-11
Sage Sparrow-cw
American Tree Sparrow-48
Song Sparrow-96
White-crowned Sparrow-45
Dark-eyed Junco-870
Gray-crowned Rosy-Finch-20
Black Rosy-Finch-130
Red-winged Blackbird-597
Western Meadowlark-42
House Finch-90
Lesser Goldfinch-4
American Goldfinch-11
Evening Grosbeak-31
House Sparrow-190

2012 Barrow's Goldeneye Count Results

From November 23rd through December 3rd, 214 Barrow's Goldeneyes were reported in Colorado on eBird, CoBirds, or the West Slope Bird Network. This is slightly above the average of 202 for the first 13 years of the count.

Location	County	Count	Date	Observer
Big Johnson Res	El Paso	1	28-Nov	Drummond
Blue Lake	Eagle	2	27-Nov	McConnell
Blue Mesa Res	Gunnison	3	26-Nov	Beason
Catamount Lake	Routt	1	26-Nov	Moulton
Dillon Res	Summit	6	23-Nov	Wood/Barry/Kellner
Fryingpan River	Eagle/Pitkin	42	24-Nov	Glaser
Ice Pond - Buena Vista	Chaffee	22	25-Nov	Wood/Barry/Kellner/Stachowiak
Ranch at the Roaring Fork	Garfield	6	27-Nov	McConnell
Shadow Mountain Res	Grand	55	25-Nov	Hundertmark/Slingsby/Binkley
Silverthorne WTP	Summit	2	30-Nov	McKennie
South Platte @ 88 th	Adams	1	2-Dec	Slingsby
Spring Park Res	Eagle	2	27-Nov	McConnell
Stagecoach Res	Routt	35	30-Nov	Litteral
Strauss Cabin	Larimer	2	28-Nov	Cropper
Tennyson & I-76 Ponds	Adams	2	2-Dec	Witter
Walden Res	Jackson	2	28-Nov	D. Maynard
Jerry Creek Res	Mesa	7	3-Dec	Bradley
WFMC Pond	Moffat	1	1-Dec	Luke
Yampa River	Moffat	22	1-Dec	Luke

2013 Eckert Crane Days Schedule of Events

Here is a tentative outline for this year's festival. To lend a hand, contact Chris Lazo at 2006clazo@myway.com

Friday March 15, 2012 (Local recreation groups day)

8:30 Set up at viewing site on Causeway: put out signs and cones, set up tables with handouts, bird houses and scopes. Set up free hot drinks table

9:00 Viewing starts with arrival of Delta Recreation Group

11:00 Delta group moves to Wildfire Pizzeria & Wine Bar for lunch and break down of tables/tens and so on

Wildfire Pizzeria & Wine Bar will offer a lunch special all inclusive for \$12.00 per person. Contact them (Curt or Gail) at 856-6200 for details

11:30 Lunch starts at Wildfire Pizzeria & Wine Bar for Delta Group

12:00 Montrose group arrives at Wildfire Grille for lunch

12:45 move to Eckert Presbyterian Church

1:00 Presentation by Evelyn Horn on Sandhill Cranes

1:45 Ladies of Eckert Presbyterian Church may offer coffee and pie as fundraiser for Church renovation project. The church is 100 years old this year and undertaking a major renovation.

2:00 to 2:30 Montrose group moves to viewing site at causeway to view landing. If anything is happening at Great Blue Heron rookery, that will be possible additional activity with viewing from south side of reservoir at old recreation site across the damn.

Wrap up when appropriate

Saturday March 16, 2013 (Audubon Chapters Day)

8:30 Set up same as yesterday

9:00 Viewing starts; Cabela's will have an optics demonstration table with a couple of lines of scopes/binos to try out. They will have some give aways and possibly reps from optics companies.

11:00 (after liftoff) viewing ends and breakdown of tables/tents and so on.

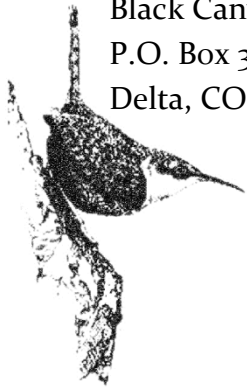
11:30/12:00 Lunch at Wildfire Pizzeria & Wine Bar offering Crane Days Specials from the menu

Sunday March 17, 2013

8:30 Set up

9:00 Viewing starts

11:00 (after liftoff) Viewing ends and breakdown of tables/tens and so on



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Black Canyon Audubon Society (NAS chapter C9ZD140Z)

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(Check one) Renewal (see mailing label for expiration date) _____
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Name: _____

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City: _____

State: Zip: _____

Phone (optional): _____

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 Email address: _____
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