



# The Magpiper

## Monthly Calendar

### Thursday, April 10

Board Meeting  
7:00 p.m.

### Thursday, April 17

Membership Meeting  
7:00 p.m.  
Whitman College

### Saturday, April 19

Field Trip  
9:00 a.m.  
Harper Joy Theatre Parking lot

**President:** Mike Denny  
**Vice President:** Jim Parrish  
**Secretary:** Paul and Judy Treman  
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**Bluebird Trails:** Tom Scribner  
**Adopt a Highway:** Carolyn Corvino  
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**Field Trips:** Paul Treman  
**Magpiper Editor:** Ginger Shoemake  
**Member at Large:** Shirley Muse  
**Bird Sightings:** Ginger Shoemake

## Website:

<http://www.blumtn.org>

## Bird sightings:

housewren084@gmail.com

## Contact BMAS:

housewren084@gmail.com

PO Box 1106

Walla Walla, WA 99362

## Meeting

### Membership Meeting: April 17, 7:00 p.m.

Room 151 Hall of Science, Whitman College

### PROGRAM: UNDERSTANDING SHOREBIRDS:

#### THE MIRACLE OF MIGRATION

The program *Understanding Shorebirds, the Miracle of Migration* is about the epic migrations of shorebirds. Eight of the thirty-eight common shorebirds found in Washington are discussed, as we explore the trans-ocean migration of Bar-tailed Godwits, Pacific Golden-Plovers, Sanderling and other birds that cross the majority of the Pacific Ocean.



Topics such as; where they migrate, why they migrate and how they are able to travel so far are covered. These global migrants require global conservation and climate change solutions. In an effort to understand their remarkable journeys we need to look beyond the North American borders and see where shorebirds spend most of their lives.

Tim Boyer is a professional nature photographer with a primary focus on the birds of North America. Shorebirds are his favorite group of birds, and he spends a lot of weekends on the Washington Coast. Tim sells fine art prints at art festivals in Washington & Oregon, and leads photography workshops throughout the year.

## Field Trip

### PALOUSE FALLS

#### Saturday, April 19 - 9:00 a.m.

April is a great time to see water roaring over scenic Palouse Falls with white-throated swifts and possibly a peregrine falcon or two below the falls. You won't want to miss this opportunity to join Joe Corvino as he leads this fun field trip via the back roads of northern Walla Walla County. We will look for birds along the way and should see a variety of raptors, horned larks, meadowlarks and much more. Ferruginous hawks have frequently been seen on this route. A total of 36 species was seen when Joe last led the trip in 2011.

Meet at the Harper Joy Theater parking lot and we will car pool. Bring a lunch, your binoculars and a friend or two. We will eat our lunches at the picnic tables at the falls. Scopes will be available for close-up viewing. Plan to return late afternoon. Please email Joe if you plan to attend: [corvinojm@gmail.com](mailto:corvinojm@gmail.com)



## *Tom's Tales by Tom Scribner*

### A NIGHT AT THE SYMPHONY

Okay, so by now you have heard, probably more than you needed or wanted, that BMAS has partnered with the Walla Walla Symphony to bring to area classical music lovers "A Little Summer Night Music." The performance is scheduled for a date that we all know in our sleep: April 15. As in, federal income tax deadline day. So what say we birders, especially those of us birders who are not particularly sophisticated, at least with regard to classical music, dust off our formal evening wear and get a little culture? As an added teaser, and for our visual as well as audio enjoyment, the evening will feature photographs of birds by Paul Bannick, an award-winning wildlife photographer.

But here's the thing. I do not know or care a fig about music, certainly not classical music. I am not sure what is expected behavior at a symphony concert. I suspect that some of you are or may be of a similar uneasiness about proper decorum when attending a symphony performance. What follows may help you make it through the evening.

Attendance, I am afraid, at the April 15 performance is mandatory for members of BMAS. Why? Because it costs money to partner up with the Walla Walla Symphony. What, you thought we could just get listed in the playbill as presenting "A Little Summer Night Music" in collaboration with the symphony and not have to shell out some money? Ain't gonna happen.

Obviously the first thing you need to know about attending the symphony on April 15 is: there is no such thing as a free concert! Ain't no safety net hammock when it comes to long-haired music (and I am not talking here about the Beatles). BMAS had to buy 100 tickets for the privilege of collaborating with the Symphony. Which is why, dear reader, you have been encouraged, as in strongly encouraged, at the last two membership meetings and in the pages of this publication to buy tickets to the April 15 performance.

**Rule #1:** Buy tickets from BMAS! Lots of 'em. If you are a season ticket holder, invite four of your closest friends (who are not season ticket holders) and give them tickets. Which tickets must be purchased from BMAS.

Okay, so now we have our tickets and we are ready to go to Cordiner Hall for the music. Remember, this is not music to sing, clap or whistle along with. (Unless they are playing the theme song from the movie "The Bridge On the River Kwai," which the Symphony did on

February 11. Then it was okay to whistle along, probably because no one knew the words or because they are dirty. Something, I am told, about Hitler's anatomy.)

**Rule #2:** Shut up! Which is going to be hard when they flash the Paul Bannick bird photos on the screen. I assume they will not have a caption telling what bird it is. Which means, knee-jerk birders that we are, that some of you good birders will know what species is being shown, and some of us not-so-good birders won't. This is not a field trip, okay. Mike and MerryLynn will be there. (They better be, this whole collaboration with the Symphony thing was Mike's idea.) But do not, as in DO NOT!, lean forward in your seat, look down the row for Mike or MerryLynn, and yell, "What bird is that?" Bad form. Uncouth. Low brow. Not the sort of thing that is done at the Symphony.

**Rule #3:** When to applaud? You don't clap at the Symphony, you applaud. And only at the proper time. According to my wife, who knows and genuinely appreciates classical music, lots of pieces have what are called movements. (I told her I had at least one movement every day, which she didn't think was funny.) Not only do you not talk (EVER!), you do not applaud at the end of each movement. Not until, that is, the end of the last movement. Which sounds simple but, trust me on this (I'm a lawyer), when they get to the end of the first movement the music will stop. The conductor will lower his arms. There will be a pause. And you are going to think, heck, you are going to know, and you are probably going to hope, that the music is over. So you will start to applaud. Except if you do it now, you will be clapping, and you and maybe four or five other cultural philistines, out of the hundreds in attendance, will be the only embarrassed yokels who will be doing so. You don't applaud until the end of the whole piece, I don't care how many @%&# movements there are!

Do not applaud until everyone else is doing it. Then, join in, but in a dignified, cultured, refined sort of way. I'm not sure what this means, but my wife tells me just to watch and do whatever everyone else is doing. This would all be good advice except I will probably be sitting with a bunch of my BMAS buddies. If I follow their lead I'll be talking and clapping at all the wrong times.

Classical music and BMAS. It promises to be an interesting evening. You don't want to miss it. Just remember from whom you are to buy your tickets. Lots of 'em.

## *The World Around Us*

### WASPS AND BIRD NEST BOXES

*Excerpts from Bird Watcher's Digest Mar/Apr 2014*

Wasps plague almost everyone who provides nest boxes for birds. First encounters with wasps that involve getting stung usually foster a certain personal resentment that sort of ferments into a perception that wasps are creepy, to be neither trusted or tolerated, and best gotten rid of. However, if a person can come to understand and appreciate the ecological significance of a wildlife species perceived as a nuisance, then the irritation and frustration derived from that species subside to a more tolerable level. (Howard Ensign Evans' book *Wasp Farm* is recommended as a good resource to learn more about wasps).

But you still don't want them in your nest boxes! Solitary wasps known as "mud-daubers" occasionally get into nest boxes, but various social wasps are much more likely to do so. These are the ladies that build the symmetrical paper nests with hexagonal cells.

For the many species of paper-nest social wasps, their nest begins with a single female. Mating occurs in autumn and the pregnant female overwinters. Each individual will start her own nest come spring. As she lays her eggs and nurtures her larvae, they quickly mature into daughters with sisters that exponentially increase the population of the nest.

Your single best defense is to routinely check your nest boxes so that you can discover the first female. All of these wasps are active by day, and all of them cling to their nests by nights. So, wait until well after dark to check your nest box when it is cool and chilly. All of the wasps will be on the nest and you can remove them all. ***Don't use insecticide*** because residue can be problematic for nestling birds. Instead, physically remove the nest and wasps— they will be very sluggish and unwilling to move much less fly. Or thoroughly soak them with alcohol squirted from a spray bottle. The alcohol will kill them, and any excess will evaporate without leaving residue harmful to nestling birds. Remember it is much easier to remove a nest with two or three females than to wait until there are 20-30 attending females present. Founding females are intolerant of other females and will actively exclude them from their nest sites. So, once you've eliminated her and her daughters, you shouldn't have any more wasp issues—until next spring.

## *Bird of the Month*

### CANYON WREN

*Catherpes mexicanus*



Size: 5.5 inches

Description: Brown body with white throat, bright rufous barred tail, and a long, thin decurved bill.

*Photo by Jim Parrish*

Have you ever been walking in a canyon or near an outcropping of tall rocks and heard a beautiful loud cascading song coming down from above? If so, you will know you are hearing a canyon wren. Like other wrens, they may be a tiny bird, but their vocalizations are something you won't forget.

Canyon wrens are found in arid mountain country and canyon lands of western North America. They make a nest of twigs and other coarse material, lined with lichens, soft plant material, webs or feathers. The nest is built in rock crevices, or attached to a rock face, protected from above by a ledge or shelf. Clutch size is 3-7 eggs.

They eat spiders and insects from rock surfaces and tight crevices. Their vertebral column is attached higher on the skull than on most birds, allowing them to thrust their bill forward into tight crevices without bumping their head while searching for food. They get water from the insects they eat rather than directly drinking water.

Canyon wrens can be found in Wallula Gap along the vertical canyon walls and rocks. They are a tiny bird scurrying around on a large expanse of rock, so you will need to listen first to determine their approximate location, and then start looking. They climb up, down and across rocks quickly so looking for a flash of white from their white throat can be helpful in your search. Another place to find canyon wrens is Columbia NWR so if you are at the Othello Crane Festival this weekend, look and listen for them along the basalt columns.

**LOOK FOR BLUE MOUNTAIN AUDUBON  
ON  
FACEBOOK**

## Local

### **THE END OF AN ERA**

For those of us who have spent time at Tom Lamb's Hummingbird Crossing outside Dixie during the warm evenings of May and June to watch scores of hummingbirds dart in and out of the feeders, the following message brings a note of sadness.



We recently received a message from Michelle Harmon, Tom Lamb's grand-daughter. Tom has health issues and will no longer be able to support the visitors that come out to view the hummingbirds. Visitors will be allowed for one more year **by appointment only**. Appointments can be made at the Hummingbird Crossing Facebook page.

Tom has brought joy to many, many people over the years. We want to take this opportunity to thank him for welcoming people into his yard and allowing us to experience the thrill of watching the wonderful world of hummingbirds.

### **Art of interest to birders.....**

Melissa Webster invites everyone to Sheehan Gallery, Olin Hall, Whitman College, to view the current exhibition of Abstract American Mokuhanga, original wood block prints, made using traditional Japanese woodcut processes.

Melissa's work, a triptych, centers on the theme of migration—especially bird migration. She says, "The Dennys shared with me a bit of the mystery of bird migration, and in my prints I'm interested in the journey, as well as the places left and those arrived at in this mystery." Subjects from nature are often used by woodcut artists and the works in this exhibition provide fresh opportunity to experience many individual responses to the natural world. The gallery is closed during spring break, until the end of March. It reopens April 1 – 18<sup>th</sup>.

### **Why Are We Co-Sponsoring a Symphony Concert?**

You've probably noticed our many notices that Blue Mountain Audubon will be partnering with the Walla Walla Symphony to co-host their concert on April 15 . . . and selling tickets for it. *What's up with that?*

Our role in that event will be to sponsor Paul Bannick's participation with projections of his wonderful bird photography to accompany the orchestra's performance of a twentieth-century composition, *Voyages*, by noted composer John Corigliano. Perhaps you know Bannick's beautiful work from his popular book, *The Owl and the Woodpecker*, and his presentation at our Audubon meeting several years ago. We've made a commitment to pay for his presentation with the symphony, as well as to sell (or purchase) one hundred tickets for the concert. You might be asking: *What in the world is Blue Mountain Audubon's interest in doing that?*

#### **The BMAS Board had several good objectives in mind:**

1. We believe that our presence with the symphony that evening will be a great opportunity to expose our group and its mission to a very large audience. Information about our organization and its activities will be provided in a lovely handout given at the door that night, and we'll be set up in the lobby with a table to promote our membership literature and our birding guides.
2. We want local students and young families especially to enjoy the concert that evening with its theme of nature and fabulous bird photography. So we are purchasing tickets to give to local school music programs—Wa-Hi and Lincoln Alternative School have already asked for tickets—and to International Students at Whitman College.
3. We believe that the Walla Walla Symphony (the oldest in the West, you know!), is a natural partner with Blue Mountain Audubon Society in our purpose to enrich the quality of life in the Walla Walla Valley through an appreciation of beauty wherever we find it—in birds, in nature, or in human artistry.

**What can you do? Buy tickets now for the concert from Blue Mountain Audubon!** Perhaps you want to attend the concert and don't already have tickets. Maybe you want to give the tickets to friends. Or perhaps you just want to support our project by making a contribution to pay for student tickets or for Paul Bannick's presentation. For any or all these reasons, buy your tickets today! *\$23 for adults, \$12 for students, or \$5 for children who will be attending with a parent.* Support your Audubon chapter in this wonderful project. Contact ticket master Jonathan Webster at 509-529-6023 or webstersinwallawalla@gmail.com with information on how many tickets you want, and we'll get them to you before April 15.

Jonathan Webster, BMAS Program Chair

## Events

### **SPRING HIGHWAY CLEAN-UP**

**When:** April 6, 1:30 p.m.

**Where:** *Spalding Road Exit off Highway 12 west of Walla Walla*

It's time to do a little spring cleaning along Blue Mountain Audubon's section of Highway 12. If we get a good turnout, it will only take about an hour of your time, and the rewards are a clean road for people to see when they drive into Walla Walla.

Put on your jeans and tennis shoes, grab your gardening gloves and water bottle and meet at Spalding Road for this worthwhile project!

### **GRAYS HARBOR SHOREBIRD FESTIVAL**

*April 25-27, Hoquiam Wa*

Each spring hundreds of thousands of shorebirds stop to rest and feed in Grays Harbor estuary on their migration northward. Coming from as far south as Argentina, these Arctic-bound shorebirds are among the world's greatest migrants. Some birds travel over 15,000 miles round trip! Tens of thousands of shorebirds feed on the open mudflats in the estuary. This concentration of birds offers people a great chance to view a number of shorebird species, and with luck, to see the birds fly together in beautiful formations while trying to escape the fastest creature on earth, the Peregrine Falcon.



#### **Festival events include:**

**Field trips** with expert birders to birding hotspots in Grays Harbor County

**Lectures** on shorebird identification

**Nature Fun Fair**

**Keynote Speaker and Reception**

**Banquet and auction**

**Shorebird viewing** is of course why most people participate in the Grays Harbor Shorebird Festival. Shorebird migration in Grays Harbor County begins around April 21 and continues for about 3 weeks.

For more information visit the festival website:  
[www.shorebirdfestival.com](http://www.shorebirdfestival.com)

## Musings by Chris Howard

It is Now! It is the Now we have been waiting for throughout the long, cold, grey winter days. Migration is here! Change is in the air! Can I stand still and absorb the sweeping circle of life I am also a part of, which one glance in the mirror verifies. Birth, death and the in between which is only the ever changing now.

Can I slow down enough to notice the subtle but sure changes as Spring erupts around me? The buds on the tips of the limbs slowly opening...the crocuses and daffodils unfolding their colorful blossoms as seen on time lapse photography...if only I can only slow down enough to see it happening. The birds are sweeping into the valley like the irrepressible rivers carrying the rushing, life giving, snowmelt down from the mountain heights. The Red-winged Blackbird, an early harbinger, is calling out from the reeds beside the rushing waters. Swooping overhead are the Violet-green Swallows, amazingly energetic considering the distance they have just traveled. The Columbia Spotted frogs are croaking in the pond. The pure white swans with necks outstretched, are passing overhead, honking and waving their wings as they continue their journey northward. I am mesmerized by glittering electric sparkles on the pond that shift in consort with the morning breezes. The male Mallard's head changes from green to purple right before my eyes. There is magic in nature.

Everything is in transition. The warm light from the rising sun is slowly gliding north along the horizon, illuminating the way for nests to be built. If I am quiet enough I can hear the screech owls sending softly hooted calls to each other as I walk the dog around the block in the darkening skies just after sunset. Can I open my mind enough to be aware of the patterns within the pattern? That of the early arrival of the Spring warmth, the rapidly receding glaciers and the increase of carbon dioxide in the air I breathe. What will the ever changing sweep of the seasons look like for my grandchildren, when I am the brightly colored flower slowly emerging from the damp earth into a ray of golden sunlight?

## *In the Field...by Ginger Shoemake*

Priscilla Dauble went to southern Arizona the last week of February and saw many wonderful birds. The first birds she saw when she returned to her home in Walla Walla were several varied thrushes.

Snow returned on March 1. Pam Fisher watched as a sharp-shinned hawk snagged a goldfinch that had hit her window. Sharpies are smart that way....

The Harris's sparrow that we had off and on in February returned several times in March. It probably has been there the entire time, but it is very secretive and only comes out in the open for brief periods of time.

Melissa Cummins saw a western bluebird at the corner of Highway 12 and S. Wilbur on March 1. Later that same day Mike and MerryLynn saw 13 of them along Mill Creek just past the Blue Creek turnoff.

More bluebirds! On March 2, Kevin Lucas saw 6 mountain bluebirds just east of McDonald Road. He also saw 2 tree swallows on the McDonald bridge.

Mike and MerryLynn found a red-shouldered hawk at Two Rivers HMU on March 3. It's only the second record of one for Walla Walla County. They also had a flyover of 43 sandhill cranes. Other interesting birds seen were a purple finch at Fishhook Park, mountain and western bluebirds on Sudbury Road and 110 bald eagles in various places along the Columbia River. There were 91 together on McNary NWR at Burbank Slough.

Carolyn Corvino heard a Cooper's hawk at her house on March 4. they have nested in the neighborhood for several years, and it sounds like they will again.

Pam Fisher saw some nice birds while walking Mill Creek on March 7—a pair of northern harriers, 5 hooded mergansers, 5 wood ducks, a sharp-shinned hawk, and a great blue heron just below the diversion dam.

On March 11, the Bennington Lake walkers were treated to returning tree swallows—and a beautiful sunny morning. This warm weather should bring out the insects which in turn will bring in the birds.

MerryLynn was working in her yard the afternoon of March 11, and was surprised to find two lesser goldfinches at one of her feeders. They seem to be occurring more frequently around Walla Walla now.



On March 13, Pam Fisher photographed two great blue herons working on a nest at the Rooks Park rookery. Looks like nesting time is coming soon.

Mike and MerryLynn birded the west side of the county on March 15 looking for spring arrivals and other interesting birds. They found Caspian terns, dunlins, a loggerhead shrike, a long-billed curlew, black-crowned night herons, a ferruginous hawk, tri-colored blackbirds, Eurasian wigeons, a Clark's grebe and a gray partridge. Wow—and that's just the unusual birds!

On March 16, Lynn Sealey reported a pair of wood ducks checking out the nest box on her pond. In the past she has had trouble with starlings nesting there before the wood ducks get a chance, but is hopeful this year the ducks will beat them to the box.

George and Deanna Jameson joined Rodger and me for our last northeast Umatilla County Raptor Route of the 2013-14 season. We found 100 red-tailed hawks and most of them were on or near nests. As you may be aware, red-tailed hawks in our area come in every color from very light to very dark. George took these photos to show the variation.



We also found six great horned owls—all females on a nest with the exception of one male that was watching over his mate. I'm sure there were males near the other nests, but we couldn't locate them. It's amazing to me how such a big bird as a great horned owl can hide so well! Other raptors seen were 30 American kestrels, 2 rough-legged hawks, 1 northern harrier and 1 sharp-shinned hawk. We saw wild turkeys along many of the creeks—in places we haven't seen them before.

March 22 was the Bennington Lake Field Trip led by Paul and Judy Treman. Fourteen people enjoyed a leisurely walk around the lake, which was in the process of being filled. It was nippy when we started out but soon warmed up. Highlights of the walk were 2 **great blue herons**, several **Townsend's solitaires**, a pair of soaring **red-tailed hawks** and a **tree swallow** at one of the nest boxes on the south end of the lake. **Mallards** and **American wigeons** were on the lake and several **killdeer** were patrolling the water's edge.



Mike and MerryLynn spent March 22 out birding the roads from College Place to the Columbia River. They found two new year birds—**American avocet** and a **cliff swallow**. The avocets were swimming with the ducks at the Delta and Tyson ponds, and the cliff swallow was in with a flock of **tree swallows** on Northshore road. Other interesting birds seen during their day's outing were a **Harris's sparrow** in Touchet, a **fox sparrow** at the Millet pond on Northshore road, **tri-colored blackbirds** near Tyson ponds, **Savannah sparrows** on Detour road, **violet green swallows** lined up on the wires along McDonald road waiting for the sun to warm them up, **canyon wrens**, a **rock wren** and a **Pacific wren** at Wallula Gap, a pair of **bald eagles** near a nest at the Delta, over a thousand **white-fronted geese** and a single **snow goose** at various places on McNary NWR.

On March 22, Michael Woodruff saw a **Virginia rail** and a **sora** near Tyson ponds.

Rodger and I drove up Jasper Mountain Road with George and Deanna Jameson on March 23 to check on the bluebirds. We were excited with the numbers we found—24 **western bluebirds** and 2 **mountain bluebirds**. They were around most of the boxes Blue Mountain Audubon and others have placed along the road.



Photo by Rodger Shoemake

Other highlights on Jasper Mountain included a **Savannah sparrow**, a pair of **pileated woodpeckers** and a **rough-legged hawk**.

April brings more birds back to the Walla Walla Valley. One of the most anticipated events of the month in our yard is the return of the hummingbirds. I always get their feeders ready for them by the second week of April. You never know when they might appear, and I want to make sure I don't miss those first ones. Usually it's a feisty male **rufous hummingbird**, like the one here that Rodger photographed. It will be followed by a male **calliope hummingbird**. The females soon join the males and the mating ritual begins. **Black-chinned hummingbirds** don't return to our yard until the first week of May, but when the male arrives he dominates the feeders. Soon the rufous and calliope will leave to nest in riparian areas in the county, but the black-chinned remains to nest in our neighborhood. I have looked for their nest in our yard for years, and haven't found it. Maybe this year will be the year I succeed....



Spring brings so many changes—arrivals, territorial disputes, courting and nesting. It's all very exciting to watch. I'm sure your yards will be as exciting as ours, so let me know what you are seeing. Email me at my new address: [housewren084@gmail.com](mailto:housewren084@gmail.com)

## **MIGRATION CONTINUES**

### *Birds to look for in April*

Osprey	Cinnamon teal
Swainson's hawk	Greater yellowlegs
Vaux's swift	Spotted sandpiper
Barn swallow	Orange-crowned warbler
Bank swallow	Hammond's flycatcher
Brewer's sparrow	Western kingbird
Grasshopper sparrow	Calliope hummingbird
House wren	Rufous hummingbird
Cassin's vireo	Black-chinned hummingbird
Nashville warbler	Yellow warbler
Townsend's warbler	

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**Mission Statement:**

Blue Mountain Audubon Society (BMAS) was organized in 1971 and chartered by National Audubon Society in 1972. The Chapter's objectives are to serve its membership and the larger communities of Southeastern Washington and Northeastern Oregon with the goals to appreciate, preserve and enjoy birds, wildlife, and the natural environment of the area. Education is a primary objective of Chapter activities. Through volunteer efforts BMAS provides educational opportunities, conservation activities and enjoyment of wildlife and wildlife habitat opportunities to members and to the public. The Chapter meets the third Thursday, (September through May) at 7:00 p.m. in the Whitman College Science Building. A newsletter, **The Magpiper** is published September through May and is free to members. Non-member subscription fees are \$25 annually. BMAS is a non-profit 501c(3) organization. Find us on the internet at [www.blumtn.org](http://www.blumtn.org)

Join Blue Mountain Audubon Society – Complete the following information and mail along with a check in the amount of \$25 for your first year's membership to: Blue Mountain Audubon PO Box 1106, Walla Walla, WA 99362

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

City: \_\_\_\_\_ State: \_\_\_\_\_ Zip Code: \_\_\_\_\_