

MURIE AUDUBON'S
PLAINS & PEAKS

DECEMBER 2024 / JANUARY 2025 | VOL. 58 ISSUE 8

<http://www.murieaudubon.org> | Facebook @ Murie Audubon Society

MURIE AUDUBON PRESENTS:



UPCOMING EVENTS

Dec 14: Christmas Bird Count

Jan 1: Bates Hole Bird Count

Jan 9, 2025 Program: Non-game Birds of Wyoming

FIELD NOTES FROM THE PRESIDENT



Season's Greetings!

As the year draws to a close, we want to express our heartfelt gratitude for your continued support and enthusiasm for Murie. We're so excited for our spring projects!

Here's an update on the progress we've made on our spring projects. Platte River Restoration Projects at Knife River Ponds: efforts continue to improve this critical habitat for birds and other wildlife. Volunteers are always welcome to join us in weekly bird surveys. These surveys provide valuable data about the health of bird populations in our area, and we're grateful to all who participate. Please contact Zach if you'd be willing to conduct a survey. We're excited about our recent proposal to purchase a prefabricated shed to be transformed into a bird blind at EKW Park. Let us know if you have carpentry skills to modify a shed, build signage, etc, so that we can finalize this project!

Looking forward, we hope that you join us for our Christmas Bird Count, Dec 14th, and the Bate's Hole Bird Count, Dec 1st. More details are found on page 6. We're looking forward to a special trip to witness the breathtaking sandhill crane migration. Mark your calendars for March 17th and stay tuned for sign-up information! We're also working with Audubon Rockies to host a Habitat Hero Garden Workshop in our area. Learn how to create bird-friendly gardens that support local wildlife. This workshop will provide tips, resources, and inspiration for your own backyard habitat.

Merry Christmas!

Jenny Edwards

DECEMBER BIRD CHALLENGE

This month's challenge is to take a young birder bird watching along with you. This is a perfect time of year because kids are out of school, and could really use some outdoor-time. These species are great birds to help them differentiate.

- Black-capped Chickadee
- Northern Flicker
- American Crow
- Dark-eyed Junco
- House Finch
- Mourning Dove
- European Starling
- Common Raven

How to Participate

Many of these birds are feeder birds. Ravens and hawks are great birds to find while driving Wyoming's highways. Help kids document their observations.

Share Your Experience: Post your sightings on our Facebook page (Murie Audubon Society) with **#WyomingBirdwatchChallenge**

Email any photos to jenny5526@mynccsd.org

BOOK CLUB

This month's book selections are great stocking stuffers for the young naturalists (ages 8-14) in your life.

"Read, Learn & Create--The Nature Craft Book" by Clare Beaton Combines storytelling with craft projects.

"Nature Crafts for Kids: 50 Fantastic Things to Make With Mother Nature's Help" by Gwen Diehn and Terry Krautwurst
Fun crafts for kids using simple materials found outdoors.

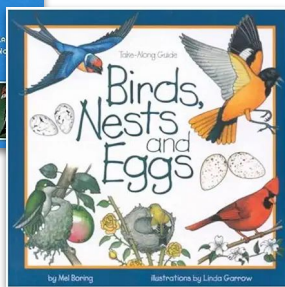
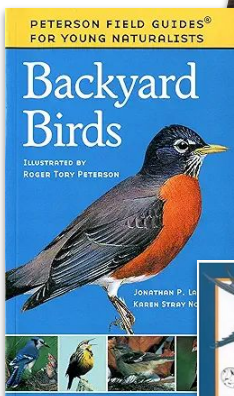
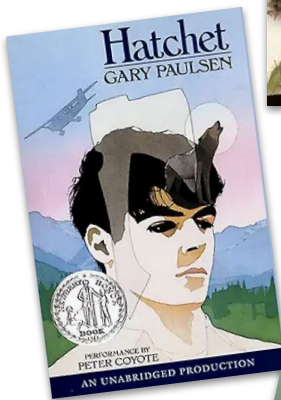
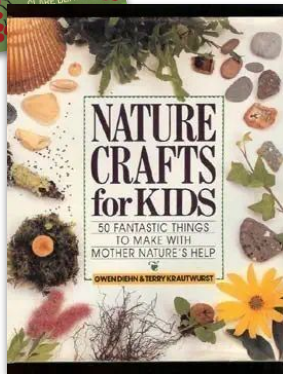
"Hatchet" by Gary Paulsen Survival novel of a boy lost in the wilderness.

"My Side of the Mountain" by Jean Craighead George this series (good news for avid readers) is about a run-away who survives in the Catskill mountains.

"Backyard Birds (Peterson Field Guides for Young Naturalists)" by Jonathan Latimer and Karen Stray Nolting Focuses on common backyard birds, making it ideal for beginners observing birds close to home.

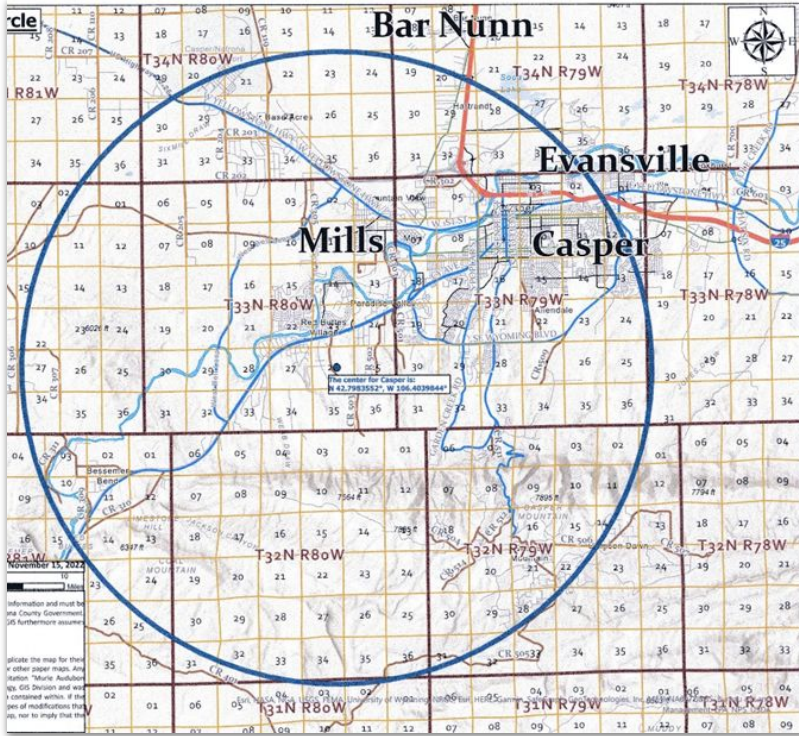
"Birds, Nests & Eggs (Take Along Guides)" by Mel Boring Combines bird identification with educational details about their nesting habits and eggs.

Jenny Edwards



MURIE AUDUBON'S 77TH ANNUAL CHRISTMAS BIRD COUNT

SATURDAY DECEMBER 14, 2024



Murie Audubon will conduct the 77th annual Casper Christmas Bird Count on December 14, 2024. Last year 57 people (37 observers in the field and 20 feeder watchers) helped to find and count 9,592 birds representing 58 species inside a 15-mile diameter circle encompassing most of the Casper area. We can use lots of help for this project – 177 square miles is a lot of ground to cover. The Center of the circle is near the vicinity of the junction of Coates Rd and Prairie Rd. Generally the boundaries are: the east boundary is Wyoming Blvd, the west boundary is Speas Fish Hatchery, the north boundary is just beyond exit 191 on I-25 north, and the south boundary is the south edge of Casper Mountain including parts of Circle Drive.

You don't have to be an expert birder to participate; we need lots of eyes and ears, and we need people to help record data, and to help drive. And we need feeder watchers to report what they have at their feeders, so if you live within the boundaries of the circle, have a bird feeder, and would like to participate, please contact us.

On the day of the count, participants are asked to meet at the SonRise Room of the First United Methodist Church, 302 East 2nd Street in Casper at 7:30 AM for instructions, maps, carpooling and area assignments. At 5 PM, we will meet again at SonRise Room for a potluck dinner, and tabulation of the day's data. Please contact Stacey Scott at 262-0055 or Bruce Walgren at 234-7455 (bruce_walgren@bresnan.net) for more information.

MAP TO SONRISE ROOM– MEETING LOCATION FOR THE CHRISTMAS BIRD COUNT



UPCOMING FIELD TRIPS

If you have questions, please call Stacey Scott at 307-262-0055, I will post field trips and any changes under “Events” on the website, murieaudubon.org. Also, I am looking for more ideas for field trips. Let me know if you have any ideas.

Saturday, Dec 14 - This is the 77th Casper Christmas Bird Count. We try to count all the birds in a 15 mile diameter circle whose west end is the Speas Warm Spring, and the eastern end is about the Country Club. It also has part of Bar Nunn and almost gets to the airport on the north and almost to Coal Mountain Road on the south. We have groups for every kind of birder. We need to go through the streets of Casper, and hike on Coal Mountain and Casper Mountain. We also need people counting their own feeders. In order to not count birds twice, we need to coordinate who is responsible for each area, so please call Stacey Scott at 307-262-055 or Bruce Walgren at 307-234-7455.

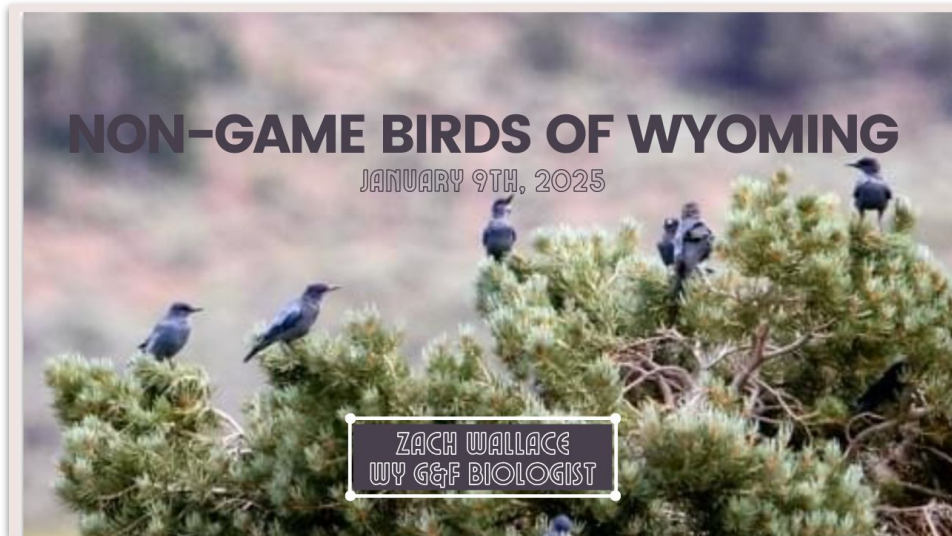
Wednesday, Jan 1, 2025 - Meet at Charlie Scott's house at 7:30 AM for the Bates Hole Christmas Bird Count, the 47th count. Usually, January 1 is a cold and windy day in Casper, and a calm, sunny day in Bates Hole. It can be really nice to get out of the wind, and usually the wind is missing from Bates Hole. This is one of the few Christmas Counts that is still actually rural, which leads to very interesting birding. The count circle goes from the junction of Wyo. 220 and 487 up to just past the Lusby area east to where Wyo 487 crosses the Bates Hole Stock trail to just below where the road crosses Corral Creek to North of Coal Mountain Rd where it crosses Little Red Creek. Call Stacey Scott at 307-262-0055 or Charlie Scott at 307-473-2512 for more details.

Saturday, Jan 11 - Meet at 9:00 AM at the Game and Fish parking lot for a field trip to Gray Reef and Alcova Dams to look at wintering waterfowl.

REPORT ON NOVEMBER 16 FIELD TRIP

Eight of us went for a pleasant walk on top of Casper Mountain. We started out walking down Aspen Way to places Margo Spurrier had seen Dusky Grouse (used to be called Blue Grouse before it was split from its relatives on the West Coast). She spotted one about 25 feet up in a pine tree. It never flew, so everyone got good views of it. I am really impressed with anyone who can just look into a tree and find a grouse, most people simply cannot see the bird. After finding the grouse, we saw more grouse sign than I have ever seen on the mountain. Although we only saw the one grouse, we were constantly seeing tracks in the snow, or piles of droppings. After looking for grouse, 3 of us walked on toward Bart Rea's cabin. I wore out before we got there, but we saw 2 sets of Mountain Chickadees and Red-breasted Nuthatches, and Luis Alza found a Brown Creeper. I haven't seen one for several years, so for me that was a really good bird. We finally got good views of a Clark's Nutcracker and a poor view of a Steller's Jay which we also heard.

MURIE AUDUBON PRESENTS:



No this isn't a mistake - Zach was unable to come in November but has agreed to come in January.

January's speaker is Zach Wallace, the statewide Nongame Bird Biologist for the Wyoming Game and Fish Department, based in Lander. His presentation will cover the Department's long-term monitoring programs for nongame birds, including Trumpeter Swans, Peregrine Falcons, Bald Eagles, and Harlequin Ducks, as well as current projects investigating the habitat needs of American Goshawks, sagebrush songbirds, and Pinyon Jays. He will highlight ongoing collaborations with academic researchers, community scientists, and other partners, all aimed at increasing our knowledge and ability to conserve Wyoming's birds.

Wallace previously served as the Biometrician for the Wyoming Natural Diversity Database at the University of Wyoming, and he brings a strong background in research and coordination from leading projects on birds and other wildlife in Wyoming and across the western United States.

He received his master's degree in wildlife science from Oregon State University in 2014, where his research focused on the nesting ecology of Ferruginous Hawks and Golden Eagles in Wyoming. Wallace's graduate research was done in close collaboration with WY Game and Fish.

Murie Audubon members and the public are invited to this free talk on January 9, 2025 at 7 p.m., at the Izaak Walton Clubhouse, 4205 Fort Caspar Road.

BIRD PHOTO OF THE MONTH

This Eastern Screech Owl spent a full day in October in our linden tree, completely unfazed by a pair of harassing blue jays, before fluttering awkwardly out of sight into a neighboring spruce.



~Rachel Spear

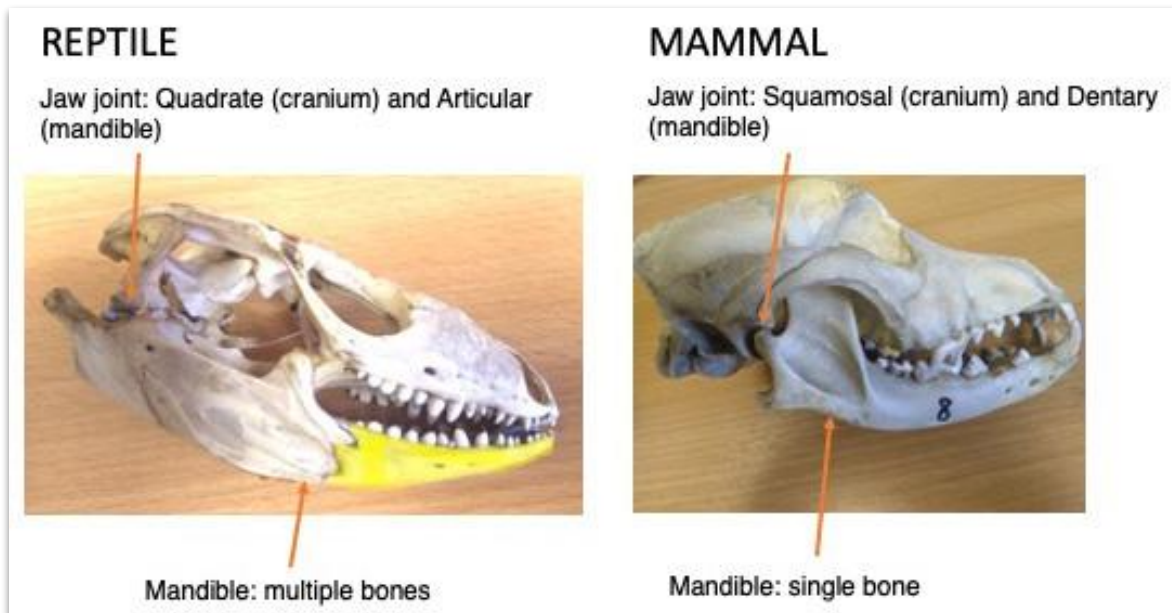
CALLING FOR SUBMISSIONS FOR FEBRUARY

Did you have a rare bird alert recently? Or were you able to capture an excellent shot? Did you travel somewhere and see a new species? Please share, by sending in your photos to be published in our newsletter!

E-mail photos to Murie@murieaudubon.org!

IN CASE YOU MISSED IT...

November's program "What (to a paleontologist) is a Mammal"



When our scheduled speaker – Zach Wallace - couldn't make it in November, J.P. Cavigelli of the Tate Geological Museum at Casper College came to our rescue and presented "What (to a paleontologist) is a Mammal".

As defined by Merriam-Webster, a mammal is any animal of a class (Mammalia) of warm-blooded higher vertebrates (such as placentals, marsupials, or monotremes) that nourish their young with milk secreted by mammary glands, have the skin usually more or less covered with hair, and includes humans. So when you specialize in studying fossils, the soft tissues (skin and mammary) that help define a mammal just aren't there.

What we learned from J.P. is that all mammals have three bones in their middle ear, the incus, malleus, and stapes, which transmit sound vibrations to the inner ear and mammals have a lower jaw made up of a single pair of bones that articulates with the skull in a unique way. These characteristics identify a fossil as a mammal. While there are many bony characteristics that are associated with mammals, this is the one that paleontologists have settled on to define the group. Mammals also have a hard palate, a lack of cervical and lumbar ribs, well fitting leg joints, a double occipital condyle, differentiated teeth and a single lower jaw bone (on each side). These other characteristics show up at different times, and sometimes, several times in the history of life.

We appreciate J.P. coming in and educating our members and guests with his expertise.

-Bruce Walgren & JP Cavigelli

RAFFLE TO BE HELD AT FEBRUARY MEETING

Chris Michelson recently donated some optics and some very nice bird books to Murie Audubon. If you're interested in a spotting scope or if you want to fill out your bird book library, this will be a great chance to get something for yourself or as a gift. The optics include: a Kowa TSN-824 M spotting scope with tripod, and a Kowa TSN-2 spotting scope. We will be selling raffle tickets for the two spotting scopes and for Doug Faulkner's Birds of Wyoming book at the January and February meetings. The drawing will take place in February. Ticket prices will be \$20 each for the Kowa TSN-824 M scope, \$10 each for the Kowa TSN-2 (with 2 lenses) and \$5 each for the book. There is still a good selection of books available.



YOUR STORIES

Calling All Murie Friends: Share Your Stories and Insights in Our Newsletter!

Whether you're a seasoned birder or just starting out, your experiences and knowledge are invaluable to our Murie Audubon community. That's why we're inviting you to contribute to our newsletter!

Why Share Your Bird Watching Experiences?

Birdwatching is more than just a hobby; it's a way to connect with nature, contribute to conservation efforts, and join a global community of like-minded enthusiasts. By sharing your stories, insights, and discoveries, you can:

1. **Inspire Others:** Your experiences could spark curiosity and enthusiasm in others. Whether it's a rare sighting or a simple joy of watching familiar backyard birds, your stories can motivate others to explore birdwatching more deeply.
2. **Learn and Grow:** Birdwatching is a continual learning process. By sharing your observations and challenges, you open the door to feedback, advice, and new perspectives from fellow birders. It's a great way to expand your knowledge and refine your skills.
3. **Contribute to Conservation:** Your sightings and insights can contribute to broader conservation efforts. By documenting bird behaviors, migration patterns, or unusual sightings, you can help scientists and conservationists track changes in bird populations and habitats.
4. **Build Community:** Birdwatching can be a solitary activity, but it doesn't have to be. Sharing your experiences helps build a sense of community. You may find others who have had similar experiences or discover new birding spots and techniques.
5. **Citizen Science:** Bird sightings and journal entries from 50 years ago are proving to be important scientific evidence for documenting key changes in migration, abundance, and frequency of birds.

What Can You Contribute?

Each month, the newsletter will provide a prompt. However, please share any of the following outside of the prompt. Here are some ideas.

- **Exciting Bird Sightings:** Did you spot a rare species or observe an unusual behavior? Share the story of your encounter and what made it special.
- **Birdwatching Gear:** Have you found the perfect gear that makes birding more enjoyable. Share your tips with fellow birders!
- **Favorite Birding Spots:** What's your go-to birdwatching location? Describe the habitat, the species you typically see, and what makes it unique.
- **Cool photos you've captured of birds.**
- **Advice to new birders in the area.**

YOUR STORIES

February's Prompt:

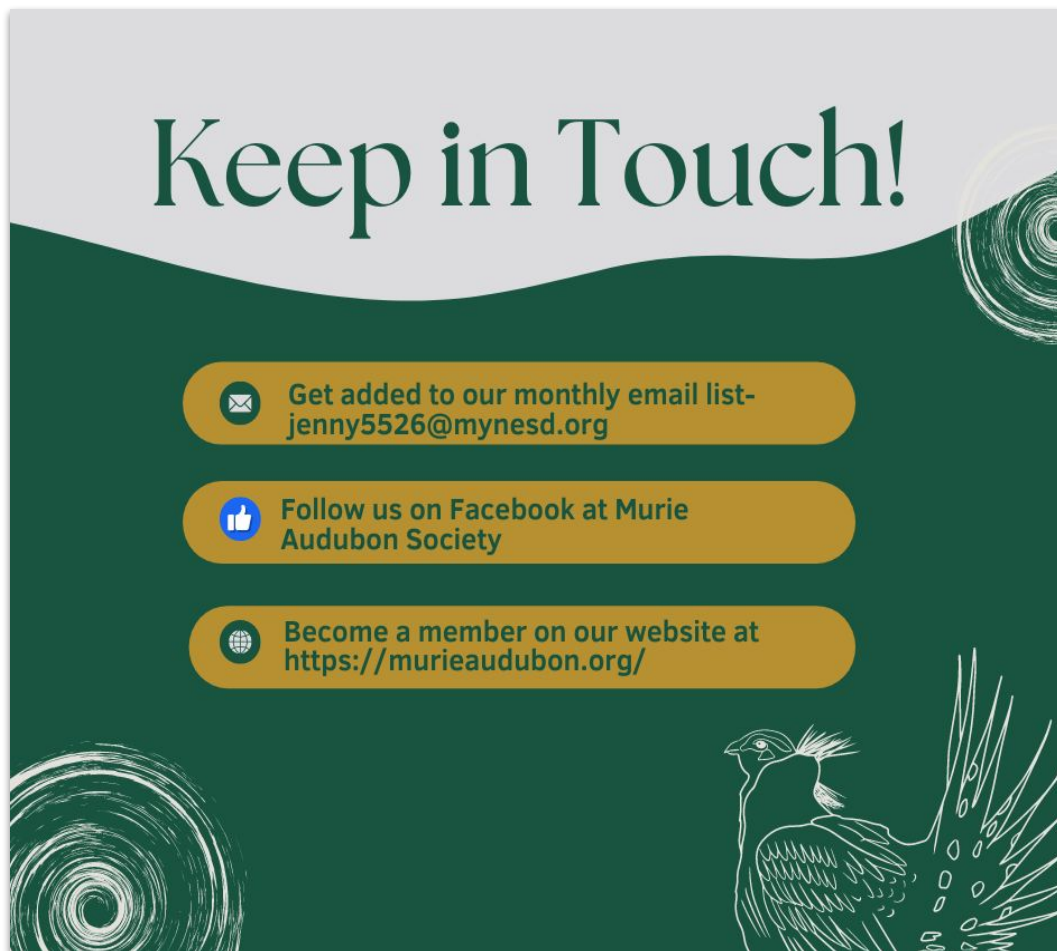
Christmas Bird Count- Tell us a story about a Christmas Bird Count Adventure.

How to Submit Your Contributions

Contributing to our newsletter is easy! Simply write up your story, tip, or insight and send it to our editorial team at jenny5526@mynesd.org by the **third week of each month**. Feel free to include photos, illustrations, or links to additional resources. We'll review your submission and may reach out with any questions or for further details.

Happy Writing!

Jenny Edwards



MAS VISION STATEMENT

The vision of Murie Audubon Society is to instill a passion for nature in present and future generations through awareness, enjoyment, understanding, appreciation, conservation, and advocacy.

MAS MISSION STATEMENT

The mission of Murie Audubon Society is to promote the conservation of birds and other wildlife through education and enhancement of natural habitats, understanding, appreciation, conservation, and advocacy.



RENEW OR BECOME A REGULAR MEMBER OF MURIE AUDUBON FOR ONLY \$10. REMEMBER, ALL MEMBERSHIPS EXPIRE SEPTEMBER 1ST

Today's Date: _____

\$10 One Year \$20 Two Years \$30 Three Years or electronic payment on our website.

Name: _____

Address: _____

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Phone: _____ (Not shared with anyone – honest!)

Email: _____ (Again, not shared with anyone)

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