

The **BARRED OWL**

Newsletter of the Baton Rouge Audubon Society

Volume XXXIV, Number 4

4th Quarter, 2007

WAL-MART SAYS NO to Louisiana Cypress Mulch

*Excerpted from Gulf Restoration Network's
Gulf Currents, December 2007*

This summer, Wal-Mart Stores, Inc. informed all of its mulch suppliers that it will no longer accept cypress mulch that is harvested, bagged, or manufactured in the state of Louisiana. Wal-Mart's action has changed the dynamic in Louisiana. The logging industry's stranglehold on Baton Rouge has loosened, and there is now room for the state to take decisive action to protect cypress forests. However, these developments could place greater pressure on cypress forests in other parts of the country. If Lowe's, Home Depot, and Wal-Mart insist on selling cypress mulch, it must be certified as sustainable by a credible, independent, third-party program. Until then, all three companies continue to violate their own corporate sustainability claims and policies.

Wal-Mart is just one of the companies that is driving the cypress mulch industry. Lowe's and Home Depot have also implemented a moratorium on harvesting cypress mulch from south of I-10/I-12, but they have no way of verifying whether their suppliers are upholding the ban. Cypress mulch producers have proven willing to hide the source of their product in the past, and it was the Save Our Cypress coalition that exposed the truth about cypress clear-cutting in southern Louisiana.

(Continued on page 4)

Swamp Feathers!

... Beginning Birding with Jane Patterson

Baton Rouge Audubon Society is partnering with BREC to present a series of classes designed to introduce the wonderful experience of bird-watching to young people and their families. The classes are recommended for children 8 to 15 with an accompanying parent (preferably one child per parent). People 16 and up may attend alone. Each topic will include a classroom session at BREC's Bluebonnet Swamp on Sunday afternoons from 1:30 to 4:30pm. Each class will focus on a special area relating to birds, then offer instruction on using binoculars and field guides, and how to find and identify birds, before a short field trip into the swamp to practice.



(Continued on page 3)

BRAS FIELD TRIPS

For both trips below, please pre-register by calling Robert during business hours at 926.2223 or by e-mail at 20legend@cox.net

Saturday, January 19 - Join Dennis Demcheck for a leisurely half-day outing to 3 or 4 Baton Rouge homes to observe wintering hummingbirds. The trip will be 2 weeks after the Baton Rouge Christmas Bird Count, so we will have a good idea where the best birds are located. Expect to see 3 to 5 species, such as Rufous, Calliope and Buff-Bellied. The trip will focus on homes with hummingbirds that have a high probability of being easily seen. We will meet at Coffee Call on College Dr. at 8am.

Saturday, February 16 - Jane Patterson will lead a group to the Richfield Riversilt Property which is adjacent to the Mississippi River a few miles Southeast of Baton Rouge. The trip should last no longer than 4 hours. We will meet at Coffee Call on College Dr. at 7 a.m. and carpool to the birding site.

Sanctuary Report: *Victoria Bayless*

On December 4, several volunteers along with Ron and I met Bill Fontenet and Peter Loos to plant trees at Peveto Woods Sanctuary. This is a continuing part of the grant we received from the Gulf Coast Bird Observatory for restoration. We planted mulberries, hackberries, live oaks and toothache trees along with some understory perennials. The weather was beautiful, several phoebes kept us company, and the ground was not too hard and dry.

I spoke with a local contractor about the possibility of putting a pavilion on top of the existing supports where our house used to be and it sounds like that is a possibility.

I also spoke with Jason Ducote from Chenier Energy about helping us with a profes-

sional plan and equipment for building our pond, trails and parking lot. He took me down the Lighthouse Road in Johnsons' Bayou and I saw the mitigation area they are creating that will make for some fabulous birding spots in the near future. Overall it was a very successful trip. I am looking forward to a Sanctuary committee meeting in January in order to finally get moving on the plans for the pond, the parking lot and the pavilion.

I know I spoke with some of you at the LOS meeting in Cameron in October. As always, thank you for your support and encouragement for the on-going efforts to completely restore and improve our Sanctuary. I wish you all happy birding during the holidays.

"Audubon Adventures are a hit!" - *Jane Patterson*

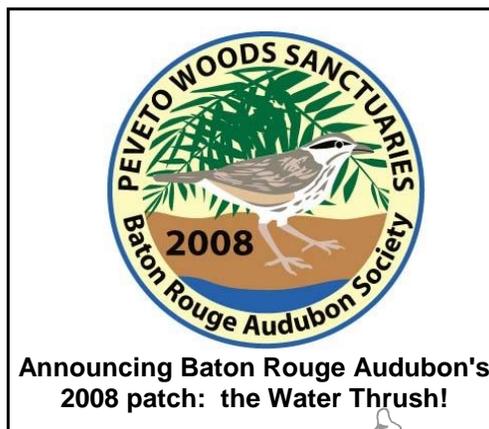
81 classrooms in Baton Rouge have received their Audubon Adventures environmental educational kits and are they enjoying them! BRAS allocated the expense of \$46.15 per kit for this program. Audubon Adventures is an environmental education program for children in grades 3 to 5. It was developed by professional environmental educators, and presents basic, scientifically accurate facts about birds, wildlife, and their habitats. The goal is to introduce young people, their families, and their teachers, to the fundamental principles by which the natural world functions.

"The Audubon Adventures kits are great. They are well suited to the kids and it keeps their interest. I even heard a "wow" when I introduced the first newspaper. I have just begun using the materials because after looking over the objectives I saw that they would intergrate well with our unit on ecosystems. The lessons and activities in the teacher's resource manual are easy to use, I like that it provides hands-on activities as well as research activities. I also downloaded the assessment questions from online to evaluate the students' learning experience with the newspapers. I would like to thank the Baton Rouge Audubon Society for providing my class with these wonderful learning tools."

-- Sheila Johnson, Fifth Grade Teacher,
Forest Heights Academy of Excellence

"Hey Miss Jane, I love the kit. We actually just used the Alligator magazine lessons for our southeast unit in Social Studies. The kids loved the pictures and activities. We also made birdhouses out of orange juice cartons and binoculars out of paper towel rolls that we set up around the school yard and went "bird watching". We actually saw more squirrels than birds, but the idea was there. We are also going to start a school garden (which was one of the suggested enrichment activities) hopefully this spring. I'm going to let Ms. Watson and Ms. LLaneza (our science teachers in 4th) use some of the animal articles when they do their "Creatures of the Earth" unit. But, all in all we love the kit. Thank you so much."

-- Laura Klatter, 4th Grade Teacher,
Cedarcrest-Southmoor Elementary



Announcing Baton Rouge Audubon's
2008 patch: the Water Thrush!

BRAS 4-1-1

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Some of the Most Imperiled U.S. Birds Make their Home in Louisiana

Melanie Driscoll

BATON ROUGE, LOUISIANA, NOVEMBER 30, 2007 - Louisiana is an important home to at least 60 of the 178 birds that Audubon and the American Bird Conservancy (ABC) have identified as in need of top-priority conservation attention. For many of them, conservation efforts in Louisiana as well as nationally will play a critical role in determining their future health and survival. Priority WatchList species found in Louisiana are:

Whooping Crane (protected by the Endangered Species Act) Unregulated shooting and loss of habitat reduced this species to fewer than 20 individuals around the turn of the 20th Century. Implementation of a recovery plan developed under the Endangered Species Act has resulted in an increase in population to over 200 individuals, and has spawned efforts to re-establish wild breeding populations in addition to the one in Aransas, Texas. The last Whooping Crane in Louisiana was captured on Audubon's Rainey Sanctuary and was moved to Aran-

sas. Audubon in Louisiana, through the Louisiana Important Bird Areas Technical Committee, recently identified the Rainey Marsh as an Important Bird Area (IBA), and is working with the Whooping Crane Louisiana Partnership toward the reintroduction of Whooping Cranes in the marshes of western Louisiana.

Piping Plover (protected by the Endangered Species Act) Protection of this shorebird's beachfront nesting grounds in the northern U.S. and Canada is helping improve the outlook for this species. Human development along beaches, increased beach recreation, disturbance by pets, and increased predation require constant vigilance. Intensive conservation efforts supported by the Endangered Species Act have helped stabilize populations and allowed populations to increase in some regions of the Atlantic and Gulf coasts. Louisiana's coastal beaches and barrier islands provide important wintering grounds for this species, a focus of Audubon's Coastal Bird Conservation Program (www.audubon.org/bird/cbcp/).

Red-cockaded Woodpecker (protected by the Endangered Species Act) Habitat loss from extensive logging of the Southeast's long-leaf pine forest savannas and suburban and agricultural development have greatly reduced overall population size and isolated populations of this woodpecker. Protection strategies via the Endangered Species Act and the development of nest cavity inserts and other conservation measures are helping populations in many places, but restoration of open long-leaf pine forest is desperately needed.

Swallow-tailed Kite Extensive logging of southeastern forests probably caused the historical reduction in range and population decline of the northern subspecies of Swallow-tailed Kite which nests in the U.S. Nesting kites typically require vast expanses of forested wetlands. Current threats are largely unknown and need to be identified. On the nesting grounds, human-caused threats include the development and logging of nesting areas during the breeding season and occasional instances of persecution. In addition, fragmentation of forests and the opening up of the surrounding landscape on the breeding grounds may artificially inflate the abundance of certain nest predators such as the Great Horned Owl.

Seaside Sparrow This habitat specialist lives in salt and brackish marshes, especially tidal marshes. Habitat loss and degradation are primarily due to marsh subsidence, dredging, draining, filling, ditching, and spoil disposal. In Louisiana, Audubon is undertaking extensive marsh restoration projects in

the Rainey Marsh IBA to restore degraded marsh and provide a model for marsh restoration along the Gulf Coast. The restored marsh will help additional WatchList species, including Mottled Duck and Short-eared Owl.

Least Tern The subspecies that breeds on the coast has been impacted negatively by development and recreation in coastal breeding habitats. The interior Least Tern's natural nesting habitat on sandbars along major river systems is threatened by modern hydrological practices including channelization, irrigation, and the construction of reservoirs and pools. Historically, terns timed nesting to coincide with low flow periods when sandbars were exposed for long periods of time. Discharges from dams pose problems for nesting birds because summer flow patterns are now unpredictable, sometimes flooding nesting areas and drying out feeding areas. Hydrologic practices that divert the river's flow often prevent the formation of nesting habitat. Recreational activities near nesting areas may sometimes pose a threat to eggs and young. Through its Mississippi River Initiative, Audubon is using the four key strategies of policy, science, education, and infrastructure to restore the function and ecological health of the Mississippi River ecosystem, which will include restoration of Least Tern habitat

Mottled Duck Habitat loss and degradation of brackish and fresh water marshes are causing population declines. Suitable habitat is being lost or degraded due to marsh subsidence, saltwater intrusion, draining of wetlands, agriculture, and spread of introduced species. Another threat is hybridization with feral Mallards. The introduction of captive-reared, non-migratory Mallards, a close relative of the Mottled Duck, has allowed hybridization to become another threat.

Prothonotary Warbler Louisiana is considered to be a remaining stronghold for this species, yet many swamps and river bottoms within the state are undergoing degradation or destruction. The Maurepas Swamp, recently identified as an IBA, represents seriously degraded habitat: the tupelo trees used for nesting are dying because of saltwater intrusion and/or permanent flooding with stagnant water. In other parts of the state, habitat is being lost to logging of forested wetlands, and development that includes draining and filling of swamps and river bottoms. The Brown-headed Cowbird, a brood-parasite whose population exploded due to human changes in land use, poses a secondary threat to the population.

For more information on the report and the complete WatchList, visit www.audubon.org.

Swamp Feathers!

(Continued from page 1)

The classes are as follows:

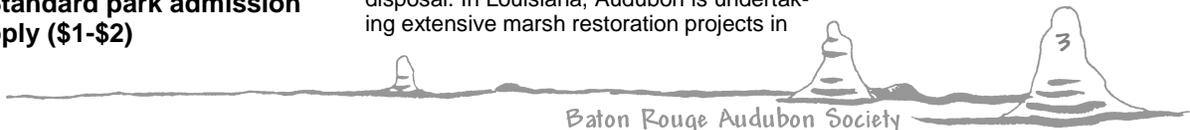
Jan 20 - Cool Birds around Baton Rouge - You know where to find birds? How about Wal-mart? But those birds are pretty boring...come find out about the cool birds you can find right here in the Baton Rouge area, if you just know where to look.

Jan 27 - Hummingbirds - Come learn some fascinating facts about the tiniest of our feathered friends.

Feb 10 - Helping Birds - Sharing ideas about how you can make a difference in the lives of birds. We'll discuss protection of bird habitat, participation in citizen science programs, and issues that affect birds that you can help with.

Feb 17- Attracting Birds to your Yard - What you can do to bring all kinds of birds to your yard where you can enjoy them up close.

Fees: Standard park admission rates apply (\$1-\$2)



President's Report - Harriet Pooler

Lindsay St. Amant Seeley recently joined the Baton Rouge Audubon Board as Program Co-Chair with Charlie Fryling. They are working on the 2008 programs, the dates of which have not yet been determined. If there are any subjects or speakers that you would like to hear please send this information to Lindsay at lindsay.seely@gmail.com. Welcome Lindsay! We look forward to future BRAS presentations and thank you for your help.

Our annual fundraising letter which was mailed this summer netted \$4,000 towards the Education/IBA programs. I thank the 28 plus members who contributed to these worthwhile initiatives-- for their donation and for their continued loyalty to Audubon. Unfortunately, \$4,000 will not cover the \$15,000 expenses (\$9,000 IBA & \$6,000 Education) we allotted and approved for these programs. We are exploring alternate funding sources such as grant writing and approaching foundations. Our goals are ambitious, but we feel this is what we as a chapter are called to do. We still need your tax deductible contributions to keep BRAS financially healthy.

By the time you read this article the CBC will have come and gone. This is one of Audubon's best known events. If you did not participate in it this year, please consider it for next year. It is a wonderful way to increase your birding ID skills in addition to gathering information that helps track seasonal bird population trends. Thanks go to Kevin Morgan and Jane Patterson, compilers for the BR CBC.

As BRAS president, I look to 2008 with good expectations of all the things we want to accomplish. I hope to see you soon and best wishes for a good New Year.

Wal-Mart Says No

(Continued from page 1)

Wal-Mart recognized the difficulty in tracking the true sources of the mulch and made all of Louisiana off-limits. Yet, even they can't be totally sure because mulch produced in Louisiana is often labeled with addresses in Texas, Arkansas, and Florida.

Wal-Mart's move is a good first step in securing the Gulf endangered cypress swamps, but we've still got a hike ahead of us. Cypress forests throughout the Gulf and the country are still at risk of becoming mulch. The Save Our Cypress Coalition continues to call on Lowe's, Home Depot, and Wal-Mart to stop selling unsustainable cypress mulch – no matter where it is harvested. The Gulf Restoration Network is rapidly ramping up its research, education, advocacy, and outreach to expand the campaign throughout Florida. Over 40 Floridian organizations have signed on to a Save Our Cypress campaign letter.

Stay involved by staying informed at saveourcypress.org. And, please, tell your friends and family to never buy cypress mulch.

Thanks to our Members!

Baton Rouge Audubon is appreciative of one and all who make it possible for us to send you this publication, maintain our sanctuaries, and the other projects we undertake on behalf of conservation and birds. We can't do it without you!

May 1, 2007 - December 1, 2007

CERULEAN WARBLER (\$1000)

Kermit & Dorothy Cummings, Huntsville, TX; Lionel H. Head, River Ridge, LA

LOUISIANA WATERTHRUSH (\$250)

Peter Monroe, New Orleans, LA

ROSEBREASTED GROSBEAK (\$100)

Frederick T. Billings III, Baton Rouge, LA; Dennis Demcheck & Kay Radlauer, Baton Rouge, LA; Mary Guthrie,

New Orleans, LA; G. M. Guynn, Baton Rouge, LA; Steve & Chris Hightower, Folsom, LA; Kenneth P. Klinepeter, Baton Rouge, LA; E. V. Tiny Moore, Alexandria, LA; Helaine Moyses, Baton Rouge, LA; Sara L. Simmonds, Alexandria, LA; Wayne & Becky Watkins, Alexandria, LA

WOOD THRUSH (\$50)

Margaret W. Campbell, Pineville, LA; Julian & Doris A. Darden, Baton Rouge, LA; Sandra Davis, Baton Rouge, LA; Linda Dawson, Montrose, AL; James Edmonds, Sulphur, LA; Mohamed & Joyce El-Mogazi, Lake Charles, LA; W. E. Godfrey II, Natchez, MS; Louise M. Hanchey, Lake Charles, LA; John & Cindy Hartgerink, Baton Rouge, LA; Wayne L. Kelly, French Settlement, LA; Joseph & Joanne Kleiman, Baton Rouge, LA; Sybil McDonald, Baton Rouge, LA; Stephen L. Pagans, West Monroe, LA; Harriet Pooler, Baton Rouge, LA; Harold Roscoe, Baton Rouge, LA

What Our Friends Are Doing

Save Our Cypress Coalition – for the latest news go to saveourcypress.org.

Feliciana Nature Society - 7th Annual Audubon Country BirdFest, April 4, 5, and 6 - The event will feature Cat Island National Wildlife Refuge and wildlife artist Murrell Butler's Oak Hill Plantation, plus four private properties - Beechwood Plantation, Hollywood Plantation, Woodhill Farm, and Wyoming Plantation. Call 225-635-3110 or visit www.audubonbirdfest.com.



Trip Report - Justin Bosler (LSU - Baton Rouge)

BRAS ventured out along the northshore of Lake Pontchartrain on the first of December with temperatures at 72 degrees F. The Boy Scout Road boardwalk of Big Branch Marsh NWR was our first stop. This boardwalk was destroyed by Hurricane Katrina, but was rebuilt and expanded in early 2007. The pine flatwood ecosystem meets the pristine freshwater marsh and shorelines on the lake to the south, and a diversity of life thrives.

The morning began with a procession of American Robins. One of our main targets, the Red-cockaded Woodpecker, was already out foraging. A recent prescribed burn along the pine section of the boardwalk undoubtedly scattered wrens and sparrows elsewhere. Further along the trail, we ran into a massive winter foraging flock of over a hundred Yellow-rumped Warblers, and smaller numbers of Eastern Bluebirds and Pine Warblers. At this same spot we tallied nearly a dozen Brown-headed Nuthatches and heard a couple Gray Catbirds.

As we reached the edge of the marsh, dozens of Eastern Bluebirds and Yellow-rumped Warblers sallied from the wax myrtles. Yellow-rumps were also busy in the charred understory. A Clapper Rail ventured from the cover. Surprisingly, King Rail was the only large rail that appeared on the refuge checklist, as this was purely a freshwater marsh. The more common Virginia Rails were less cooperative and usually let their presence known with shrieking or lower-pitched rasping calls. A flyover White-winged Dove directed everybody's attention away from the marsh. The grating "sklit" calls of a family of Red-cockaded Woodpeckers were soon audible, and shortly thereafter, four Red-cockaded Woodpeckers were winging their way over our heads. Later, at Fontainebleau State Park we tallied quite a few Red-headed Woodpeckers, which made 7 woodpecker species, but a disappointing miss of Yellow-bellied Sapsucker kept us from reaching eight.

Moving along, several members of the group picked out more Clapper Rails in the marsh vegetation, and at least two series of CLRA vocalizations were heard. We had good looks at Marsh and Sedge Wrens and a perched Merlin (probable female) once back on Boy Scout Road. Also noteworthy was a small flyover flock of Cedar Waxwings (5). American Goldfinches flew over in ones and twos.

Our first stop on the lakefront, terminus of LA-434, was slow. A few distant ducks whizzed by. A flock of American White Pelicans, a few Greater Yellowlegs, and a couple Northern Harriers were some of the few species tallied. Hunters were many, and one of only five dabbling ducks seen, a Gadwall, quickly felt the heat as it lifted from the marsh. Others included a pair of Mottled Ducks and two distant Mallards. Other lakefront stops included Fontainebleau State Park, Sunset Point in Mandeville, and the Madisonville Boat Landing. Between these three locations we managed only 105 Lesser Scaup, 174 Buffleheads, 8 Red-breasted Mergansers (all females), 18 Horned Grebes, 6 Pied-billed Grebes, and 4 Common Loons. Forster's Terns were numerous with 1,165 on the day; roughly one thousand of those at Sunset Point in Mandeville. It was surprising to see 5-10 of them in, or rapidly attaining, crisp breeding plumage for the date. We also had our only Osprey of the morning at Sunset Point. At least two Wilson's Snipes were recorded at the Madisonville Boat Landing in addition to some of the waterfowl mentioned above and approximately 500 American Coot to the west on the lake.

Overall, it was a mildly dull, yet successful field trip for BRAS with 88 species. Leaders Devin and Justin Bosler thank all 10 participants for joining them.

Thank you for your support of our programs!

Earlier this year, BRAS sent to all of our members a fundraising letter requesting support for our Important Bird Areas and Education programs. We are pleased to recognize below those of you who generously donated. In this issue, you can read about the significant work and results achieved in both areas. BRAS is proud of its part in these accomplishments. If you would still like to make a contribution, please send it to: Baton Rouge Audubon Society, P.O. Box 67016, Baton Rouge, LA 70896. We couldn't do it without you!

If you'd like to join our email list to learn about BRAS activities, field trips, and other announcements, send an email to Jane Patterson at braseducation@cox.net

Donations of \$1000: Joseph D. Guillory, Baton Rouge, LA

Donations of \$250: Peter Monroe, New Orleans, LA; Dorothy Prowell, Baton Rouge, LA

Donations of \$200: Rex & Miriam Davey, Baton Rouge, LA; Doris Falkenhainer, Baton Rouge, LA

Donations of \$150: Michael J. Caire, West Monroe, LA; Catherine Coates, Baton Rouge, LA; Helen E. Fant, Baton Rouge, LA; Robert L. MacLaughlin III, Baton Rouge, LA; Sara L. Simmonds, Alexandria, LA

Donations of \$125: Helaine Moyse, Baton Rouge, LA

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New Orleans, LA; Richard E. Foerster, Cedar City, UT; Keith R. Gibson, Baton Rouge, LA; Francis X. Guglielmo, Baton Rouge, LA; Nell Hennessy, Washington, DC; Suzanne N. Mague, New Orleans, LA

Donations up to \$50: John W. Barton, Baton Rouge, LA; Robert Dunnell, Natchez, MS; Grayson & Jane Rayborn, Hattiesburg, MS; Larry R. Raymond, Shreveport, LA; Jill B. Rehn, Prairieville, LA; Peter C. Ocenton, Jessup, MD; Alan Troy, St. Francisville, LA

Donations of \$25 - \$49: Carol S. Brown, Baton Rouge, LA; John C. Moser, Pineville, LA

Anonymous donations of \$560 were received.

Baton Rouge Chapter of the National Audubon Society

Baton Rouge Audubon Society

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Keep Your Membership Current!

If your membership expires, you will no longer receive *The Barred Owl!* Well, eventually we take your name off the list. It is expensive to produce and membership dues help to cover that cost. Please see the expiration code on the first line of the label above your name. BRAS-only subscriptions will identify the month and year in which your membership expires (e.g. BRAS Dec. 2006). We are working on updating NAS memberships to show the same (e.g. NAS Dec. 2006).

Keeping your membership current is important!

BRAS and National Audubon Membership

You may join NAS by going to their website (audubon.org) and you automatically become a member of both NAS and BRAS. You will receive the quarterly award-winning *Audubon* magazine as well as the quarterly BRAS newsletter, *The Barred Owl*.

Patches Extra sanctuary patches or patches for NAS members are \$10 each and can be ordered by mailing the form below. If you are joining BRAS and want a free patch, you must put "1" in the blank.

BRAS Only Membership

If you want all of your dues to support local conservation and education, join BRAS only. You will NOT receive the *Audubon* magazine. You WILL receive *The Barred Owl* and a free sanctuary patch. You may join on-line at any level by visiting our website www.braudubon.org, or send this form with your check to: BRAS, P.O. Box 67016, BR LA 70896.

Baton Rouge Audubon Society (BRAS)

Please enroll me as a member of BRAS! Enclosed is my check for:

- \$25 Individual Membership
- \$30 Family Membership
- \$50 Wood Thrush Donation
- \$100 Rose-breasted Grosbeak Donation
- \$250 Louisiana Waterthrush Donation
- \$500 Painted Bunting Donation
- \$1000 Cerulean Warbler Donation
- \$ _____ Additional Contribution
- # _____ of patches (indicate 1 which is free with BRAS membership; additional patches \$10 each; NAS member patches @ \$10 each; no patch will be sent if there is no indication.)

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Address: _____

City: _____ State: _____ Zip: _____

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