



Tern and Plover Conservation Partnership

Conservation. Sensible Solutions.

A Newsletter by and for our Volunteers and Partners

<http://ternandplover.unl.edu>



As the Plover Terns

Happy Summer!

Our Piping Plovers and Least Terns have made their way back to Nebraska. This is gearing up to be an exciting summer. During the winter, 5 of the plovers we banded during summer 2008 were spotted along the Louisiana and Texas coasts. We'd certainly like to find as many as we can that return this season, and that

means we need lots of eyes looking for them.

If you see any terns or plovers while you're out this summer, please let us know. Have a great summer!

*Chris Thody, Outreach Coordinator
Mary Bomberger Brown, Program Coordinator*

Catch Us on YouTube



<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=pkW7bb4MHZU>

Be sure to catch the Tern and Plover Conservation Partnership's newest video, "Points About Plovers—An Afterschool Special", on YouTube. The video was produced by Nongame Bird TV, the same producer as last Fall's "Respect the Signs, Respect the Birds". You can also catch the Nongame Bird TV series on TimeWarner Local Access at 4:30 p.m. Mondays, and 7:30 p.m. Fridays.

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Thody Receives Alumni Award

Congratulations go out to Chris Thody, Outreach Coordinator for the Tern and Plover Conservation Partnership. The University of Nebraska-Lincoln Wildlife Club awarded Chris the 2009 Alumni Award at their annual banquet on 25 April.

Chris was an active member of the UNL Wildlife Club from 1993 to 1999. Ron Case, UNL Emeritus Professor, presented the award, describing how he first met her; a wife, a mother of a young boy, and a non-traditional student who was looking for a change in careers.

Chris held the offices of secretary, public relations, and president in the Wildlife Club, while earning



her Bachelor's degree in Natural Resources with an emphasis in Fisheries and Wildlife. She also won the Outstanding Wildlife Club Student, Merit Award, and several Top Student and Conservation Education awards during her time as a member of the club.

The UNL Wildlife Club continues to be an important part of her life. Wildlife Club students have become summer field technicians for the Tern and Plover Conservation Partnership. Another student who participated in the Partnership's high school Job Shadowing program, enrolled in the School of Natural Resources Fisheries and Wildlife program and became an active member of the Wildlife Club.

Also receiving awards were: Aaron Hildreth, Brian Smith Memorial Outstanding Student Award; Wes Sheets, 2009 Howard L. Wieggers Lincoln Journal Star Nebraska Outstanding Wildlife Conservation Award; Phil Stollberg, Merit Award.

Annual Tern and Plover Meeting a Great Success

The Tern and Plover Conservation Partnership hosted the annual Nebraska Tern and Plover Meeting on February 23 in Hardin Hall. More than 60 people attended.

Special invited speakers were Susan Haig, from Oregon State University, spoke about Piping Plover and Least Tern population genetics. Elise Elliott-Smith, also from Oregon State University, spoke about the International Piping Plover Census.

Presenters were from the University of Nebraska-Lincoln, Oregon State University, Nebraska Game and Parks Commission, the Platte River Recovery Implementation Program, the American Bird Conservancy, the U.S. Geological Survey, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, the National Park Service, the Central Nebraska Public Power and Irrigation District, Nebraska Public Power District, the Central Platte Natural Resources District,

and the Tern and Plover Conservation Partnership.

Others in attendance were from HDR Consulting, the Rocky Mountain Bird Observatory, the Nebraska Environmental Trust, the U.S. Department of Agriculture, the Nebraska Ornithologists' Union Breeding Bird Atlas Project, New Zealand Land and Pelagic Bird Tours, and the Nature Conservancy.



A special thanks goes out to our volunteer Diane Pratt for catering this event. Great job, Diane!

CONGRATULATIONS to Diane for winning the 2009 Volunteer Advocate Award from Lincoln's Volunteer Partners organization.



Carol Aron, a U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service biologist from Bismarck, ND, gives a presentation about the 5-year review of the Endangered Species Act listing status of the Piping Plover

Rivers and Wildlife Celebration 2009

The 39th Rivers and Wildlife Celebration was held in Kearney, NE, to celebrate the return of Sandhill Cranes to the Platte River. Every year more than 500,000 Sandhill cranes descend on a 150 mile stretch of the central Platte River, stopping over to fatten up before they head to nesting areas in Canada, Alaska, and Siberia. This event is the longest-running bird festival in the United States, and is hosted by Audubon Nebraska and the Nebraska Partnership for All-Bird Conservation.

The Tern and Plover Conservation Partnership is a part of the Planning Committee and organized the silent auction, which helps fund bird conservation awards distributed by the Nebraska Partnership for All-Bird Conservation.

Look for more information about the 40th annual Rivers and Wildlife Celebration

on our website in January and February. If you haven't witnessed the spectacular crane migration, plan a visit to Kearney next year!



Nebraska Partnership for All-Bird Conservation



Photo by Joel Jorgensen

Coordinator's Corner

We welcomed the first Piping Plover of 2009 on 21 April at a site near North Bend. The first Interior Least Tern of 2009 was spotted on 14 May at a site near Ashland.

With the terns and plovers busily nesting all along the Platte, Loup, Elkhorn, Niobrara, and Missouri rivers, I think this is a good time for us to review what the two laws that protect our terns and plovers—the federal Endangered Species Act and the Nebraska Nongame and Endangered Species Conservation Act – actually say and what that means for us.

The federal Endangered Species Act states that all species that are in danger of extinction are of “esthetic, ecological, educational, historical, recreational, and scientific value to the Nation and its people”. The federal law goes on to say that the natural resources of our entire country can and should be better protected for the benefit of eve-

ryone. The purpose of the federal Endangered Species Act is to “provide a means whereby the ecosystem upon which endangered species and threatened species depend may be conserved”. We are asked to protect threatened and endangered species by protecting where they live.

The Nebraska Nongame and Endangered Species Conservation Act states that all of our nongame, threatened and endangered species need special protection and that it is in all of our best interests to protect those species through the preservation of their environment. Again, we are asked to protect threatened and endangered species by protecting where they live.

Both laws explicitly state that “take” of any protected species is a violation of the law, but what is “take”? “Take” includes harassing, harming, pursuing, hunting, shooting, wounding, killing, trapping, capturing, or collecting any of these species. “Harass” means

disturbing species to such an extent that their normal behavior is disturbed. “Harm” means killing or injuring these species—this can include modifying or degrading their habitat. These definitions may seem pretty harsh, but activities that seem inconsequential to us may have serious consequences for the species.

By protecting threatened and endangered species and where they live, we are protecting ourselves and where we live...it is also the right thing to do.

I'd be remiss if I didn't remind you to consider making a contribution to the Tern and Plover Excellence Fund in support of the Tern and Plover Conservation Partnership...the terns and plovers would be very grateful.

If you see any terns or plovers this summer, please let us know.

Mary



Mary Bomberger Brown
Photo by Joel Sartore



Mary gets acquainted with a Piping Plover.

Jorgensen Receives Wetlands Stewardship Award

Congratulations to Joel Jorgensen, Nongame Bird Program Manager at the Nebraska Game and Parks Commission. Joel received the Wetland Stewardship Award from the Rainwater Basin Joint Venture.

Joel was recognized for his work in Nebraska's Rainwater Basin. Recently this region was recognized as a “Landscape of Hemispheric Importance” by the Western Hemisphere Shorebird Reserve Network (WHSRN). Joel is a tremendous asset to the Tern and Plover Conservation Partnership. His energy and enthusiasm for bird conservation, management, and research has helped move the Partnership forward. In 2008, he

helped establish a banding program for Least Terns and Piping Plovers, began a study of nesting habitat on mid-stream sand bars, and used GIS analyses for further nest site selection studies. We are grateful for his help.



Joel Jorgensen, multitasking on the Platte River, 2008.

Outreach Activity Highlights

The Tern and Plover Conservation Partnership (TPCP) participates in a large number of outreach and educational programs, festivals, and conferences. Here are some highlights.

Maxey Nature Club

One of our most exciting experiences this year was starting an after school Nature Club at Maxey Elementary School in Lincoln. We met every Thursday afternoon with 25 students in grades 3-5. Mary Bomberger Brown, Shari Bitney (3rd grade teacher), Chris Kiewra (parent), and Chris Thody were leaders.

Nature clubbers met a tree, made nature journals, planted flower seeds, did neighborhood clean-up for Earth Day, and made individual bird band bracelets for International Migratory Bird Day. Sam Wilson from Nebraska Game and Parks Commission gave a presentation about river otters.



Sam Wilson talks with Maxey Nature Club students about River Otters.

Family Nature Nights

We participated in Family Nature Nights at four schools in Lincoln and one in Brainard. The entire families are invited to participate. Family Nature Nights are sponsored by Lower Platte South Natural Resources District.



Two youngsters pretend to be Piping Plovers and pick "worms" out of gravel.

earth wellness festival

Southeast Community College was the setting for the 15th annual earth wellness festival. This two-day event draws hundreds of fourth graders from southeast Nebraska. The kids learn about natural resources and how to reduce, reuse, and recycle. Our "Hidden Hazards" migration game was a hit.



Students reach the banding station obstacle during "Hidden Hazards" game.

Informal Educators Network-

The TPCP, as part of the Informal Educators Network of Lincoln, has been busy organizing the second Teacher's Night Out. The next TNO will be held on Wednesday, September 23 from 4-7 p.m. at Hardin Hall, 3310 Holdrege Street. Any educator interested in attending should contact DiAnna Hemsath at (402) 472-3560.

Nebraska Children's Groundwater Festival

Despite a cool, windy, and a drizzly day, over 1,000 kids participated in the Groundwater Festival in Grand Island. We challenged the kids to guess how many endangered species of birds, mammals, plants, fish, mussels, reptiles, and insects there are in Nebraska.

OLLI (Osher) Lifelong Learning Institute

UNL offers OLLI classes to adults aged 50+, and Mary organized a series of classes titled, "The Rivers Run Through Us". Six guest speakers presented information about how the rivers in Nebraska are used by wildlife and people.

We gave presentations to the UNL School of Natural Resources Career Night, UNL Service Learning Fair and Volunteer Fair, Lincoln Children's Zoo Sensory Safari, Girl Scout's Camp Catron Spring Fling, Fremont Ecofair, Wachiska Audubon, UNL Severe Weather Symposium (Weatherfest), Earth Day Celebrations at UNL and Lincoln Children's Zoo, Lower Platte River Corridor Alliance Water Quality Open, Midwest Ecology and Evolution Conference, Nebraska Ornithologist's Union, Iowa Western Community College, OLLI (Osher Lifelong Learning Institute), Lower Platte River Summit, McPhee Elementary School, Wildcat Audubon Society, Nebraska Chapter of The Wildlife Society, Nebraska Alliance of Conservation and Environment Educators, Nebraska Breeding Bird Atlas, American Ornithologists Union, Association of Field Ornithologists—Wilson Ornithological Society, and Nebraska Partnership for All-Bird Conservation.



Birding 101 class at Girl Scout Camp Catron near Nebraska City.

Brown Assists Teen in EnvironMentors

LINCOLN, Neb. -- Maddie McAlister, a 10th-grader at Lincoln High School, is by all accounts, including her own, now much more confident about talking to professionals, especially to explore how to put her love of dogs to good use.

"I can talk to different people now who are in more professional roles and not be totally nervous," she said. "I'm finding people who are interested in the same things I am," such as Lincoln Animal Ambassadors, which is committed to alleviating cruelty to animals.

Maddie was part of a pilot group that combined the long-standing Upward Bound program at the University of Nebraska-Lincoln (UNL) with EnvironMentors. Both programs serve first-generation college students. Maddie and two other students will travel to Washington, D.C., for the national EnvironMentors fair.

In addition to completing the Upward Bound summer program, Maddie worked through the school year with a mentor, **Mary Bomberger Brown**, from the Tern and Plover Conservation Partnership at UNL's School of Natural Resources, on an environment-related research project.

Maddie did a statistical analysis of animal shelter records from Lincoln, Beatrice and York that revealed that large, dark, male dogs take longer to be adopted than others -- a pattern that dog advocates across the country have noticed and publicized via websites such as blackpearldogs.com. Maddie won a scholarship at the national fair, recognizing the high quality of her project.

Dave Gosselin, an earth scientist at UNL's School of Natural Resources who has forged connections with K-12 educators, is leading the effort to incorporate EnvironMentors into UNL's offerings for high school students who need extra help attaining an environmental career.

UNL has offered the federally funded Upward Bound program since 1999, and first offered a summer session in 2000, said Joan Mendoza-Gorham, Upward Bound project director. In summer 2008, 13 of Upward Bound's 100 students were selected, based on their interests, to participate in the EnvironMentors program. For a few hours each afternoon for five weeks, they focused on environmental issues, and took field trips to destinations such as the university-run Nine Mile Prairie.

"We're serving first-generation students who come from backgrounds where parents don't have the experience, education, or opportunities to help their children make decisions about education and careers," Mendoza-Gorham said. "That's what men-

tors are all about. They will help them better understand the steps to get there." Upward Bound is a TRIO program administered by the U.S. Department of Education and established in the 1960s.

EnvironMentors is an initiative of the National Council for Science and the Environment, established in Washington, D.C., in 1992 as a pathway to college for under-represented youth. EnvironMentors' flagship program in the nation's capital has boosted high school graduation rates for participants to 98 percent, compared with an average D.C. rate of 43 percent, and 95 percent of the students have gone on to college, compared with the D.C. college acceptance rate of 12 percent.

Environmental scientists are still often disproportionately white and male, Gosselin said, and both Upward Bound and EnvironMentors are working to diversify the future workforce.



Maddie McAlister and her mentor, Mary Bomberger Brown, shown here at the Capital Humane Society, with Ziggy the dog.



Volunteers Needed to Spot Banded Birds

The Tern and Plover Conservation Partnership is looking for volunteers to help us monitor terns and plovers along the Platte River. Volunteers help partnership staff monitor nesting populations and involve help with outreach programs.

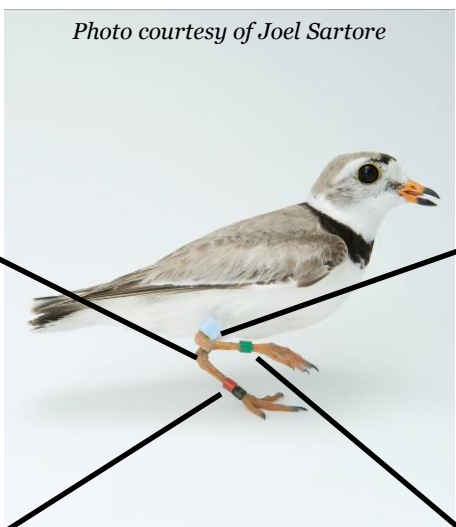
Volunteer time commitments will be an hour or two at a time, possibly several times during the season.

If would like to volunteer contact Chris Thody, at 402-472-8741 or ternsandplovers@unl.edu

Color-banded Birds - What to Look For

Piping Plovers from the Platte River

Upper leg: USGS metal band. Unique number for each bird.



Upper leg: Light blue indicates the bird is from the Platte River drainage. Other flag colors indicate birds from other parts of the range.

Lower left leg: One or two bands used to identify individuals birds.

Lower right leg: Color combinations indicate where the bird was banded-sandbars, sand and gravel mines, or housing developments.

Least Terns from the Platte River



Lower leg: A metal USGS band, unique number for each bird.

Lower leg: One lone green band indicates bird banded on river sandbar. A yellow/green split band indicates banding on a human-created area, like a sand and gravel mine.

Please report any Piping Plover or Least Tern sightings, especially ones with leg bands, to ternsandplovers@unl.edu or 402-472-8878. Please note the band color(s), and what legs the bands are on.

Rainwater Basin Receives Special Recognition

Manomet, MA, -- The Executive Office of the Western Hemisphere Shorebird Reserve Network (WHSRN) at Manomet Center for Conservation Sciences has announced the designation of Nebraska's Rainwater Basin as its first Landscape of Hemispheric Importance.

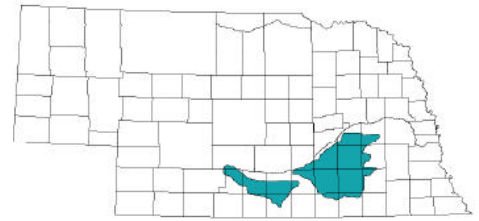
The Rainwater Basin is a 6,100-square-mile region of shallow playa wetlands located south of the Platte River in south-central Nebraska. In the spring and fall, millions of migratory birds pass through the region to feed and rest. Some of the 40 species of shorebirds that visit the Rainwater Basin include American Golden-Plovers, White-rumped Sandpipers, Sanderlings, Wilson's Phalaropes, and Hudsonian Godwits that migrate each year between Tierra del Fuego, at the southern tip of South America, and the northernmost brink of Canada and Alaska. One species, the Buff-breasted Sandpiper, is especially dependent on the eastern Rainwater Basin, with virtually all the world's "buffies", estimated at 20,000 to 30,000 stopping over to feed in the region's agricultural fields each spring.

Before making a designation, WHSRN requires a written commitment from a recognized conservation entity – in this case the Rainwater Basin Joint Venture – to work with area landowners, making shorebird conservation a priority. According to WHSRN Executive Director Charles Duncan, "The Rainwater Basin is a wonderful example of a variety of partnerships working effectively together to restore and protect wetland habitat that is vitally beneficial to shorebirds and people." The nomination of the Rainwater Ba-



Buff-breasted Sandpiper. Photo by Joel Jorgensen

sin was achieved collaboratively by the Nebraska Game and Parks Commission's Nongame Bird Program Manager, Joel Jorgensen, and the Joint Venture's recently-retired coordinator, Steve Moran.



Jorgensen noted that, in addition to being the first Landscape of Hemispheric Importance, the Rainwater Basin is only the second site in the Great Plains to receive WHSRN's highest designation, "hemispheric importance." The significance of the recognition, he said, is that "WHSRN is the leading conservation initiative for this group of birds that travel across the hemisphere." Because shorebirds' migrations span continents, conservation efforts require what Jorgensen calls "a hemispheric perspective."

Joint Venture coordinator Andy Bishop remarked, "Here in Nebraska, we've always known the Rainwater Basin was important to shorebirds. The WHSRN designation confirms that fact and brings international attention to the Rainwater Basin."

WHSRN is the oldest and most important hemisphere-scale voluntary conservation collaborative in the world. Its mission is the conservation of shorebird species and their habitats through a network of key sites in the Americas. WHSRN currently comprises 73 sites and one landscape in 12 countries, totaling some 25 million acres. Additional information is at www.whsrn.org

The Rainwater Basin Joint Venture is a partnership of landowners, conservation organizations and government agencies dedicated to conserving migratory bird habitat in south-central Nebraska's Rainwater Basin region. To learn more, see www.rwbjv.org.

Rainwater Basin Facts

There are approximately 400 Rainwater basin wetlands remaining, most range in size from 1 to 40 acres, but some are over 1,000 acres. The Rainwater basin, in combination with the Platte river, provides for one of the world's greatest waterfowl migration spectacles. 7-9 million ducks and 2-3 million geese annually stop in the Rainwater basin, including:

- 90% of the mid-continental white-fronted goose population
- 50% of the mid-continental mallard population
- 30% of the continental northern pintail population

A total of 257 bird species have been observed in the Rainwater Basin, including 25 species of waterfowl, 27 species of shorebirds and 5 threatened or endangered species (bald eagle, whooping crane, **piping plover**, **least tern**, and peregrine falcon).

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Farewells and Welcomes

The changing of the seasons is a bittersweet time for us. We're sad to have to say farewell to our technicians, but we also are excited about meeting new ones.

Farewells

Jason Thiele, our field technician in 2008, is now working in Golden Pond, Kentucky, as a US Forest Service Wildlife apprentice. This fall he'll be studying burrowing owls through South Dakota State University for a Master's degree project.

Melissa Vander Linden, who worked as a biologist with Joel Jorgensen at Nebraska Game and Parks Commission is now working in Pennsylvania with Bat Conservation International monitoring bat and bird fatalities from wind turbines.

Welcome

Our new Tern and Plover Conservation Partnership field technician is Courtney McCusker. Courtney comes to us from the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign. She has a Master's Degree in Natural Resources and Environmental Science. She enjoys camping, hiking, birding, and biking.

Melissa Santiago works as a biologist with Joel Jorgensen at Nebraska Game and Parks Commission. She will be helping Courtney monitor tern and plover colonies throughout the summer. She has a Master's degree from Ohio State University where she studied Red-headed Woodpeckers. Welcome to the Partnership!



Courtney McCusker



Melissa Santiago

Easy ways to contribute to our program

We realize that not everyone has time to volunteer or make monetary contributions to our program. Here are a couple things you can do to help, don't cost a lot or nothing at all, and you can have a hand in helping conserve Least Terns and Piping Plovers. You can:

- 1) Save *Best Choice* brand food labels from grocery items and send them to us. These labels equate to dollars when "cashed" in.
- 2) Go to the Goodsearch.com and under "Who do you goodsearch for?" type in **Tern and Plover Conservation Partnership**. Each search generates 1¢ for our program. It doesn't take long, and the more you click, the more you contribute! You can also use GoodShop to find coupons and discounts at more than 1,000 stores, and up to 30% of each purchase will go to the Partnership.
- 3) Buy a subscription to Birdwatcher's Digest. Call 1-800-879-2473 and mention Tern and Plover Conservation Partnership, or go to www.birdwatchersdigest.com/site/subshare.aspx and find the Tern and Plover Conservation Partnership on the website.
- 4) Follow Endangered Species legislation. Write letters to your Senate Representatives, House Representatives, the President, and others who shape our laws. Encourage them to strengthen, not weaken, the Endangered Species Act.
- 5) Tell everyone you know or meet about Least Terns and Piping Plovers. You'll be amazed at how many people have never heard of these rare birds!

About the Partnership

The Tern and Plover Conservation Partnership (Partnership) studies and protects endangered Least Terns, threatened Piping Plovers and other birds within the Platte River system, Nebraska, in a manner that minimizes conflicts with private industry, and educates and involves local communities in this effort.

History: The Partnership was founded in 1999 to prevent and resolve conflicts between nesting birds and sand and gravel mining industry operations. Jeanine Lackey and Ron Johnson from the University of Nebraska-Lincoln Extension, and John Dinan of the Nebraska Game and Parks Commission initiated the program. The approach of the Partnership is to work with all interested parties to find sensible, proactive solutions to protecting terns, plovers, and other components of the Platte River ecosystem, while ensuring that business, industry, and private interests are free to continue to operate with minimal interference.

Partnership Activities

- Monitor and protect Interior Least Tern and Piping Plovers from human disturbance and predation.
- Create strong working relationships between sand and gravel mining companies, homeowner’s associations, local governments, conservation organizations, and the public.
- Prevent and mitigate conflicts between nesting birds, business interests, and property owners.
- Increase awareness and appreciation of conservation issues through education and outreach.
- Mentor students through our “Job Shadowing” program.

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Partners



Partners: Arps Gravel and Concrete, Central Sand and Gravel, Girl Scouts-Spirit of Nebraska, Hallett Materials, Harwest Corporation, Legacy Resources, Loup Power District, Lower Platte South Natural Resources District, Lyman-Richey Corporation, National Fish and Wildlife Foundation, Nebraska Environmental Trust, Nebraska Game and Parks Commission, Nebraska Nongame Conservation Fund, Oldcastle Materials, Osher Lifelong Learning Institute, Overland Sand and Gravel, Papio-Missouri Natural Resources District, Preferred Rocks of Genoa, Western Sand and Gravel, and United States Fish and Wildlife Service.

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Tern & Plover Conservation Excellence Fund #10234

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CALIFORNIA: Attorney General's web site at <http://caag.state.ca.us/charities/>

MARYLAND: For the cost of postage and copies from the Maryland Secretary of State, State House, Annapolis, MD 21401, (410) 974-5534, 1-800-825-4510.

NEW JERSEY: Information filed with the Attorney General concerning this charitable solicitation and the percentage of contributions received by the charity during the last reporting period that were dedicated to this charitable purpose may be obtained from the attorney general of the state of New Jersey by calling (973) 504-6215 and is available on the internet at <http://www.state.nj.us/lps/ca/ocp/charities.htm>.

NEW YORK: Office of the Attorney General, Department of Law, Charities Bureau, 120 Broadway, New York, NY 10271.

WASHINGTON: Secretary of State at 1-800-332-GIVE.

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