



The Scissortail

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President's Message

Let it be recorded for posterity that the OOS Spring Field Meeting at Black Mesa State Park had to be canceled due to the COVID-19 epidemic. Instead Jeff Tibbits organized an online presentation on Mountain Plover research from the scheduled banquet speaker Allison Pierce. This broke a long record of OOS Spring Field Meetings. At the time the meeting was canceled at the end of March, governments had announced a social distancing guideline of 6 feet minimum in public places and a limit of 10 people on the size of a gathering. Seniors were advised to stay as isolated from potential infection sources as possible. These guidelines were inconsistent with our usual meeting format consisting of group field trips, socializing at meals and the Saturday banquet with speaker. In addition the sleeping accommodations at Black Mesa State Park were bunk houses. Looking forward to the fall, it is impossible to say at this point whether the usual Fall Technical Meeting will be feasible. There are too many unanswered questions. Will the virus reemerge with the end of the countrywide lockdown and the resumption of almost normal activities? Will the epidemic be ended by warm summer weather? Will it reemerge with vigor with the cooler weather in the fall? Will a therapeutic drug or vaccine bring an end to the risk of contracting the disease? Will academic institutions reopen for regular attendance in the fall rather than continue with distance learning, and if they reopen, will they allow an outside group to hold a meeting on campus? Where else might it be possible to hold such a meeting and under what restrictions? The OOS Facebook Page has become the best way to stay informed of latest developments.

The presentation by Allison Pierce is still accessible through a link at the top of the OOS Facebook page. The link is not obvious. Just click or tap in Jeff's announcement where it says "Shorebirds without a shore." I have viewed the presentation twice. It provides a lot of fascinating insight into a little-known bird. I recommend the presentation to anyone whose interest in Oklahoma birds goes beyond listing and counting. There is about 10 minutes of dead time at the beginning of the video where Allison is waiting for people to log in, so skip that part in the usual way by tapping or clicking the video window to bring up the scroll/progress bar and then tapping or clicking on the bar at around 20% beyond the start.

The compilation of a 2nd edition of the Oklahoma Breeding Bird Atlas was announced by Dan Reinking. He has called for volunteers to survey the blocks which comprise the survey area. Birders of all stripes are invited to apply. The Atlas project involves resurveying blocks at 25-year intervals. Not all the blocks are surveyed in the same year, so if a volunteer misses out on an assignment this year, there will be a chance again next year or the year after. As the OOS membership comprises the most ca-

pable group of birders in the state, those whose health and senses will permit them to survey should seriously consider doing it.

As if to offset disappointment over the cancelation of the Spring Meeting, we had an awesome spring migration season in Oklahoma this year. An odd weather event, a very late and large bulge of Arctic air into the eastern United States, produced steady easterly winds in the central US for over a week in early May. Many eastern migrants were apparently diverted west of their usual routes and into Oklahoma. The result was relatively large numbers, but still not many, of typically more eastern migrant warblers like Bay-breasted Warblers and Golden-winged Warblers. Some typical migrants occurred in much greater numbers than usual like Swainson's Thrushes, Yellow Warblers, Blackpoll Warblers and Alder Flycatchers. Looking down the road, the current generation of Oklahoma birders will be watching the weather closely each spring in the hope of another Arctic bulge into the East in early May.

With all the extra time (LOL) we have due to the break in our routines due to COVID, there is some space to reflect a little on the current status of Ornithology. What is clear is that the biological sciences like Ornithology, Herpetology, Entomology, Botany, etc., have taken on a strongly ecological focus. To get some historical perspective on whether Ecology is really both as new and as all-encompassing as it might seem, consider some words from the Introduction of the book volume titled *ECOLOGY* in the Life Nature Library, published by Time Life Books in 1963. The opening line is, "ECOLOGY, in the next 10 or 20 years, may well become the most popular of sciences – a household word to those masses who today are ignorant of both the word and its meaning." Those lines were written 57 years ago by the then President of the World Wildlife Fund, Bernhard, Prince of The Netherlands. Perhaps his wording "become the most popular of sciences" may not be exactly the right way to describe the ascent of *ECOLOGY* as a global concern, but there is no doubt that *ECOLOGY* and the prefix *ECO* are now universally recognized. Terms like Eco Tour, Eco Lodge, Eco Hotel and Eco Friendly are standard in the modern lexicon.

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2019 Kenton (Black Mesa) CBC

The 2019 Christmas Bird Count occurred on Sunday December 29th. Participants were Steve and Kim Metz (feederwatchers), Zach Poland, John Sterling, Max Thompson, Gene Young and myself. Weather conditions were mostly overcast skies with a beginning temperature of 17 degrees and a high of 36 degrees. Winds were light to moderate during the day with a bit of a windchill.

We met in Kenton at 8:30AM Central Time to hand out assignments and get last minute information. A couple of folks had birded in the beginning daylight for owls and such. No owls were detected but the best early find was a Roadrunner in the cemetery. Count teams fanned out to visit Black Mesa State Park and Lake Etling, the town of Kenton, the Regnier Ranch road, and the road to Colorado which passes by the namesake Black Mesa.



Photo by [Ray Hennessy](#) on [Unsplash](#)

Max and Gene found a large number of waterfowl at the lake including Snow, Cackling and Canada Geese; Pintail, GW Teal, RN Duck, Lesser Scaup, Bufflehead, Common Goldeneye, Hooded Merganser and Common Merganser. This was quite a run of birds for winter in this area. Bald Eagles were seen here as well. Zach rounded up Golden Eagle, Scaled Quail, Kingfisher, Prairie Falcon, Bushtit, Marsh Wren, and Curve-billed Thrasher in his early birding run. I was able to find a Lesser Goldfinch in town and a Ferruginous Hawk on the highway.

Per usual, we met back in Kenton for lunch and to go over the list at about 12:30PM. The wind had picked up so the lunch was a quick one due to the windchill. Max and Gene headed to the Easter Pageant and to a private ranch after lunch. Zach and I joined forces to bird the Easter Pageant and John decided to bird the roads. After lunch, Zach found a single Scrub Jay and Juniper Titmouse above Camp Billy Joe along with

more Bushtits. Gene and Max added a lone Rusty Blackbird amongst a large flock of Red-winged Blackbirds at Steve's feeders in Kenton. John added a Ladder-backed Woodpecker, Horned Larks, and some Mountain Bluebirds in his wanderings.

Zach and I came back to Kenton to get his car and ran into Steve and Kim coming out of their house. They graciously invited us inside the old church they are converting into a part time home. The building used to be a bank a long time ago and they showed us the room that held the vault. There is a downstairs room where the church used to put on puppet shows. They plan to retire to this place in a few years. They said their feeders were quite active all day.

Zach, John and I met for dinner and a quasi-compilation count at the Pizza Hut in Boise City that evening. Gene and Max had to head back to Elkhart, KS.

All together, we five birders found 78 species on count day and three Count Week species for a total of 81 species. The better finds were the large amount of waterfowl on the lake, Ferruginous Hawk, Golden and Bald Eagles, Prairie Falcon, Merlin, Scaled Quail (unusual for the mesa country), White-winged Doves, Blue Jays, Black-billed Magpie, Juniper Titmouse, Marsh Wren, Sage Thrasher, American Pipit, Northern Shrike, Rusty Blackbird, Lesser Goldfinch, and American Tree Sparrow.

We did not find any truly rare birds but the Rusty Blackbird and Lesser Goldfinch were out of place for this time of year. The lack of Jays and Magpies and Screech Owls continues to be a fact to ponder and perhaps worry about. We found most of the local specialty birds but we missed a few things we had hoped to get like Rough-legged Hawk, Pheasant, Turkey, W Screech Owl, Great Horned Owl, YB Sapsucker, Say's Phoebe, Steller's Jay, Pinyon Jay, Chihuahuan Raven, WB Nuthatch, Rock Wren, Mockingbird, Cedar Waxwing, Cardinal, Cassin's Finch, longspurs, just to name a few.

I would like to say thanks to the birders who made the long trip out to the Black Mesa country to participate in this count. It's always a struggle to get enough count teams to cover this CBC circle adequately and sometime the weather can be a challenge. Thankfully, we only had to deal with the cold and winds on count day although some winter precipitation did occur not too far away in the days leading up to the count. This is a unique place in the state and a special place to bird for me. I look forward to next year's count and hope to see many of you out there too.

Thanks,

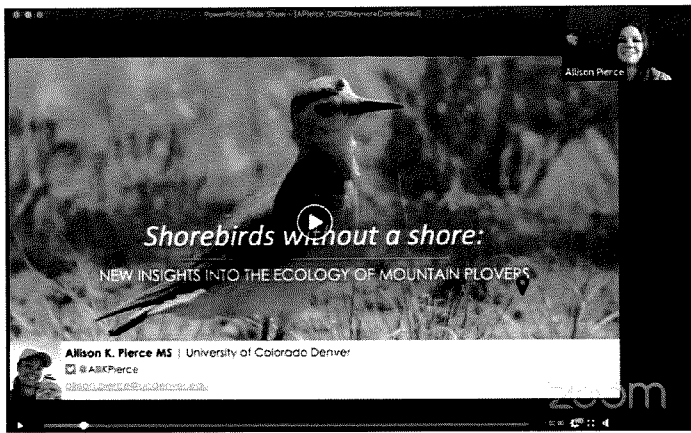
Jimmy Woodard

Kenton CBC compiler (2018 to present and continuing)

Spring 2020 OOS Meeting

Unfortunately, we could not have our planned meeting at Black Mesa due to the COVID-19 pandemic. However, our planned keynote speaker, **Alli Pierce**, did give her presentation, “*Shorebirds without a shore: new insights into the ecology of Mountain Plovers*”, on the OOS Facebook page. Allison Pierce is a PhD student at the University of Colorado Denver, and her broad research interests include animal population dynamics and behavioral ecology. Currently, her research focuses on migratory ecology and demography of an inland breeding shorebird of conservation interest, the Mountain Plover. As part of this research, one of her projects focuses on tracking individual plover migration movements using GPS data loggers in collaboration with the Migratory Connectivity Project and the Smithsonian Migratory Bird Center.

To view the presentation, visit the OOS Facebook page or scan the QR code. The link is in the pinned announcements on the Facebook page, and a link is also pinned to the OOS homepage.



Many thanks to Alli for her willingness to present digitally! This was a very unconventional approach for an OOS event, and I'm hopeful this experience will be a first step towards expanding OOS' digital presence.

Jeff Tibbits, President-elect

Fall 2020 OOS Meeting

I don't have an announcement for the fall meeting due to the uncertainty regarding the COVID-19 pandemic. I anticipate that there will not be a traditional, in-person technical meeting for the fall of 2020, but I hope to be proven wrong. More information forthcoming as the situation develops, but in the event an in-person meeting isn't possible I will explore digital possibilities.

Jeff Tibbits, President-elect

OOS Special Project Cancelled for 2020

Because of current health concerns and social distancing currently in practice, the OOS Special Project offering grants to those seeking funds for their projects has been cancelled for this year. We expect to be able to offer these grants in 2021. Announcements will be made when more information is available.

Oklahoma Birding News & Resources

Did you know that there are several ways to keep up with Oklahoma bird news and sightings? The Oklahoma Ornithological Society hosts a **Facebook group page** where birders can learn about recent bird sightings and upcoming OOS events, read about scientific studies and get help with bird identification. See and join this group page at:

<https://www.facebook.com/groups/18864377410/>

Another resource is the **OKbirds listserv**. This is a free email subscription service hosted by the University of Oklahoma that sends emails to its subscribers when other members post messages. This is an excellent way to get real-time updates to recent bird sightings and other news from Oklahoma birders. To subscribe, go to:

<https://lists.ou.edu/cgi-bin/wa?A0=OKBIRDS>

eBird is an application that allows birders to record and post their bird sightings that may be used by scientists to track bird populations and movements. It's also useful for birders in general to be able to see when and where other birders have reported their bird sightings. This free app is available online and can be downloaded to your phone for you to use in the field. It's hosted by The Cornell Lab of Ornithology. Find more information at:

<https://ebird.org/home>