



# The Scissortail

NEWSLETTER OF THE

Oklahoma Ornithological Society

ISSN: 0582-2637

Volume 70, Number 4

Winter Issue

December 2020

## President's Message

This is my last President's Message before Jeff Tibbits becomes president on January 1st. I thought it would be of interest to sum up what has been going on with OOS membership for the past four years, Oct 2016 to Oct 2020. Following are the membership figures reported by the Membership Chair in the October Business Meeting: 217 in 2016, 224 in 2017, 200 in 2018, 205 in 2019, 179 in 2020. We had a large decrease in membership from Oct 2017 to Oct 2018, 24 members, and another large decrease from Oct 2019 to Oct 2020, 26 members. The latter decrease mostly reflects the cancelation of the Spring 2020 Meeting due to the COVID epidemic which prevented the usual large number of membership renewals at the Spring Meeting sign-in desk.

The decline of 24 members from Oct 2017 to Oct 2018 stands out as being almost as large as the decline of 26 due to COVID. Was there something about the nature of the two relevant meetings that caused the decline? The Fall 2017 Meeting was at the University of Oklahoma Biological Station at Lake Texoma and was held jointly with the Friends of the UOBS. The Spring 2018 Meeting was held at Dwight Mission, Sequoyah NWR and Lake Tenkiller. Both meetings were considered successes, so it is hard to view meeting formats as the cause of the membership decline. One factor outside of those meetings is that there may have been a boost to membership in the Tulsa area at the 2016 Fall Meeting at Jenks High School which is reflected in the Oct 2016 to Oct 2017 membership increase of seven, which increase however was given back the next year.

The long-term decline in OOS membership is not due to a single cause, but more likely is the result of changes in the social and cultural environment in which OOS is embedded. Among these changes are: (1) the trend toward monetization of all work and the increasing scarcity of people willing and able to donate free time, (2) the increasingly ecological and global focus of academia which was discussed in the last Message, (3) the pushback of corporations and business owners against environmental regulation and advocates for conservation, and (4) the trend toward social media and virtual meetings and away from face-to-face interactions and meetings.

OOS has become increasingly digitized over the past several years. The OOS Facebook page is by far the most

widespread influence OOS has on the statewide community at the current time. Due to COVID we have started to hold board meetings via Zoom videoconference. We expect normal Spring and Fall members' meetings to resume in 2021 as vaccines quell the pandemic. However, the likelihood is that board meetings will increasingly be held via video conference to save the travel time and expense involved in gathering 15 board members from all over the state for winter and summer meetings or to save time for field trips and technical presentations at spring and fall meetings.

During the past two years, we have placed seven new board members, Jeff Tibbits as President Elect in 2018, Angelina Stancampiano as President Elect in 2020, Steve Davis as Secretary, Deanne McKinney as Newsletter Editor, Zach Poland as Membership Chair, Mia Revels as Awards Chair and Matt Fullerton as Business Manager. The durability of birding and ornithology as a cause to which both amateur and professional naturalists are willing to donate their time is a wonderfully positive sign for the future of OOS.

Being OOS President has been a great honor. I thank everyone who worked with me to make meetings fun and productive during the last four years, or who otherwise contributed to the smooth functioning of OOS. It is the individual contributions of many people which combine to make OOS a supportive, relevant and stimulating resource for the birding and ornithology community.

*William Diffin*, President '19-'20

### In This Issue

President's Message	1
OOS Officers and Chairpersons	2
Spring Meeting Pre-announcement	3
September Board Meeting Minutes	3
Treasurer's Report	3
Membership Report	3
Special Projects Application	4
Conservation Report	4
About North American Birds journal	5
Black Mesa Bonanza	5
Taurus the Bald Eagle	6
Fall Meeting Summary	6
Merganser ID Tips	6

The Oklahoma Ornithological Society, is a member of the Oklahoma Wildlife Federation. It was founded in 1950 and has more than 175 members. It is incorporated as a non-profit organization under the laws of the State of Oklahoma and the Internal Revenue Code. Membership is open to anyone interested in birds and their welfare.

The OKLAHOMA ORNITHOLOGICAL SOCIETY is dedicated to the observation, study, and conservation of birds in Oklahoma. The Society conducts meetings and field trips, publishes a quarterly newsletter and scientific bulletin, participates in nationally sponsored projects such as the Breeding Bird Survey and the Christmas Bird Count, encourages conservation, cooperates with the State Department of Wildlife and offers assistance to local groups organized for the study and enjoyment of nature

**OOS MEMBERSHIP DUES**

OOS members receive the newsletter, *The Scissortail*, as well as *The Bulletin*, a professional ornithological publication.

Regular	\$25.00	Includes publication of the Society
Family	\$35.00	One set of publications per family.
Student	\$15.00	Same as regular membership allowing students to participate at reduced fee.
Sustaining	\$40.00 or more.	In addition to membership, gives extra support to the Society.
Life	\$500.00	In addition to membership, provides long range income for the Society through the Endowment Fund.

Libraries and other institutions may subscribe to the publications of the Society for a \$25.00/year fee.

Add \$1.00 to each category if paid after February 15 of the membership year.

Make all checks payable to: Oklahoma Ornithological Society or O.O.S. and mail to: OOS Membership Chair, 3123 E.48th St., Tulsa, OK 74105. New members who have joined before December 1st join for that year and receive the preceding March, June, and September issues of publication. New members who join after December 1st become members for the upcoming year and will receive the first publication in March. Membership runs from January 1st to December 31st.

Both renewing and new members should enclose a stamped, self-addressed envelope to receive their membership card.

Please send notification of change of address to the Membership Chairman promptly as any returned mail from the Post Office is extra expense to the Society.

**OOS GIFT MEMBERSHIP**

Have you considered giving an annual OOS membership as a gift to a birding friend or someone always curious about our birds? We hope you will consider giving an annual OOS membership to a friend or family member this year! An OOS membership is a great gateway for people who are new to birds, birding, or interested in ornithological research. Perhaps you know a young birder that could use a membership that might inspire them to pursue their interests in birds. Please consider giving an OOS membership this year and help us grow our organization!

Notes for the OOS *Bulletin* are being sought. Articles should pertain to early sighting dates, late sighting dates, unusual behavior, unusual anatomical features, or summary papers of rare or accidental birds. Please send items for consideration to the editor of the *Bulletin* by email. Should you have questions regarding the process, please contact the *Bulletin* editor.

**O.O.S. Officers and Chairpersons as of 1/1 2021**

- President** — Jeff Tibbits — ODWC PO Box 53465, Oklahoma City, OK 73152 jeff.tibbits@odwc.ok.gov (405)535-7382 {'21-'22}
- Past-President** -- William Diffin, 7308 NW 119th St., Oklahoma City, OK 73162 WilliamDiffin@aol.com (405)722-3778 (home); 405-596-3890 (Cell) {'21-'22}
- President-elect** -- Angelina Stancampiano — 918-772-2108, angelina.stancampiano@travelok.com, {'21-'22}
- Secretary** -- Steve Davis — 436 NW 118th St, OKC, 73114, spdavis@lane-davis.com 405-740-2120 {'21}
- Treasurer** -- Nadine Varner -- 7845 NE 18th St., Oklahoma City, OK 73141 (405) 370-5076 gallinuleofpurple@yahoo.com {'21}
- Business Manager** – Matt Fullerton — Mrfulle@okstate.edu{'21}
- Membership/Circulation** -- Zach Poland -- 3123 E.48th St., Tulsa, OK 74105 (405)880-2014; zachapoland@gmail.com {'21-'22}
- Awards** — Mia Revels - Dept. of Natural Sciences, 611 N Grand Avenue, Northeastern State University, Tahlequah, Oklahoma, 74465 revels@nsuok.edu (918) 444-3824 {'21-'22}
- Activities** -- Rebecca Renfro -- 6024 Cornell Dr., Bartlesville, OK 74006, (918)333-4875, relore7@aol.com {'21}
- Conservation** -- Mark Howery -- 801 Heatherhill Ct., Norman, OK 73072 home (405) 447-3641, office (405) 521-4619, mark.howery@odwc.ok.gov {'21-'23}
- Archivist** – Claudia Glass -14805 E. 500 Rd. Unit D, Claremore, OK 74017 home(918) 230-2404, office(918)343-7697, cglass@rsu.edu{'21}
- Special Projects**—Donald Glass — 14805 E, 500 Rd. Unit D, Claremore, OK 74017 home(918) 230-2404, office (918)343-7710, dglass@rsu.edu {'21-'23}
- OOS Bulletin Editor** -- Eugene A. Young — Northern Oklahoma College, 1220 E. Grand, Post Office Box 310, Tonkawa, OK 74653-0310; Phone: 580 -628-6482; Fax: 580-628-6209; eugene.young@north-ok.edu
- The Scissortail Editor** – Deanne Hardy McKinney—8432 NW 91st St. Oklahoma City, OK 73132 (405)820-8543, trialsz63@gmail.com
- OBRC Chairman** – Joe Grzybowski – 715 Elmwood Drive, Norman, OK 73072 (405) 360-0182, j\_grzybowski@sbcglobal.net
- Webmaster** -- Jeff Tibbits — ODWC PO Box 53465, Oklahoma City, OK 73152, jeff.tibbits@odwc.ok.gov (405)535-7382
- Other positions:**
- Coordinator for Breeding Bird Survey & Winter Bird Atlas** -- Dan Reinking --Sutton Avian Research Center, P.O. Box 2007, Bartlesville, OK 74005-2007, (918) 336-7778, dan@suttoncenter.org

**OOS SALES BY MAIL**

- Oklahoma Bird Records Committee, Date Guide to the Occurrences of Birds in Oklahoma, 6th Edition. 2012. \$6 each in person; \$7 via mail or internet
  - OOS Field Checklist. 2005. Tri-fold card. 1-5 cards, \$0.50 each. Packet of 10 checklists, \$3.00
- For volume sales and information contact: Nadine Varner, (405) 370-5076; gallinuleofpurple@yahoo.com
- For purchase, send order and check to: OOS Sales, 7845 NE 18th St., Oklahoma City, OK 73141 **Make check payable to "OOS."**
- You may also purchase these publications online at our website [www.okbirds.org](http://www.okbirds.org) Look for the publications link.

## MINUTES:

### OOS Summer Executive Board Meeting September 3, 2020 Zoom video conference

The meeting was called to order at 7:35PM by President Bill Diffin. Board Members Attending: Jimmy Woodard, Nadine Varner, Zach Poland, Ron Glass, Jeff Tibbits, Mark Howery, Steve Davis, Deanne Hardy McKinney, Joe Grzybowski, Mickie Duggan, Rebecca Renfro, Mia Revels. Absent: Gene Young, Claudia Glass. Guest: Angelina Stancampiano, Naturalist/ Interpretive Park Ranger, Sequoyah State Park

#### Secretary: Steve Davis

B. Diffin stated minutes of the Winter meeting had been distributed by Steve Davis and asked whether anyone had changes. No changes were suggested and minutes were accepted as submitted.

**OOS Bulletin Editor:** Gene Young was absent from the call.

See MINUTES, page 11

## OOS SPRING MEETING

The 2021 spring meeting of the Oklahoma Ornithological Society will be held April 16-18 at Sequoyah State Park on Fort Gibson Lake. Sequoyah has 12+ miles of trails from paved to earthen, in pine-oak forests and along shoreline. See photo of group camp below. Masks will be required inside all public spaces as well as when groups are assembled such as with field trips.

Angelina Stancampiano, President-elect



Angelina Stancampiano, rights reserved

## Treasurer's Report December 1, 2020

By Nadine Varner

We currently have \$16,135 in the General Fund, \$39,338 in the Bulletin Fund, \$35,731 in the Memorial Fund and \$10,772 in the Special Projects Fund.

## Electronic Publications Sign-up

Sign up for electronic distribution of the newsletter and bulletin at:  
<https://mailchi.mp/1c1347d4c53e/oos-esubscribe>

Having access to digital copies will enable you to copy and paste links like the one above rather than having to type them. Future newsletters are likely to include increasing numbers of links to reference material and enhancements to content. Also you can create your own electronic archives of the newsletter or bulletin or print the material at home. You will continue to receive mailed printed versions of the newsletter and bulletin even if you sign up for electronic distribution unless you opt out of mailed versions at some future point when that choice is offered.

## Membership as of September 28, 2020

By Zach Poland

69 Life Members	1 Student Members
17 Family Members	10 Library Subscriptions
3 Sustaining Members	20 Complimentary & Exchanges
59 Regular Members	

Current Total Membership (i.e. unique mailings)--- 179

## Dues Reminder:

For those who haven't renewed your OOS membership for 2021, please send your dues to:

OOS Membership Chair, 3123  
E.48th St., Tulsa, OK 74105

You may also renew online at:  
[www.okbirds.org](http://www.okbirds.org)

## 2021 OOS Special Projects Applications

The Oklahoma Ornithological Society's Special Projects awards provide funding to students at any level, faculty researchers, and individuals or civic groups proposing to do work that aligns with our general mission to promote the "observation, study, and conservation" of birds in Oklahoma.

Proposals will be judged by a committee of OOS members that will rank overall merit based on financial need explained by the researcher, professionalism of presentation, articulation of the question or need the proposal addresses, and significance of the work to Oklahoma ornithology. To apply, prepare a written proposal in MS Word, double-spaced, using 11-pt or larger font, and with a maximum length of 3 pages (not including lit cited and budget). Present the information in the following order:

- name, institution, and contact information for the applicant
- project title
- introduction and justification
- clear statement of objectives
- study area and methods description
- anticipated results
- literature cited
- itemized budget of expenses for which the funds will be used

Finally, to better illustrate the need for OOS support, please indicate the approximate amount of funding from all sources that has already been secured to conduct the proposed research in one of the four following categories:

- a) 0% - there is no funding currently available to do the proposed research
- b) more than 0% but less than 50%
- c) more than 50% but less than 100%
- d) 100% - support from the OOS would be supplemental

Applicants may request support in any amount up to \$500. The deadline for submission is **5 pm on Monday, 1 March 2021.** All applicants will be notified of the committee's decision by April 1 (Wednesday) 2021.

Proposals should be sent as an email attachment to Mr. Don Glass: [dglass@rsu.edu](mailto:dglass@rsu.edu)/[donglass0534@gmail.com](mailto:donglass0534@gmail.com)

Applicants for whom email submission is impracticable should contact Mr. Don Glass via telephone at 918-230-1154.

The membership of the Oklahoma Ornithological Society invests a significant proportion of the annual budget in its commitment to fund Special Projects. Applicants who receive Special Projects funding for research projects are expected to prepare a manuscript of the work for publication in the Society's journal, the *Bulletin of the Oklahoma Ornithological Society* and/or deliver a presentation of the work as part of the scientific program at our Fall Annual Meeting, usually held in October. Recipients of funding for non-research projects are expected to summarize their projects in a submission to our newsletter, *The Scissortail*, and are also invited to deliver a presentation at a Fall Annual Meeting.

---

### Conservation Report Winter 2020

By Mark Howery

#### Oklahoma's Resident Bald Eagles

Oklahomans have long recognized our state as an important wintering area for Bald Eagles (*Haliaeetus leucocephalus*) that breed in central Canada, the northern Great Plains, and the western Great Lakes region, but we have a healthy and growing population of resident Bald Eagles that nest here in the late winter and spring. Since the late 1980s, the Sutton Avian Research Center has monitored Oklahoma's nesting Bald Eagle population and they recently published their update for the 2020 nesting season. The nest monitoring effort is conducted by a combination of staff biologists and volunteers that form the Bald Eagle Survey Team (BEST). Even in the face of the COVID epidemic, these dedicated volunteers surveyed and documented nearly 250 active territories in 2020 (January through May) and monitored a record 207 nests!

See **CONSERVATION, page 7**

# About *North American Birds*—the journal

By Joe Grzybowski

“*North American Birds (NAB)* is the longstanding journal of ornithological record for birders across North America, from Alaska to Panama and the West Indies” (American Birding Association’s website: [aba.org/north-american-birds/](http://aba.org/north-american-birds/)). It is part of a now 74-year history of logging birder observations by regions of the North American continent that began initially as *Audubon Field Notes* in 1947, became *American Birds* in 1971, and eventually the current *North American Birds* in 1999. Over time, many articles summarizing continental birdlife, distribution, new discoveries, and on identification accompanied the regional reports.

“Regional reports, which highlight noteworthy bird records in sub-regions of the continent, made up the bulk of the printed magazine” ([aba.org/north-american-birds/](http://aba.org/north-american-birds/)). Oklahoma is included in the Southern Great Plains Region that also contains Nebraska and Kansas. In 2017, staffing and management issues at *NAB* disrupted magazine production for a while. However, under new leadership, the journal continues on with biannual issues produced in 2020. The journal itself is now focused on continent-level summaries, articles on taxonomy, identification, and some more specific topics such as hybridization, population eruptions, or weather-related events (e.g., effects of hurricanes). There is also a Pictorial Highlights portion covering documentation of many rare occurrences across the continent including those of the Southern Great Plains. The regional reports, as they are completed, such as those on the Southern Great Plains, have moved to an online status under the link [aba.org/nab-reports/](http://aba.org/nab-reports/), and continue the series.

Membership in the American Birding Association (ABA) can allow access to past (2016 and before) and current volumes of the *North American Birds* journal. The journal had already been a treasure trove of information on continental birdlife now available online under the ABA umbrella.

Regional reports since 2016 are being completed for many regions including our Southern Great Plains and adjacent Texas, and are being placed online at [aba.org/nab-reports](http://aba.org/nab-reports).

The journal happily accepts manuscripts for consideration. Contact Editor Michael L. P. Retter at [mretter@aba.org](mailto:mretter@aba.org).

See **NORTH AMERICAN BIRDS**, page 9

---

## Black Mesa Bonanza

By Jimmy Woodard

I left MWC at 5AM on Sunday September 6<sup>th</sup> to meet up with Lou and Mary Truex in Boise City. Brief stops were made on the way at Ft Supply Lake, Optima Lake, Keyes sewage ponds, and Boise City sewage ponds.

We joined forces in Kenton, and then birded in the state park. Despite the 100 degree heat and windy conditions, the birds were quite plentiful. Along Carrizo Creek, the brush and weeds had grown up. Pools of water were in the creek, but it wasn’t flowing. Wilson’s Warblers popped up and down constantly and were numerous in the creek bed. We saw dozens in the short section of the creek we walked. Also seen were Northern Waterthrush, MacGillivray’s Warbler, Dusky Flycatcher, Cordilleran Flycatcher, Cassin’s Vireo, Philadelphia Vireo, Lesser Goldfinch, Western Pewee, and Cassin’s Kingbird.

For me, Monday dawned with a walk along the Cimarron River behind the Black Mesa B&B. I saw one Western Screech Owl and heard another.

After breakfast, we visited Kenton to search for unusual hummingbirds. Black-chinned were all we found today. Surprising was the six Woodhouse Scrub Jays found at Steve’s Metz’s house in Kenton. Also seen was a Black-throated Sparrow on a fence just west of town. It was mixed in a large flock of Chipping, Clay-colored and Lark Sparrows. Large groups of sparrows were in evidence most every place we went.

See **BLACK MESA**, page 10

# Taurus the Bald Eagle

By Angelina Stancampiano

You can find Taurus on the shores of Fort Gibson Lake among the shortleaf pines. There are many nesting pairs of bald eagles who spend their winter here - adding on to their massive nests and gracing park visitors with their incredible fishing moves.

Taurus impresses visitors in many other ways - he is a resident at the Three Forks Nature Center at Sequoyah State Park. At 15-years-old Taurus flew into a powerline, fracturing his humerus. Followed by a bad infection, his left wing had to be amputated. This huge bird lived for many years at the Cameron Park Zoo in Waco Texas until 2011 when he moved to Sequoyah. Now 41-years-old, Taurus has spent more of his life in captivity than ever as a flighted bird. He is a great ambassador for his species and a beloved resident to his caretakers. He has appointments with the vet where he has his talons and beak trimmed and blood and fecal samples taken. This elderly bird has a magnificent appetite - especially for trout - and trots around his enclosure moving with the sun. Of course we never wish captivity upon any animal, but when the choice is between euthanasia or a lifetime of fish and chicken and teaching the public about this species who came back from the brink of extinction - we will take the latter.



Angelina Stancampiano, rights reserved

You can visit Taurus in his outside enclosure located at 19460 Park 80, Hulbert OK 74441.

**Angelina Stancampiano** | Recreational Coordinator | Tourism & Recreation | Sequoyah State Park  
ph. 918.772.2108 | [TravelOK.com](http://TravelOK.com)

---

## Fall 2020 Meeting Summary

By Jeff Tibbits

Due to the pandemic, the Fall 2020 meeting was merged into BioBlitz 2020. BioBlitz Oklahoma is an annual biodiversity survey of an Oklahoma state park or natural area that brings together expert biologists and citizen scientists to explore new areas and identify species. However, for this year, experts led field trips with small groups at multiple locations throughout the state rather than the typical one location.

Participants recorded 1,261 species, including 94 bird species throughout the state. Thank you to Bioblitz organizers for including OOS members!

**Jeff Tibbits, President-elect**

---

## Challenges of bird identification: Common and Red-breasted Mergansers

By Joe Grzybowski

Common and Red-breasted Mergansers create one of the more regularly occurring systematic ID biases among birders. Below are some ID tips to help birders make the correct choices.

Common Mergansers and Red-breasted Mergansers are species that winter in Oklahoma. The statuses of both species have changed significantly in Oklahoma since the mid-1980s.

**See MERGANSERS, page 7**

## MERGANSERS, from page 6

The previously uncommon Red-breasted Merganser is now the common species, while the Common Merganser, once abundant on some larger lakes in mid-winter, may not arrive until December, depart by early March, and be present in much smaller numbers.

Breeding-plumaged male mergansers are readily distinguishable. However, most mergansers during fall are in basic (non-breeding) plumage--like female plumages, creating need to distinguish them when most similar with no clear adult-male-plumaged birds among them. Because they occur on larger lakes and can be at some distance, identifications are often presumed or conjectural. Many ID biases have been noted in this period.

**IDENTIFICATION TIPS.** *Find illustrations (photos) in field guide or the internet when reading this.*

Red-breasted Mergansers in **basic (female-type) plumage** are dull-marked--brown heads, gray bodies, blending with no clean contrasts or breakpoints in plumage and a more ragged crest.

Common Mergansers are more cleanly marked, with brown heads more distinct from the gray bodies, and with a discrete white throat patch. The crest is less pronounced, more often rounded rather than ragged. Their bills will look distinctly redder, but immatures can be duller.

**Male** Common Mergansers, even at a distance, are extensively white on chest and sides, with green rounded heads, and dark backs. The bill is distinctly red.

**Male** Red-breasted Mergansers also have a green head but with a ragged crest, white neck, but rusty chest. They are more patterned on the body with limited white areas.

Sometimes, pale chested and necked immature Double-crested Cormorants can be mistaken for mergansers, particularly at a distance. If possible to see, the orange throat and gular area will make an ID. Cormorants often hold their bill up at an angle, also helping distinguish them.

The expected species in the Oklahoma Panhandle is still the Common Merganser. It also appears to me more regular in Tulsa County, although both species can be found there and along the northern tier of Oklahoma counties. Common Mergansers become rare in southern Oklahoma. Except in the Panhandle, Red-breasted Mergansers are more expected, and arrive a month earlier in fall (~ 1 Nov), and depart later in the spring, a few staying into early May. A good freeze further north can still push Common Mergansers down in numbers into Oklahoma during January, but in nowhere near the historic numbers (thousands) of 60-80 years ago.

FYI, and Good Birding.  
Joe Grzybowski--OBRC

---

## CONSERVATION, from page 4

At least 172 of these nests were successful in producing at least one fledgling and somewhere between a minimum of 260 and 326 chicks fledged to join the growing resident eagle population! Our population has come a long way in a short period of time. In the late 1980s, fewer than a dozen pairs nested in Oklahoma, and these were primarily in the eastern edge of the state. The population has steadily grown and expanded across most of the eastern half of the state, with a few nests now popping up in western Oklahoma along our prairie rivers.

### Chimney Swifts

I have many favorite birds, but one that is near the top of my list is the Chimney Swift (*Chaetura pelagica*). I was fortunate to grow up in a household that appreciated Chimney Swifts and welcomed them in the chimney each spring. When my wife and I bought our first (and current) house in 1993, I promptly had the cap removed from the chimney and the chimney cleaned. Swift settled in the following spring and we've been graced by them ever since. This year they departed in mid-October, about a week and a half before the historic ice storm that struck most of central and western Oklahoma.

See CONSERVATION, page 8

## CONSERVATION, from page 7

But although they are gone for the winter, they are always on my mind. A few weeks ago, we had a chimney repair company come to the house and inspect the chimney in case any of its mortar or brick was in need of repair. Naturally, the first thing they told me was that the chimney needed to be capped to keep water out of it (of course it hasn't leaked). When I explained that a chimney without Chimney Swifts was of no use to me, I immediately got that certain look from them. Now I know that I didn't pay them \$150 just to come out and tell me that I'm crazy! I declined their recommendations and came to the stark realization that this is why so many chimneys are capped these days! According to the Breeding Bird Survey, Chimney Swift populations are in decline across more than 90% of their breeding range. Over the past 50 years, their overall population had declined by nearly 2.5% per year – and the rate of decline has accelerated during the past 20 years. We may not be able to change the chimney habitat of non-birders, but the Chimney Swift does have advocates. For three decades, Paul and Georgean Kyle have experimented with wooden Chimney Swift tower designs in their hometown near Austin, Texas. They have hosted the website [www.chimneyswifts.org](http://www.chimneyswifts.org) to share their experiences and encourage others to construct homes for swifts. Whether you have a chimney or not, this winter, I encourage you to visit their site and think about what you can do to help these beneficial urban birds.

### **Endangered Species Act Actions for Eastern Black Rails and Red-cockaded Woodpeckers**

On October 8, 2020, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service published its final listing determination for the Eastern Black Rail (*Laterallus jamaicensis jamaicensis*), classifying it as a threatened species under the Endangered Species Act (ESA). As a federally threatened species, potential impacts to local populations must be addressed by any federally-funded or federally-permitted actions within their occupied range in accordance with the National Environmental Policy Act. All forms of direct take of individual birds (e.g., trapping, shooting, netting, possession) are prohibited, and under a special ESA Section 4(d) rule, specific human activi-

ties that affect their nesting habitat are prohibited as well. During the nesting season, prescribed burning, mowing/haying, and grazing of Black Rail marshes is prohibited unless at least half of the affected marsh is left unaltered. The list decision and the 4 (d) rule became effective on November 16, 2020. In addition to the Federal Register Notice, the USFWS also posted the Eastern Black Rail Species Status Assessment, which is a supporting document that provides more detailed information on the ecology and status of the subspecies. Both documents can be found on the USFWS's Environmental Conservation Online System (ECOS) Black Rail Species Account at the following website: <https://ecos.fws.gov/ecp/species/10477>

Eastern Black Rails inhabit coastal saltmarshes and inland marshes of several types in a patchy range across parts of the eastern United States. Black Rails typically occur in the highest (shallowest) portions of marshes where the vegetation is dense, and the water depth is typically less than four inches deep. More than 90% of the remaining Eastern Black Rails occur in coastal marshes and as disjunct populations scattered along the Atlantic Coast from the Chesapeake Bay to central Florida, and along the Gulf Coast of Florida, southwestern Louisiana, and Texas. Most of the subspecies' inland population is gone; however, a population persists in freshwater cattail marshes along the Arkansas River in eastern Colorado and central Kansas. This Colorado/ Kansas population is the source for the birds that migrate through Oklahoma each spring and fall and are occasionally detected (mainly heard) during some summers. A breeding-season survey was conducted in northwestern Oklahoma in 2016 and 2017 by Michael Patten and Brenda Smith of the Oklahoma Biological Survey. They found Black Rails in May and June at a handful of sites in Ellis, Beaver and Texas counties, but breeding in Oklahoma appears to be rare and opportunistic.

Also on October 8, 2020, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service published a proposal to reclassify the Red-cockaded Woodpecker (*Dryobates (Picoides) borealis*) as a federally threatened species. The Red-cockaded Woodpecker was one of the first species listed as endangered when the current Endangered Species Act was signed into law in 1973.

**See CONSERVATION, page 9**



## CONSERVATION, from page 8

This non-migratory woodpecker is dependent upon large tracts of open-canopy, mature, pine woodlands. A Species Status Assessment conducted in 2018/2019 documented a minimum population of nearly 7,800 family groups distributed across 124 populations in ten states. This represents an overall increase in the total population of birds since it was listed; however, roughly 75% of the 124 populations contain fewer than 250 adult birds and most of the population increase has occurred in approximately 30 populations.

The reclassification of the Red-cockaded Woodpecker from endangered to threatened has been met with mixed responses. While many people are encouraged by the bird's increasing population trend and want to celebrate this Endangered Species Act success story, most point out that it remains a species that is highly dependent upon intensive habitat and population management. There is a real concern that most populations are not self-sustaining without human interventions such as prescribed burning to maintain its required open pine woodland habitat, and protection of cavity trees from predators and competitors. More than 70% of the remaining birds occur on publicly-owned lands – primarily national forests managed by the U.S. Forest Service and military training lands managed by the Department of Defense. Without the investments made by these two federal agencies, it is unlikely that the Red-cockaded Woodpecker would have experienced the population growth that it has. In half a dozen states, there are Red-cockaded Woodpecker populations on privately owned lands that are enrolled in Safe Harbor Agreements that help to maintain these populations. One concern about a reclassification to a threatened status is that the incentive would be diminished for private landowners to continue their involvement in the Safe Harbor program and some populations would be lost gradually. Oklahoma's small Red-cockaded Woodpecker population represents about one half of one percent of the overall number of birds, but its dependence upon annual habitat management and public conservation lands (ODWC's McCurtain County Wilderness Area and the USFW's Ouachita National Forest) is representative of the species' condition across its range. A final decision on the proposed reclassification from an endangered to a threatened species status is expected next fall.

— Mark Howery, Conservation Chair

## NORTH AMERICAN BIRDS, from page 5

Below is a summary for the Southern Great Plains Region.

### Southern Great Plains\*

*Joseph A. Grzybowski and W. Ross Silcock, Regional Editors*

The three U. S. states of the Southern Great Plains region—Nebraska, Kansas, and Oklahoma—house prominent state institutions that have provided the foundations and frontiers for ornithology in multiple dimensions. Leading historical figures include Paul Johnsgard, Robert Mengel and George M. Sutton. The region's ornithological history underpins and accents our understanding of bird migrations, taxonomy, hybrid zones, transformed landscapes, and dynamic distributional patterns of birds.

The Southern Great Plains region occupies a mid-continental location that transitions eastern and western avifaunas in its own splendor of prairies. The decreasing rainfall and increasing elevational patterns westward capture a continental level of habitat diversity from the eastern deciduous and southern pine-oak forests to mesquite and pine-juniper forests of the Southwest and Mountain West. Paralleling the Rocky Mountains also fosters major migration corridors for waterfowl and shorebirds in the region.

The area contains some of the continent's finest prairies, home to prairie grouse, Scissor-tailed Flycatchers, and Henslow's Sparrows. A high diversity of open-country raptors, sparrows, and longspurs, including Smith's, occurs during migration and winter. The penetration of differing habitats from opposite sides also captures inclusion of species from Brown-headed Nuthatches, Bachman's Sparrows, and Black-capped Vireos in the south to Cordilleran Flycatchers, Pinyon Jays, and rosy-finches in the northwest.

The region observes significant migrations of waterfowl, Sandhill and Whooping cranes, and shorebirds. More than 35 species of shorebirds can be seen annually in the region, a major corridor for Buff-breasted and White-rumped sandpipers and Hudsonian Godwits.

See NORTH AMERICAN BIRDS, page 10

## NORTH AMERICAN BIRDS, from page 9

Its mid-continental climate produces extremes with consequences for the population dynamics of regional populations, as well as influences on population shifts and irruptions at a continental level. All three states in the region boast lists approaching 500 species.

\*Summary of the Southern Great Plains bird life and study ([aba.org/southern-great-plains/](http://aba.org/southern-great-plains/) 2020), reprinted with permission of *North American Birds*.

A more recent seasonal account for the Southern Great Plains can be found at:

<https://www.aba.org/southern-great-plains-fall-2019/>

Joseph A. Grzybowski, Regional Editor,  
North American Birds, Southern Great Plains Region

---

## BLACK MESA, from page 5

The state park was again very birdy. A flock of nine Scaled Quail was a nice sight in the cactus flats coming into the park. The lake held twenty-eight White-faced Ibis, thirty-eight Black Terns, nine Forster's Terns, Osprey, Eared and Pied-billed Grebes. A Sora in the flooded flats near the dam was an unexpected find.

Incredible were the SIX Townsend's Warblers we found in the park. Two were in the creek and four were in the junipers along the bluffs on the east side of the lake. This is more Townsend's in one day than I have seen in 34 years of birding in Oklahoma!

Other finds in the park were three Yellow-billed Cuckoos, Cassin's Vireo, three Sage Thrashers, Northern Waterthrush, two MacGillivray's Warblers, Summer Tanager, 107 Yellow-headed Blackbirds, and a boatload of Wilson's Warblers again.

After another 100 degree day on Monday, a strong cold front blew thru about midnight. Tuesday came in cold with strong north winds and a temp of 45. Lou and Mary had to leave so I birded the rest of the day alone.

Kenton and the park held mostly the same birds but in lower numbers. The lake had two adult Bald Eagles, teal, Osprey, and one Franklin's Gull. I walked

a dike from the west side out into the lake to get a closer look at some swallows. I flushed large numbers of Wilson's Warblers along the way. I observed about 50 swallows sweeping over the weedy flats looking for insects as a light rain fell. Seen were Tree, Cliff, Barn, Bank and Rough-wings.

On Wednesday, it was again cold, rainy, overcast and cold. Steve and Kim Metz had arrived at their house in Kenton. He and I went to Asa Jones's hummer feeders at the south edge of town. Steve located a young Calliope and Broad-tailed Hummingbird amongst the many Black-chins. The inclement weather made sitting outside a bit uncomfortable.

We spent the rest of the day birding around Boise City, Wheelless and Felt. We visited the cemetery and sewage ponds in Boise City and various homesteads in the western half of the county. We didn't see much new but did find Wood Duck, Turkey, 12 Marbled Godwits, and a flock of phalaropes flying around the lake that would never land so they could be identified (presumed to be Wilson's).

I spent Wednesday night with Steve and Kim. He and I birded together on Thursday. We got a late start because it rained steadily till about 10AM. We went to Boise City for supplies. A homestead south of town had few birds but we did get a Gray Flycatcher who posed for photos. The bird called and responded aggressively to playback of its call. We also had a Curve-billed Thrasher and a covey of Bobwhites too.

A nearby property known locally as "the Dairy" has a double line of evergreen, pine and deciduous trees. This shelterbelt harbored a good collection of birds. We flushed a Barn and Great Horned Owl. Other finds were Chat, MacGillivray's Warbler, Townsend's Warbler, and several more Wilson's.

Next stops were Felt and the Rita Blanca Grasslands trail. Notable was another Townsend's Warbler in addition to flycatchers, pewees, phoebes, more Wilson's, and numerous sparrows.

See **BLACK MESA**, page 11

## BLACK MESA, from page 10

A county road to the Texas line revealed dozens of sparrows of mixed variety, ten Western Kingbirds, and a couple of Dickcissels.

At an old homestead near Wheelless, a birding fallout gave us perhaps the best birding of the trip. Migrants included five Green-tailed Towhees, two female Western Tanagers, Ash-throated Flycatcher, Rock Wren, House Wren, Red-breasted Nuthatch, four Blue-gray Gnatcatcher, Spotted Towhee, two more Townsend's Warblers, Orange-crowned Warbler, and a MacGillivray's Warbler. Another Barn and Great Horned Owl were seen in addition to many sparrows and more Wilson's Warblers! Our Ebird list for this place had 44 species. This place was rocking!

Vicky Robert's sister has a place near Hwy 325 and the Wheelless-Felt cutoff road. John Sterling joined us for more good birding. We recorded another Barn Owl, Cassin's Vireo, Ruby-crowned Kinglets, Blue-Gray Gnatcatcher, Rock Wren, House Wren, MacGillivray's Warbler, Townsend's Warbler, Red-breasted Nuthatch, and a Black-headed Grosbeak. Nearby on the road to Kenton, we found a Prairie Falcon and a Golden Eagles perched on different telephone poles.

John and I were again treated to the Metz's hospitality with dinner and a bed for the night. We celebrated another great day of birding in the mesa. I had to leave for home on Friday after enjoying a wonderful week of birding in Cimarron County! It's my favorite place in the state.

Jimmy Woodard  
Midwest City, OK

## MINUTES, from page 3

**Website development:** Jeff Tibbits, President-elect, recommended contracting with John Kennington to work through Dan Reinking to develop the new OOS website for \$500 to \$1000. JT said the amount is much less than any other vendor he has contacted. JT will transfer and update the content for the new website once it has been developed. He recommended using Duda or Wix web development tool, rather than WordPress, which is more easily hacked.

Discussion: Mickle Duggan asked where hosting will be done. JK can develop the website, but we must have a server on which the site is to reside. OOS has been paying DR for the domain name, but will need to pay for the server, in addition to paying JK to develop the site. JT said JK will arrange for the server for the website at \$15-\$40 per month, get the domain transferred, and the site will be more user friendly. Rebecca Renfro recommended OOS insure the new OOS website is separate and distinct from other state birding sites, e.g., Tulsa Audubon.

Further discussion: Deanne Hardy asked whether the design will follow the template JT shared with us previously. JT said the content, logo, colors and format can easily be changed once the site has been built. DH also asked about the timeline for development RR recommended a specific timeline be established. JT said he would contact to JK via text to get a timeline. Steve Davis suggested adding the timeline to the motion. BD suggested putting up old site to have a presence online. RR recommended not having something that is sub-par. Zach Poland reported he gets complaints that there is no website now and requests to be able to pay dues online, which can't be done now. He recommended any timeline be before the end of the year, so new members will be able to pay next year's dues online. It was agreed (MD amended his motion and Joe Grzybowski seconded his amendment) to add timeline to motion. JT sent a text to JK re feasibility and the motion was tabled to await his response.

### **Fall Meeting:** Jeff Tibbits

JT recommended OOS combine the Fall meeting with the Oklahoma Bioblitz! and asked Angelina Stancampiano, co-organizer of that event, scheduled for Oct. 4-6, to talk about Bioblitz activities. Participants must register for the event, but it is free. There will be a virtual nature center with information about what, when and where nature walks will be held. Currently there are no bird walks scheduled, but RR said she will go to Roman Nose SP to conduct one, Mark Howery will lead 1-2 bird walks during the event, and JT may lead a walk to a cave near Stillwater, or at Lake Arcadia.

See MINUTES, page 12

## MINUTES, from page 11

AS said each event this year will be put in the hands of the individual group leaders, so they can contact participants directly about any changes. RR said she enjoyed the Spring OOS speaker and would like to have one or more speakers in the Fall; AS said there are no speakers scheduled, as yet, for Bioblitz. RR suggested having students record presentations and JT suggested talking to OSU students re making YouTube videos to be linked to the Bioblitz page. ZP suggested people interested in conducting bird walks during Bioblitz should contact AS and information about the walks be posted on Bioblitz, OOS Facebook page and in the OOS newsletter; AS agreed; she makes a lot of videos and can make one for OOS about Bioblitz.

### **Fall Newsletter:** Deanne Hardy

Timeline for Fall newsletter was discussed and the need for content, e.g., announcements, articles of interest, and activities. AS offered to contribute content, and RR offered to write about banding with Nadine Varner. JW suggested ZP write an article re Magnificent Frigatebird sighting. MH will also provide an update and JT will write about the "outlaw cave." After discussing time till Bioblitz, it was agreed reports will be to DH by 9/8 or 9/9. ZP noted that time from printer to mailing depends on delivery of the Bulletin, but no Bulletin is ready at this time.

It was agreed the newsletter will be distributed whether a Bulletin is ready or not.

### **Retirements and Nominations:** Bill Diffin

MD said it is his intention to retire. RR will fulfill her final year with assistance from JT and AS, who agreed to provide activities support with outreach and developing relationships with state parks, USFWS, etc to involve new OOS participants. DH suggested asking experts to create YouTube videos re bird identification that could be linked to the OOS website. RR will write a item for the newsletter to solicit help with activities. BD requested suggestions for successor to MD. JW has contacted Doug Wood about his interest (a later email indicated DW is not available at this

time). JW also suggested Mary Jackson, a retired accountant and former Tulsa Audubon secretary. Rebecca R recommended Janis Blanton for the position. MD noted it should be explained to potential applicants that Business Manager deals with taxes and would benefit from institutional experience.

### **Treasurer and Committee Reports:** Bill Diffin

BD asked whether another meeting should be held to discuss reports, or review them online. MD suggested reviewing them online and adding a consent item to the next meeting's agenda to approve the reports. That recommendation was accepted with no objection.

**Zoom screen sharing function demonstration:** BD asked SD to use the Zoom meeting share function to show a sample PowerPoint presentation to demonstrate the capability and he did so. Mia R noted there is a PowerPoint record function that allows presentations and presenter comments to be recorded and played back at a later time, which could be used to offer pre-recorded student research presentations at future meetings.

**Webpage Development re-visited:** Jeff Tibbits JT reported that John Kennington had replied to his text and told him he could have the webpage developed in two weeks. Given that information, BD requested "raised hands" for accepting the previous motion to contract with JK for webpage development and the motion passed unanimously **Next Meeting:** Bill Diffin

MD noted that a general membership meeting will still be required to hold the election of officers. It was recommended that, for a large group meeting, it would be more effective to use the Zoom webinar option, rather than the meeting option, to allow for a 'Chat' moderator to manage participant comments while the host runs the meeting, accepting hand-raising, etc.

RR suggested offering a short tutorial to members to explain how the Zoom webinar process works. BD noted that AS has access to the OU webinar license, which is more expensive than the meeting license. He suggested holding a dry run, as was done for this meeting. RR suggested having door prizes to encourage people to attend and AS said that had worked well for a meeting in which she participated.

JG suggested holding the general meeting the week after Bioblitz, so there will be no competition between the two events. DH recommended putting the date in the upcoming newsletter. It was agreed another evening meeting was preferred and Thursday, October 8, 7:30PM was selected for the date and time. After discussing options for notifying members and inviting them to participate in the general meeting, it was agreed multiple methods will be used: ZP will send an email using available email addresses, though it is known several of them are outdated. DH will also place a notice in the Scissortail newsletter with instructions to use Tiny Letter and/or Mail Chimp service to enroll for the Fall general meeting. This will provide a means of capturing up-to-date email addresses from all who reply. This was made into a motion by JG and seconded by SD. [who will set up the Tiny Letter/Mail Chimp reply mechanism?] The motion passed.

### **Meeting Closure**

The meeting ended at 9:59PM.