



## THE 1014TH MEETING OF THE BRODIE CLUB

The 1014th Meeting of the Brodie Club was held at 7.30 pm on Oct. 16, 2007 in the Ramsay Wright Laboratories of the University of Toronto.

Chairman: Glenn Coady  
Secretary: Bruce Falls

There were 19 members and 4 guests.

- Dorothy Andrews, guest of Fred Bodsworth
- Ross Harris and Declan Troy, guests of Glenn Coady
- Jeremy Hussell, guest of Ann Falls

Several members sent regrets.  
Ann Falls moved the adoption of the previous minutes.

### NEW BUSINESS:

Elections were held for all positions. The members following were elected:

- Secretary: Oliver Bertin, with help from members recently recruited by Ed Addison (thank you, OB).
- Treasurer: Aarne Juhola
- Membership Committee: George Bryant, Ann Falls, Kevin Seymour, Jennifer Young
- Program Committee: Ed Addison, Hugh Currie, Bruce Falls, Jock McAndrews, Jim Rising
- FON (Ontario Nature) Representative: Trudy Rising and others to be discussed at the next meeting
- Archives: Alexandra Eadie, Kevin Seymour
- Several members to assist with refreshments.

Acceptance of the above slate was moved by Helen Juhola, seconded by Ellen Larsen and carried unanimously.

- Member Ron Scovell has moved to a senior's home in Waterloo, where he has an apartment with some of his extensive book and art collections. He would be glad to hear from friends, at 126 - 605 Laurelwood Drive. Waterloo, 519-746-2121 or [hillstar@sympatico.ca](mailto:hillstar@sympatico.ca)
- On behalf of the Program Committee Bruce Falls announced that the speaker at the next meeting would be Bill McIlveen, a terrestrial toxicologist and environmental consultant, who will speak on the *Extinction of Insects*.

SPEAKER:

Jean Iron, a member of The Brodie Club, spoke on one of her favourite topics, *Autumn Shorebirds*. She gave a clear account of differences among species and between adults and young of all the shorebirds migrating in Ontario. Her talk was illustrated by many excellent slides.

SOUTHBOUND SHOREBIRDS

Jean spoke about one of her favourite groups of birds: Shorebirds. Most of her photos were taken in southern Ontario, with some from Hudson and James Bays and the Canadian High Arctic.

Shorebirds are hard to define, she said, but easy to recognize. Fifty species are on the Ontario Checklist, with about 40 occurring regularly. Groups of shorebirds include plovers and sandpipers, a large group that includes godwits, peeps, curlews, avocets, stilts, turnstones, phalaropes and more.

The program had five sections:

1. Shorebird facts about plumage, molt, aging and migration.
2. The first wave of southbound shorebirds from the Arctic in late June to July.
3. Jean's shorebird surveys with MNR on James Bay in early August 2005.
4. Short and Long-billed Dowitcher identification.
5. The final wave of southbound migrants before freeze-up. Throughout, she focused on aging juvenals and adults, molts and plumages. We also examined important feather tracts used in shorebird identification.

To identify shorebirds, being able to recognize feather tracts is important. We looked at the scapulars on a juvenal Buff-breasted Sandpiper. Scapulars are large shoulder feathers that cover the top of the wing. Jean pointed out that wing coverts range from tiny marginal coverts, through rows of lesser and median to greater coverts. Tertials are the three innermost secondaries that cover the tips of the folded primaries. It is often important to know how far the primaries extend beyond the tertials in species such as the Baird's and White-rumped Sandpipers.

To age shorebirds and identify plumages, one must know three feather types: alternate (breeding) feathers are usually brightly coloured and patterned, basic (winter) feathers are grey with a distinct dark shaft streak, and juvenal feathers usually have bold pale fringes. These pale fringes give most juvenal shorebirds their distinctive scalloped appearance on the upperparts.

Southbound shorebirds exhibit three distinct migration waves related to their breeding biology.

In most shorebirds the females migrate first. They stay on the breeding grounds until the eggs hatch then depart in the first southbound wave.

Males stay about another three weeks until the young have grown and fledged. They then migrate in the second wave.

Juvenals remain on or near the breeding grounds for another two weeks to a month before they form the third southbound migration wave.

Then, Jean followed with photographs of many shorebird species arranged in the migration chronology outlined above. Jean showed and compared adult and juvenal plumages. Many species such as yellowlegs molt on migration whereas others such as the Spotted Sandpiper migrate to the wintering grounds before molting. The Dunlin and Purple Sandpiper

have a different molt strategy. They undergo molt near the breeding grounds before migrating south.

The program ended with the latest fall migrants such as Dunlin and Purple Sandpipers. Jean encouraged us to watch for migrating shorebirds, which will be around until the mudflats freeze in late November or early December.

Questions and discussion centered on the identification of Short- and Long-billed Dowitchers by plumage and voice.

Jean was thanked by Jim Rising, who stressed how much he had enjoyed her talk.

#### NOTES AND OBSERVATIONS:

- Speakman showed a picture of two Red-headed Woodpeckers at a feeder at his daughter's place at Lake Simcoe. He had recently seen a female Pileated Woodpecker hollowing a beech tree at his cottage.
- A Northern Wheatear was seen by many observers at Shrewsbury during the recent meeting of the Ontario Field Ornithologists. Several butterflies including a Clouded Sulphur had also been observed.
- John Sparling showed a photograph of a rare and unusual mushroom he had collected recently that consisted of two different species with their mycelia mixed together. This occasioned a lively discussion.
- Claire Muller wrote that she and Bernard had seen a Snowy Owl at Sutton on October 7.
- Helen Juhola recommended a new book on geology: *Canada Rocks* by Toronto professors Eyles and Miall (Fitzhenry and Whiteside).
- Bruce Falls loaned club copy of *A Pocketful of Galls* to Coady.

The meeting adjourned about 9.30 pm for refreshments and further discussion.

#### NEXT MEETING:

The next meeting will be held at 7:30 pm on Nov. 20, 2007 in Room 432 of the Ramsay Wright Zoological Laboratories of the University of Toronto. The speaker will be Bill McIlveen, a terrestrial toxicologist with Ontario Ministry of the Environment for over 25 years, and now an environmental consultant with broad interests ranging from toxicology and land classification to the inventory of various plant and animal groups. He will speak on *Extinction among Insects - What is known and suspected about their disappearance.*

## The Lazy Gardener

By Yorke Edwards

Our Western Correspondent

Some years ago, I wrote a small story that went to a garden magazine. They took it, and also made a queer drawing that was supposed to be me sitting in my garden on in an old wicker chair, surrounded by my weeds and small birds. Parts of that story are below.

In my garden, I had a so-called grass community of small plants, much of them clover with many other little plants that were pumping nitrogen into my garden soil. The grass turned rather brown while the clovers were fresh and green and covered over much of the lawn. It had been clover that was first scattered all over the grass, but soon there were many other kinds of plants growing over the lawn.

The grass itself was in decline while dandelions invaded the so-called lawn, making colourful summer flowers with their little wild daisies scattered everywhere. Cutting my lawn was rarely done. When I did cut, many kinds of plants were just left where they fell. It seemed pointless to collect the cuttings, and I just left them as food for the spring's next growing season.

My lawn first looked much like a tiny hay field, but soon I had many kinds of plants that stayed healthy, showing their many bits of colour from their many flowers. Should my lawn ever become all green, I would put over it green rugs covered with coloured spots of blue, red, yellow, white and brown.

In the fall, I sometimes rake up heaps of leaves that have fallen from our many trees. Children play games running about while grinding down the leaves into thick layers of decay, helping to feed the many

hard workings of earth worms. They are also good hunting grounds for robins, sometimes a varied thrush or two, maybe song sparrows and Bewick's wrens or a few crows. In our trees, there are often gangs of tiny bush-tits rushing through our trees, always in a hurry.

Foreign plants in my garden are not very interesting. My crocuses and snowdrops came from high meadows in the Alps. My tulips were shaped by ecological forces in Turkey. My cypresses and wisteria were first grown in Japan.. My dandelions came from continental Europe. While I welcome plants from all parts of the world, my native plants are all in perfect condition. They were once from their home far away, some from Europe, others from Asia. Now they are in their new home, so must protect themselves in their own ways.

I also grow red currants in spring, and later watch the many birds eating near where I sit.

I'm sure some people think that I am lazy. Maybe so. But I have many reasons for the way I do it. If you call it gardening, you are probably not a naturalist. It is best to have local nature, not just a foreign crowd of plants. I hear advice from people, but I always show carefully how to improve my garden. It is a place for good times, and not a place for just plants. Birds seem to be the best, and sometimes too there are active squirrels that are red or gray or black. Where I work, I am in my old chair with good binoculars and I often see many friendly birds, sometimes even mammals too, like squirrels, mostly red, some gray, a few black. Y

-30-

