THE BRODIE CLUB

ROYAL ONTARIO MUSEUM OF ZOOLOGY

THE 1,024th MEETING OF THE BRODIE CLUB

The 1,024th meeting of the Brodie Club was held at 7:30 pm on Nov. 24, 2008 in Room 432 of the Ramsay Wright Laboratories of the University of Toronto.

Chairman: Bill Crins
Secretary: Oliver Bertin

The meeting was attended by 26 members and six guests:
Mark Stabb, guest of John Riley
Peter Hussell and Erica Dunn, guests of David Hussell
Richard Pope, guest of Hugh Currie
Peter Webb, guest of John Speakman
Terry Marescaux, guest of Oliver Bertin
Several members sent regrets, including Bill Rapley, who was in Churchill, Man. studying polar bears, and Ellen Larsen, who was doing field work in Costa Rica.

The minutes of the previous meeting were accepted with no changes.

ANNOUNCEMENTS:

● Ann Falls has recommended Erica (Ricky) Dunn, a.k.a. wife of David Hussell and mother of Jeremy, for membership in The Brodie Club. She has attended the requisite three meetings. "I am sure everyone will approve," Ann wrote. "She will make an excellent member." (See biography below)

● Jon Barlow was recently awarded the Bruce Naylor Award by the Alliance of Natural History Museums of Canada. Jim Rising said he came to Toronto in the mid-1960s as professor of zoology at UofT, curator of birds for the Royal Ontario Museum and later head of the museum studies program. During his 35 years as curator, he revolutionized the bird collection, taking the old boxes full of study specimens and transforming them into lively and appealing displays. He retired in 2001. "It has been said that through his unique combination of talents – researcher, collector, curator, educator, mentor, editor, administrator and larger-than-life personality – he transformed the ornithology program into a flagship department at the ROM."

● Bill Rapley wrote to say he was travelling to Churchill Point from Nov. 17 to 28 with polar bear researchers and Polar Bear International, and was attending a celebration of Wapusk Park with Parks Canada and Manitoba Wildlife. He is on the Advisory Committee for the Species at Risk Act for OMNR.

● David Hussell recommended the book: *State of North America's Birds of Prey*, edited by Keith Bildstein et al; published by The Nuttall Ornithological Club and The American Ornithologists' Union. The book has many analyses of raptor migration counts.

● Bruce Falls suggested moving the May meeting ahead to May 5 to accommodate the spring bird migration. No decision was taken.

● The next meeting will be held on December 16, the third Tuesday of December, as usual. The meeting will NOT be moved forward, as was done in previous years to avoid a conflict with Christmas. All members are invited to bring Christmas cheer. The speaker will be Bob Curry, who will talk on his recent trip to Peru. The talk will complement a recent speech presented to the Toronto Ornithological Club (TOC).

● Oliver Bertin may have to miss the December meeting. He is planning to be in the Deep South looking alligators and water moccasins in the eye, so volunteer secretaries will be welcomed with open arms and an extra piece of Christmas cake! Make that two pieces!

SPEAKER:

The speaker was introduced by fellow journalist and author Fred Bodsworth, who noted that D'Arcy Jenish has long been familiar with The Brodie Club. All members will remember the story he wrote in Ontario Nature magazine after the club's 1,000th anniversary meeting.

D'Arcy grew up on the Prairies, in Estevan, Sask., an experience that led to the writing of a history of the Plains Indians, named *Indian Fall: The Last Great Days of the Plains Cree and the Blackfoot Confederacy*, and *Epic Wanderer: David Thompson and the Mapping of the Canadian West,* published in 2003 by the Anchor Canada division of Random House Canada ($21.95 at Indigo/Chapters).

He took a BA in English at the University of Western Ontario, before heading back West for a seven-year stint at Alberta Report, a lively and often-controversial Edmonton newsmagazine. That led to 15 years at Macleans magazine and a career freelancing magazine articles and popular books on Canadian history and hockey.

EPIC WANDERER

David Thompson and the Mapping of the Canadian West

(from D'Arcy's speaking notes)

David Thompson was born in London in 1770 and died near Montreal in 1857. He began his life in Canada in 1784 – a distant and very different time in the history of our country. He spent the next 28 years roaming what was then known as the Great Northwest Lands. Lands bounded by the west coast of Hudson Bay, by Lake Superior, by the upper Missouri River and extending west to the Pacific.

All those vast, uncharted resource-rich lands were then the domain of the Indian – Chipewyan, Cree, Ojibway, Mandan, Blackfoot, Kootenae, Salish and many minor nations. Rival commercial interests – the Hudson's Bay Co. of London, the North West Co. of Montreal and John Jacob Astor's New York-based American Fur Co. – coveted these lands and contended for control of them. And rival nations – Britain, America and Russia – sought to claim as much of Great North West as possible.

David Thompson rose to prominence in this world. He began on the bleak, lonely coast of Hudson Bay, a boy of 14 and a well-schooled one with seven-years of formal education. He became a man of many parts: fur trader, explorer, astronomer, surveyor, mapmaker, farmer, businessman and writer. He worked for the Hudson's Bay Co. and the North West Co. He acquired the skills of survival and leadership. He could build a house or construct a canoe. He could mend his clothes, repair his guns and he had a knack for learning languages. His first was English, spoken with a Welsh accents; his second was Cree; his third Blackfoot and his fourth, an exquisitely accented French.

David Thompson possessed another set of skills that set him apart from the rough-hewn, largely illiterate men of the fur trade. He mastered the complex science of celestial observation. He could aim a telescope or a sextant at the heavens and observe the motion of the moon, the moons of Jupiter or of prominent stars. He used a timepiece to record the minutes and seconds that elapsed while he observed. He used a thermometer to record the temperature because

celestial light is refracted – or distorted – as it passes through the earth's atmosphere and the degree of distortion is affected by temperature. Later, working alone by candlelight in cramped, darkened and sleep-filled trading posts, he would spend three to four hours performing the trigonometry required to determine his precise position on the face of the earth in degrees of latitude north of the equator and degrees of longitude west of the prime meridian in Greenwich, England.

These skills elevated him in the eyes of his peers and made him a man of magical powers to the Indians. An Ojibway guide once told a cluster of brethren that: "He has traveled all over the world and is respected wherever he goes." And the Salish, a people of the forested valleys west of the Rockies and south of the 49th parallel, called him Koo Koo Sint – The Man Who Looks at Stars. He would stand on clear, dry nights, wind blowing and wolves howling, and gaze at magnificent western skies peppered with glittering stars, and his Salish friends would stand with him. They would see the homes of illustrious ancestors – warriors, shamans and hunters – gone to their rightful places in the heavens, but he saw Arcturus, Aldebaran and Capella and other distant beacons that he used to determine degrees of latitude and longitude.

The skills of the practical astronomer provided Thompson with passage to a geopolitical contest that was global in scale. He became a participant in the race of nations to explore and map the earth's surface. And he played a lead role, along with Alexander Mackenzie, Simon Fraser, Meriwether Lewis and William Clark, in the frantic, headlong rush to explore the Great Northwest and claim as much as they could for distant political masters.

It is estimated that David Thompson traveled over 50,000 miles, or 80,000 kilometres, by canoe, on foot and on horseback in the Northwest. He traveled from the shore of Hudson Bay to the foot of the Rockies. He found the headwaters of the Mississippi River south of Lake of the Woods. He circumnavigated Lake Superior several times. He opened two passes through the Rocky Mountains. He discovered the source of the Columbia River, a waterway known as the Great River of the West in the years before it was an established geographical fact. The dreamers and adventurers of the fur trade believed that beyond the Rocky Mountains there had to be a river like the Saskatchewan, the St. Lawrence or the Mississippi that carried men and goods down to the sea and to the markets of Europe. The Great River of the West, though, would carry men and furs to the Pacific and there the bales would be stowed aboard cargo vessels and shipped to the dazzling markets of Shanghai and Canton. David Thomson discovered the source of this river in a valley just west of the Rockies and some 200 miles north of the 49th parallel. And he became the first person on record to paddle that serpentine stream all the way to the Pacific, at latitude 46 degrees north, a journey of 1,200 miles.

Everywhere Thompson went, he observed for latitude and longitude, and he used his observations as the basis of his greatest work, the *Map of the North West Territory of the Province of Canada*. Thompson made several copies of the map over the course of his life. The first was in the spring of 1814 and it was done for William McGillivray, chief executive of the North West Co., and it was hung in the Great Hall at Fort William, the company's inland terminal at the head of Superior.

If you want to see the real thing, the only Canadian copy is on permanent display at the Archives of Ontario in downtown Toronto at 77 Grenville St., near Bay and College streets. The map measures six feet nine inches by 10 feet four inches, and was made of 25 sheets of paper glued together. It depicts with astonishing accuracy a land mass stretching from the west coast of Hudson Bay to Lake Superior, from the upper Missouri River to the 60th parallel and west to the Pacific Ocean.

Many men employed in the fur trade produced maps and some were very good. In fact, the Hudson's Bay Co. employed two highly skilled mapmakers, named Philip Turnor and Peter Fidler, who produced dozens of maps. Most were of small parts of the country, a section of river, or the union of a river and a lake, and their maps proved very useful to the cartographers of Europe. Thompson's work was grand in design and conception, grander than anything produced

by his peers. His map covered 1.2 million square miles of land, all based on his own surveys. You would think Thompson would have had his hands full managing the trade on behalf of his superiors and pursuing his passion for practical astronomy. And yet he had such a fertile mind that he was constantly observing and studying the world around him.

One of the more amazing examples occurred in October, 1800. He was traveling in what is now Central Alberta with a Piegan guide named Old Bear, a Cree named He Dog and five French Canadians. They traveled up the Clearwater River, a tributary of the North Saskatchewan, overland to the Red Deer River and then west towards the Rockies to trade with a party of Kootenays from over the mountains.

Thompson noticed that the Red Deer was once 500 yards wide, but was no more than 50 in most places and rarely exceeded 200 yards. One evening he sat near the fire, recording the day's events in his journals, and he speculated about the powerful natural forces that had so changed the river.

Thompson, the naturalist, is sprinkled throughout his writings. I was particularly struck by his description of the birds of Muskrat Country, a swath of the interior around Hudson Bay. It was a miserable landscape of many lakes, of rock covered with moss and "spots of tolerable soil," as Thompson put it, which were neither large nor frequent. But each spring, the Muskrat Country was transformed into an ornithologist's paradise. There were birds everywhere, pigeons, rooks, two species of eagle, four species of owl, five species of hawk and a great variety of aquatic birds, swans, ducks, cranes, plovers, bitterns, pelicans, cormorants, gull and the loon.

From David Thompson's Narrative: Musk Rat Country.

The water is the element of the Loon, on the land his is unable to walk, his legs being placed too far backwards, nor from the ground can he raise his flight, and is quite helpless; but in the water, of all birds he is most completely at home. He swims swiftly and dives well, going under water apparently with the same ease, as on the surface; he has the power of placing his body at any depth, and when harassed in a small lake, places his body under water to be secure from the shot, leaving only his neck and head exposed and this he sinks to the head; in any of these positions he remains at pleasure; he prefers acting thus on the defensive, than flying away, for being very short winged, he has to go some thirty yards near the surface before he can raise his flight, and is so steady on the wing that he is accounted a dead shot: the Loon is very destructive among the small fish, yet seldom fat: it lays only three eggs, when boiled, the inside appears streaked black and yellow, and [they] are so ill tasted they cannot be eaten, it's flesh is also bad. When on discovery to the northward, one evening on camping we found a Loons nest; the eggs were taken, but were found not to be eatable: two lads lay down near the nest, in the night the pair of Loons came, and missing their eggs, fell upon the lads, screeching and screaming, and beating them with their wings; the Lads thought themselves attacked by enemies, and roared out for help; two of us threw off our blankets and seized our guns, the Loons seeing this returned to the lake, we were at a loss what to think or do, the Lads were frightened out of their wits; in a few minutes we heard the wild call of the Loons; the Indian said it was the Loons, in revenge for the loss of their eggs; and giving them his hearty curse of "death be to you," and told us there was no danger, and the Loons left us quiet for the rest of the night.

Thompson was an unusually inquisitive individual. But he had another quality that distinguished him from some early travelers and the mass of settlers who followed them. He was open to Aboriginal ways of seeing and thinking about the world.

A fine example of this open mindedness occurs in a piece he wrote about the caribous, which Thompson called Rein Deer. In May 1792, he and a fellow employee of the Hudson's Bay Co. were hunting on a river a few miles above York Factory.

From David Thompson's Narrative: Musk Rat Country.

On the third morning the weather cold and uncomfortable, we were sitting by our fire, when we heard a noise as of distant thunder, and somewhat alarmed, put our four guns, and blankets into the canoe, and we sat quietly in it; waiting what it could be; with surprise we heard the sound increasing and rushing towards us, but we were not long in suspense. About forty yards below us, a vast herd of Rein Deer, of about one hundred yards of front, rushing through the woods, headlong descended the steep bank and swam across the river; in the same manner ascended the opposite bank, and continued full speed through the woods; we waited to see this vast herd pass, expecting to see it followed by a number of wolves; but not one appeared, and in this manner the herd continued to pass the whole day to near sunset, when a cessation took place. … The next day, a while after sun rise, the same sound and rushing noise was heard, and a deer herd of the same front, with the same headlong haste came down the bank and crossed the river, and continued to about two in the afternoon, and attended by small herds on either side, after which small herds passed, but not with the same speed, and by the sun set finally ceased.

Thompson and some of his peers tried to determine the number of animals in the herd. But they were corrected at every turn by the Indians who were present, and Thompson realized that their method of calculation was superior. They could better estimate the speed of the herd, the number of hours per day it was moving and the space each animal required. Using their specifications, Thompson states that the herd of the first day was 100 yards wide by 120 miles long. The second herd was the same width and six miles long. Given that each animal required about 80 square feet of space, Thompson estimated that there were 3,564,000 caribou in all.

An interesting discussion followed:

"You look at the stars," an Indian said to Thompson. "Tell us the cause of the regular march of this herd of deer."

"Instinct," Thompson replied.

"What do you mean by that word?" the Indian asked.

"The free and voluntary actions of an animal for its self-preservation," Thompson replied.

The Indian pointed out the folly of this notion. Many of the caribou would die in the stampede. They would perish in the swamps. Stumble on inclines and break their necks, or drown while crossing rivers. How could this be driven by self-preservation?

"You white people," the Indian said. "You look like wise men, but you talk like fools. Do you not perceive that this great herd was under the direct order of their Manito, and he was with them, he had gathered then together, made them take a regular line and drove them on to where they are to go. And where is that place? We do not know. But when he gets them there, they will disperse and none of them will ever come back."

Thompson was persuaded and, as he later wrote: "I had to give up my doctrine of Instinct to that of their Manito. I have sometimes thought Instinct to be a word invented by the learned to cover their ignorance of the ways and doings of animals…"

David Thompson's post-fur trade career spanned nearly 40 years, all of it in what is now known as Quebec and Ontario. I could tell you many remarkable things about those decades, but I will focus on just two. First, Thompson played a vital role in the first International Joint Commission, which was created by Britain and America after the War of 1812 to survey the boundary between their possessions. Thompson was Chief Surveyor to the British commission charged with drawing the boundary from St. Regis, where the 45th parallel strikes the St. Lawrence, to Lake of the Woods. This took 10 years and when the work was done, Thompson and his American counterparts had created the first authoritative maps of the upper St. Lawrence and the Great Lakes.

Thompson's labours in the fur trade and boundary survey made him prosperous but, in 1836, at age 66, he was pushed into bankruptcy. He and his Métis wife, Charlotte, endured an impoverished old age in Montreal. In his daily journal, Thompson wrote of being without firewood on a frigid January day, of pawning his possessions to survive, of living in squalid

apartments and of walking the streets of Montreal day after day looking for work. And on April 29, 1843, he wrote: "I am on the morrow 73 years old but so destitute I have not the wherewithal to buy a loaf of bread. May the Pity of the Almighty be upon us."

Poverty made Thompson a writer and, strangely enough, enobled him. In 1845, he began writing a narrative of his travels and, by the end of the decade, had produced a handwritten manuscript that was nearly 700 pages long. His manuscript is now preserved in the Fisher Rare Book Room of the Robarts Library of the University of Toronto, and I examined this wonderful historical artifact while researching my book. It was amazing to see these aged foolscap pages with their dog ears and tea stains and with paragraphs crossed out and arrows directing the eye of the reader to the next line.

The manuscript was not published until 1916, nearly 60 years after Thompson's death, and it's a small miracle that it survived intact because it changed hands several times and two owners tried to sell it to private collectors.

The last thing I want to tell you about is Thompson's disability. In the winter of 1789-1790, while mastering the ordeal of celestial observation, he lost the sight in his right eye from the strain of spending hours by candlelight doing the complex math required to produce co-ordinates of latitude and longitude. The loss of his vision did not impede or slow him down, or even trouble him. He never mentioned it in the daily journals he kept for the next 60 years. We may never have known of his disability were it not for the strange turn of events that occurred in February 1848 when he was 78 years old. One morning, he awoke totally blind. Through the generosity of his son-in-law, he received treatment from a Montreal doctor. The physician bathed his eyes daily for three weeks in a chemical concoction that washed away the "cataracts", allowing him to view the stars with his right eye for the first time in nearly 60 years.

QUESTIONS:

- Thompson married Charlotte Small, a Cree woman, in 1799 when he was 29 and she was 13. Unlike the typical HBC "country marriage," their union lasted until 1857, when they died a few months apart.
- Charlotte's mother was a Cree from Isle à la Crosse, near the headwaters of the Churchill River; her father was Patrick Small, a former North West Co. trader and partner who sold his shares and retired to London, leaving his wife and three children behind.
- Thompson and Charlotte had 13 children, but there are few mentions of them in his diaries. One son became a draftsman, and one moved way. One daughter moved to New York State and one apparently had a drinking problem. Another daughter took her parents in when they were elderly.
- Thompson traveled about 50,000 miles across the Prairies, from Thunder Bay to the Pacific Ocean, a tremendous achievement in those days. He would travel by canoe from 3 am to 9 pm every day, usually sitting in the middle tracking every turn in the river with a compass and watch. His methods may have been primitive, but they were very accurate.
- He canoed north of Lake Athabaska and as far south as the source of the Missouri River.
- Among his many accomplishments was a glossary of Indian languages.
- Thompson became famous as a mapmaker, but he spent only one year of his 28-year career working on maps full time. He was first and foremost a full-time fur trader with the Hudson's Bay Company and the North West Company.
- He kept detailed diaries on his travels, mapping his location and the route of the rivers, but also describing the scenery, the people and the fauna, everything that interested him.
- He made a considerable amount of money in his later days, but went bankrupt in the recession of 1833 and 1834 after several of his businesses went sour and fellow settlers were unable to pay back the money he had loaned them.
- He never travelled the Thompson River. That was named after him, much later.

● Thompson suffered two episodes of blindness. He lost the sight in one eye while relatively young, and in both eyes when he was 73 years old. The cause was never determined, but it appeared to be related to an infection.

● Thompson quit the HBC in 1797 and moved to the rival North West Co., which offered him more opportunities to follow his true love, mapping the West.

● Thompson never became as famous as his contemporaries Alexander Mackenzie, Simon Fraser or Lewis and Clark, perhaps because he was not an explorer in the classic mould. They tended to follow one river to a noteworthy destination, while he travelled all over the Prairies, practising the mundane, but important, role of surveyor.

● Thompson's father died when he was two years old. He was educated in the Grey Coat School, a charitable institution in central London from the age of seven to 14, when he was picked by an HBC recruiter who was looking for literate children who could write the company's daily journals. He was despatched to Churchill, Man. that summer and never returned to England.

● D'Arcy said after the meeting that it is safe to say that he was one of the first to make canoes of cedar and likely the first in eastern Canada to attempt to produce them commercially. He made his first canoe in his winter camp in the Athabaska Pass in the winter of 1811 while waiting for the snow to break up so he could descend the Columbia River. The birch in that area was too weak to make a canoe, so he used crafted cedar planks with an axe, sewed them together with roots and waterproofed with pine gum. The end result was 25 feet long and fifty inches wide, as light as birch but stronger. He made a second cedar-plank canoe in Fort William in July 1812 – this one of sawed logs nailed together – which proved to be 20 per cent faster than birchbark canoes on a 500-mile journey across Lake Superior. He offered these canoes to the military and won a contract to build seven.

● In his later years, Thomson lived in the Bethune Thomson House in Williamstown, Ont., not far from Cornwall, Ont. It is still a lovely little village, that hasn't changed in 200 years. The current house has an addition on the back that was built of vertical logs in the 1790. He lived there until 1836, when he went bankrupt and had to leave. The house was sold to a coal merchant, whose family used it as a summer home until about 1930, when it was sold to the hired hands, who owned the house until 1970 when it was picked up by the Ontario Heritage Foundation.

The speaker was thanked by John Riley.

NOTES AND OBSERVATIONS:

● Hugh Currie spied a Northern Hawk-Owl and Boreal Owl on the Lesley St. Spit in Toronto. He also saw an Avocet in Ajax at the mouth of Duffins Creek.

● Hussell said a Boreal Owl was captured and banded at the tip of Long Point on November 1. A Tree Swallow started to lay a clutch of six eggs on May 1 near the base of Long Point, the earliest date ever. Two of the six eggs hatched after 20 days of incubation, the longest incubation period on record for a Tree Swallow, but both nestlings were underweight and died within 24 hours, perhaps indicating selection against excessively early breeding. They usually hatch in 14 days, but Hussell's previous record for successful incubation was 19 days.

● Hussell traveled to Iqaliut in July and again in late August. The breeding season was two weeks earlier than last year. He saw lemmings and juvenile Snowy Owls in late August. He said he had spent four summers in Iqaluit in the past 50 years, and this was the first time he had seen lemmings and Snowy Owls there.

● Bill Crins visited Presqu'ile Provincial Park on Nov. 15 to see Cave Swallows, without luck, but he did see a Purple Sandpiper, 75 Dunlin, one Eared Grebe and one Iceland Gull.

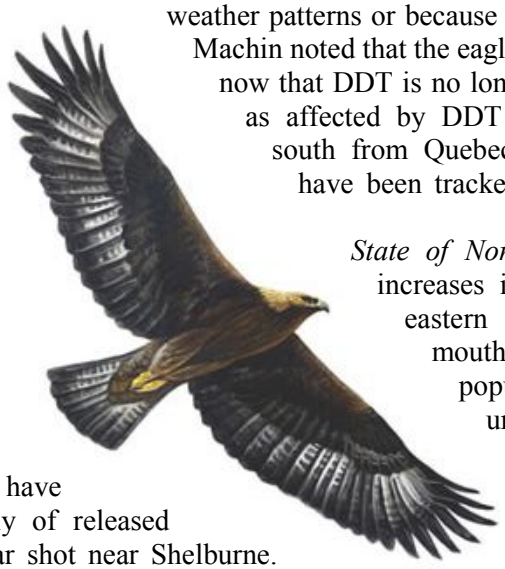
● Jock McAndrews offered to trade a seventh edition of Grey's Manual of Botany, published in 1907. It is leather-bound and looks nearly new.

● Guest Mark Stabb spied a Rough-legged Hawk southeast of Markham.

● Helen Juhola commented on the new – and very good – dinosaur diorama at the Museum of Nature in Ottawa. She also recommended *Underwater to Get Out of the Rain* by Trevor Norton, a most charming book about the sea by a botanist of seaweed.

● Richard Joos saw a Boreal Owl on Long Point and helped band some Cave Swallows, which flew in through an open window and were caught in a net.

● Bruce Falls said the number of Golden Eagles appears to have increased greatly in recent years, for no obvious reason. Ron Pittaway agreed that he has definitely seen more of the birds, possibly due to changes in weather patterns or because more of them appear to be nesting in trees. Enid Machin noted that the eagles may be coming back, like many other species, now that DDT is no longer used. But Pittaway said Golden Eagles weren't as affected by DDT as were Bald Eagles. They are probably coming south from Quebec and Labrador, where there are lots of nests. They have been tracked from Labrador down to the United States.



● Hussell noted that the *State of North America's Birds of Prey* reported steady increases in Golden Eagles from 1974 to 2004, at all north-eastern migration watch sites except for Tadoussac, at the mouth of the Saguenay River.

● John Riley noted the popularity of an emerging rural myth – as popular as any urban myth – that OMNR officials have been releasing live cougars in southern Ontario. There have been fairly regular sightings of cougar, all likely of released pets, including one purportedly with a radio collar shot near Shelburne. "The inevitable will happen," he said, meaning a cougar-human interaction that triggers a negative reaction to cougars. He suggested that OMNR release a public notice to inform rural residents as to the current status of the cougar, as well as a recommendation for caution.

● Falls recalled earlier myths about OMNR releasing live wolves, while Ken Abraham and others said they had heard that the Ministry had released fishers to keep the porcupine population under control on the Bruce Peninsula.

● Falls noted that Doug Pimlott used to walk around with tame wolves, sometimes scaring local inhabitants.

● For the record, Ed Addison said OMNR is NOT releasing cougars or wolves.

The meeting adjourned at 9:10 p.m.

NEXT MEETING:

The next meeting will be held at 7:30 pm on Dec. 16, 2008 in Room 432 of the Ramsay Wright Zoological Laboratories. The speaker will be member Bob Curry, who will talk on his recent trip to Peru. Members are encouraged to bring Christmas cheer.

ERICA DUNN

Erica (Ricky) Dunn is an Emeritus Scientist with Environment Canada, living in Simcoe, ON.

Born in Massachusetts, Dunn began her career at age 16, assisting the Massachusetts Audubon Society in a region-wide study of Herring Gulls. On a hiatus from university, she worked for a year in Germany at a Max Planck Institute, also on birds. She completed her Ph.D. at the University of Michigan on energy allocation during growth in nestling Double-crested Cormorants. Marriage to ornithologist David Hussell brought her to Canada in 1972.

Dunn's eclectic career has included stints at the Long Point Bird Observatory, Trent University (Assistant Professor), the Ontario Ministry of Natural Resources (analyzing data on arctic-nesting geese), and Cornell University's Laboratory of Ornithology (founding director of Project FeederWatch). As Surveys Scientist for the Canadian Wildlife Service, Dunn worked with data from broad-scale bird surveys such as the Breeding Bird Survey, Christmas Bird Counts, migration monitoring and feeder surveys – analyzing results, improving data collection and identifying priorities for filling gaps in coverage.

The diversity of Dunn's interests and experience is reflected in the list of her nearly 50 scientific papers, on a wide variety of subjects (including development of thermoregulation in nestling birds, avian population trends, general life history, migration and stopover biology, and setting of conservation priorities) – covering a broad array of species from seabirds to songbirds. She is author of a book of results from Project FeederWatch (*Birds at Your Feeder*, W.W. Norton), and edited books on the use of mist-netting to monitor bird populations and two atlases of results from bird-banding in Canada.

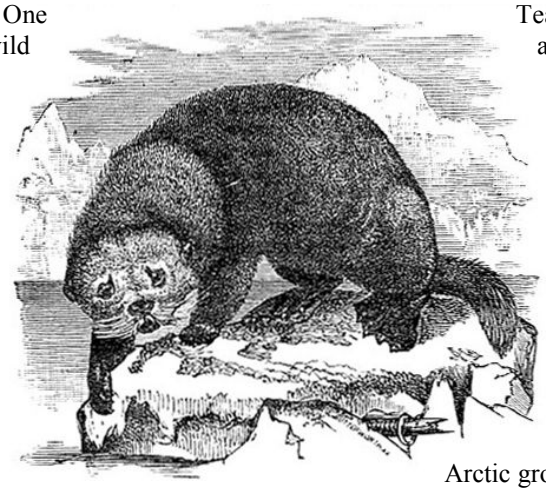
Dunn's extensive record of involvement with ornithological organizations includes serving as President both of the American Ornithologists Union and the Society of Canadian Ornithologists. The latter group gave her the 2001 Doris Huestis Speirs Award for outstanding contributions to Canadian ornithology, and the Linnaean Society of New York awarded her a Eugene Eisenmann Medal -- which uniquely recognizes contributions to scientific ornithology in combination with encouragement of amateurs. Dunn also served on technical committees for Partners in Flight, eBird and the second Ontario Breeding Bird Atlas, and was a member of scientific review panels for the North American Breeding Bird Survey and Christmas Bird Counts.

In retirement, Dunn continues her involvement with bird population surveys that rely on volunteers to collect data. She regularly visits bird observatories, and currently is a member of technical committees for two programs designed to monitor avian population trends through counts of migrating birds: the Canadian Migration Monitoring Network and the Raptor Population Index. Despite her best efforts to resist getting enmeshed in husband David's field projects, she has assisted with his work on Tree Swallows and Northern Wheatears, and will likely end up helping to analyse and publish swallow data.

Alaska

By Yorke Edwards
Our Western Correspondent

Alaska is in the far northwest corner of North America, and it lives by the sea. Long ago, there was a narrow path of land that joined Russia and Alaska together, but now they are separated by 50 miles of sea. In that early time, both wild animals and people crossed back and forth on a narrow path of land joining the present Russia and Alaska. One example is the wild reindeers of Asia. Today, those animals live in North American, where they are called caribou. Santa Claus, of course, still calls them reindeers, which live in Europe and Asia.



Those two named animals are living in two different parts of the world's wild northland. In Canada long ago, some caribous once lived as far south as the United States, but now they are restricted to small areas in the northwest United States, living in part of the State of Washington.

A map of Alaska today shows a large square area of land with a long, narrow area going south towards B.C.'s Queen Charlotte Islands. Alaska also has many small islands, a long line of them going across the sea for about 80 miles, towards both Russia and Japan.

Most species of birds and mammal living in Alaska are also in Canada, but there are a few that do not. They are, for example, Whooping Cranes by their shores, all white but with black and yellow bills. Also the smaller Ross' Goose with its orange bill; and more of the Falated Teal; the Steller's Sea-eagle with a large bill; the Eurasian Kestrel. There are many other kinds of rare birds from Asia that fly or swim across the sea to Alaska. Many of them are probably going east to the little islands that sit in a long line between Alaska and Japan. There are now a few mammals living in both North America and Asia, the reindeers (caribou), polar bears, Arctic foxes and Arctic ground squirrels.

In the 1770s, many ships traveled to the northwestern sea to collect sea otter skins for peoples' hats in Europe, Asia and North America. 'Otter hats' were used in many countries until they became unfashionable, and then sea otters became wild and numerous once again.

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