

THE  
BRODIE  
CLUB



ROYAL ONTARIO  
MUSEUM OF ZOOLOGY

### **THE 1,025th MEETING OF THE BRODIE CLUB**

The 1,025th meeting of the Brodie Club was held at 7:30 pm on Dec. 16, 2008 in Room 432 of the Ramsay Wright Laboratories of the University of Toronto.

Chairman: Ken Abraham

Secretary: Ed Addison

The meeting was attended by 24 members and three guests:

Margaret Carney, Dave Beadle and Dennis Barry were guests of Hugh Currie

Several members sent regrets including the Bendells, Oliver Bertin, Bill Crins, Ron Pittaway, and Jim and Trudy Rising, Jennifer Young, and the Hussells.

A correction to the minutes of the previous meeting was to change “dinosaur diorama” to “mammal diorama”. The minutes were approved with this change.

There was no business arising from the minutes, no new business and there were no committee reports.

#### **SPEAKER:**

The speaker was club member Bob Curry who was introduced by Bruce Falls.

### **NORTHERN PERU, OCTOBER-NOVEMBER 2007**

Bob was one of a small group of naturalists who teamed together for a month in northern Peru in October-November 2007. The group was led by Brodie Club guest Dave Beadle. Also within the group were Brodie Club guests Margaret Carney and Dennis Barry, and club members George Bryant, Hugh Currie and Glenda Slessor. Bob had been to Peru in 2002 but on that occasion most of his focus had been on southern Peru.

The 2007 trip was in the north, mainly in a variety of ecosystems east of Chiclayo. Ecosystems to be visited included coastal desert and scrubland, lowland tropical rainforest of the Amazon basin and the diversity of systems in the mountains and valleys of the Andean Mountains, including highland rainforest and alpine meadows.

They flew to Iquitos on the Amazon River. Iquitos is the largest city in the world that lacks road access to the outside. They travelled by boat to two lodges in the Iquitos area. The first, ExplorNapó Lodge, was down the Amazon and then about 50 miles up the Napo River, a major tributary of the Amazon with its source in the Andes of Ecuador. The visit was just prior to the

rainy season, hence the rivers were low. At ExplorNapo, the cabins were open to the air but there was bug netting. The first animal they saw at ExplorNapo was the peacock katydid, *Pterochroza ocellata*. When resting it is camouflaged to look like a leaf and when startled opens its wings that contain markings like those on peacock feathers. Bob showed pictures of a wide diversity of butterflies from the area including the tropical buckeye that appeared similar to our local buckeye butterflies.

There were low islands in the river that were dominated by bamboo and which had their own unique avifauna.



The day-time flying tropical moth *Urania leilus*, was quite common as were Amazon race runners, lizards about 12” long that scurried in the area of the lodge. On a tree top walk, they observed a poison dart frog, *Dendrobates ventrimaculatus*, that was only about half the length of a thumb. Also present in the canopy was the Amazon thorny-tail lizard, *Tropodirus flaviceps*.

Cane toads, *Bufo marinus*, were common on the ground, as were double-toothed kites in the air. In the afternoon, there were predictable buildups of cumulo-nimbus clouds.

Many of the rivers in the area were ‘black water rivers’ with dark tea-coloured water. As they travelled some rivers, fish with very spiny fins and sharp teeth jumped into their boat.

Returning to Iquitos, the group travelled upstream and stayed at Muyana Lodge. Many of the lodge buildings were constructed on stilts. There were monkeys, boat-billed herons and black-fronted nunbirds all in the area of the lodge. One of the smaller primates was the pygmy marmoset that was seen 4 to 5 m up a tree, and was about the size of a gray squirrel. Among many other species that were seen in the area were social flycatchers [common], lots of other flycatchers with similar coloration, an abundance of orchid species, dark-headed tree rat, rufescent tiger heron, yellow-rumped cacique [one of the most common icterids], black-capped donacobius, white-eared jacamar [fairly common and somewhat related to our kingfishers], crane hawk, and a subspecies of turkey vulture with white on the nape.

The group visited an area with white sand, an ecosystem less common in the Iquitos region. Here they observed another poison dart frog, *Dendrobates reticulata*; *Colostethis marchesianu*, a frog of the forest floor; paradise jacamar [fairly common]; and the yellow-billed nunbird, one of the rarer nunbirds.

They visited yet another area on the Amazon. There were orchid festivals in town, lots of spectacular bugs and an Andean coral snake, *Micrurus lemniscatus*.

The group flew out of Iquitos to Lima, birded in the Lima area and then flew to Chiclayo for their time in the dry coastal ecosystem. They travelled to Bosque de Pomac, where a historic sanctuary protects a small portion of the Pacific Tropical Desert. Prickly pear cactus and black vultures were very common. Other species observed included a Sechuran fox, rufous flycatcher, golden-olive woodpecker, and Peruvian plantcutter [quite a few].

In the high, dry mountainous country, the group stayed at Chaparri Lodge. Excellent food including bananas and chickens were cooked in clay ovens. Spectacled bear and tortoises were being rehabilitated at this site. Croaking ground dove were common at the feeders. Also at feeders were white-headed brush finches. They saw the elegant crescent-chest, one of the specialty birds of the area. Saffron finches were common and widespread. Long-tailed mockingbirds were common and there were a variety of jay species including the white-tailed jay. A very rare bird, the white-winged guan [*Penelope albipennis*] was in this area. The guans, turkey-like birds of the American tropics, had been bred and released in the area.

They visited a number of areas in the Andes east of Chiclayo, including Cajamarca. In areas there was agriculture in the valleys, the roads had many switchbacks, and there were some dry rain shadow habitats. They visited ruins of human communities on the edges of cliffs. These communities preceded the Inca empire. Hats were worn by both men and women in these high mountain areas and the design of the hats varied among areas.

Many birds were observed in the mountain areas including Koepcke's Screech-owl [*Megascops koepckeae*], a special bird of the area; black-chested buzzard-eagle; mountain caracara; plumbeous rail which unlike most rails was walking about in the open; fasciated tiger-heron; Andean lapwing; golden-billed saltator [*Saltator aurantiirostris*], a relative of cardinals and similar to grosbeaks; red-crested cotinga [*Ampelion rubrocristatus*]; another cotinga, the Andean cock-of-the-rock; rufous breasted chat-tyrant [flycatchers]; Jeliski's chat-tyrant [*Ochthoeca jelskii*]; spot-throated hummingbird [*Leucippus taczanowskii*]; black-throated flower piercer; Marañón tropical Gnatcatcher, a subspecies of the tropical gnatcatcher [*Polioptila plumbea*] locally endemic to the Marañón valley; Peruvian meadowlark; black metaltail hummingbird [endemic to Peru]; Amazilia hummingbird [common]; and Royal Sunangel hummingbird [*Heliangelus regalis*]. One of the highlights of the trip was seeing the great spinetail [*Siptornopsis hypochondriacus*], a species threatened by loss of habitat.

Other biota observed by the group in the mountains included an abundance of lupins and orchids, spectacular butterflies, one colubrid snake, tarantulas, interesting beetles and a great diversity in moths. One moth, *Automeris micheneri*, was a giant silk moth, which do not feed as adults. *Adhemarius sexoculata* was a beautiful sphinx moth.

Bob closed by presenting some comparative data on human populations in Canada and Peru that demonstrated generally similar total populations, about twice the birth rate in Peru as compared with Canada, with infant mortality about six times higher in Peru and the vastly lower income/capita in Peru.

#### **QUESTIONS:**

Are poisonous dart frogs poisonous to handle? Some are but others are not a serious threat. There is an Ecuadorean dart frog being used as a source of a morphine-like drug.

Are railroads still being used in Peru? They saw some railroads being used specifically in mining operations. There are problems with avalanches over the tracks.

Bob was thanked by Glenn Coady.

#### **FIELD OBSERVATIONS:**

Bruce Falls observed seven snowy owls on Amherst Island and noted that there was an abundance of voles in the Eastern Arctic, hence lots of young owls reared.

John Speakman observed a swan with a yellow identification patch on the ice on Lake Simcoe. This was the first such observation at John's property there.

Hugh Currie noted the observation of two black-throated blue warblers, the first such observations in the 109-year history of the Toronto Ornithology Club Christmas bird counts. There was a parula warbler seen on the count in Thickson Woods.

Dennis Barry noted about 1,500 white-winged crossbills [three quarters males] during the Minden count, and a red-throated loon was seen two days before the count on Gull Lake near Minden.

Ed Bousefield gave an update on 'Ogopogo' observations on Lake Okanogan. From observations, the animals are considered to be 50 to 60 feet in length. However, observations have been becoming more frequent and many of the animals appear smaller. This is giving rise to hope that

the population is expanding and that people are seeing an increasing number of young. If this is occurring, it may be related to increased eutrophication, which would enhance the food pyramid within the lake and possibly promote reproduction.

When in Argentina in November, George Bryant observed trees 'leaking water' so rapidly that it was like a rain shower beneath the trees despite no rain in the area for days. How is this water being shed in such quantities?

Sandra Eadie reported on an article citing an invasion of snowy owls in Prince Edward Island.

Glenn Coady reported that the manager of Parklawn Cemetery stopped three people on the property on the previous Saturday who were hunting deer with crossbows.

Following the meeting, members and guests enjoyed a diversity of very tasty Christmas treats along with refreshments.

**NEXT MEETING:**

The next meeting will be held at 7:30 pm on Jan. 20, 2009 in Room 432 of the Ramsay Wright Zoological Laboratories. The speaker will be member Dr. Paul Gray of the Ontario Ministry of Natural Resources who will talk on "Global Warming – Emerging Axioms".

## Birds in the City

By Yorke Edwards

Our Western Correspondent

Victoria is the warmest Canadian city. It seldom has any snow, so many birds stay home all year. Below is a list of birds seen through the year.

This list has only most birds that can be seen all year (Read across below).

Double-Crested Cormorant	Brant's Cormorant	Pelagic Cormorant,
Great-blue Heron	Mute Swan	Canada Goose
Harlequin Duck	Surf Scoter	Mallard,
White-winged Scoter	Common Merganser	Cooper's Hawk
Red-tailed Hawk	Ring-neck Pheasant	California Quail
Killdeer	Black Oystercatcher	Glaucous-winged Gull
Pigeon Guillemot	Marbled Murrelet	Rock Dove
Belted Kingfisher	Downy Woodpecker	Hairy Woodpecker
Steller's Jay	Northwestern Crow	Skylark
Raven	Chestnut-backed Chickadee	Bushtit
Red-breasted Nuthatch	Brown Creeper	Bewick's Wren
Winter Wren	Marsh Wren	Golden-crowned Kinglet
Robin	Varied Thrush	Starling
Rufous-sided Towhee	Song Sparrow	White-crown Sparrow
Dark-eyed Junco	Redwing Blackbird	Brewer's Blackbird
Purple Finch	House Finch	Pine Sisken

Those below do come, but nest elsewhere, but not far away.

Pacific Loon	Common Loon	Pied-billed Grebe
Red-necked Grebe	Western Grebe	Green-winged Teal
Northern Pintail	Northern Shoveler	American Wigeon
Greater Scaup	Lesser Scaup	Common Goldeneye
Black-bellied Plover	Common Snipe	Greater Yellowlegs
Black Turnstone	Short Dowitcher	Mew Gull
Common Murre	Fox Sparrow	Golden-crowned Sparrow

Those below are seen inside the town in summer nesting areas.

Spruce Grouse	Rhinoceros Auklet	Rufous Hummingbird
Anna's Hummingbird	Olive-sided Flycatcher	Western Flycatcher
Violet-green Swallow	Barn Swallow	Yellow Warbler
Orange-crowned Warbler	Magnolia Warbler	Townsend Warbler
MacGillivray Warbler	Common Yellowthroat	Wilson's Warbler
Savannah Sparrow	Cowbird	American Goldfinch

There are others, of course, but those above are seen most years. Come to see them sometime. Even in winter, there are many birds staying on our island with many others near to our southern shores. We almost never have snow, and, if so, just for a few days. The birds don't go away. This is a city on an island with many birds living here all year.

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