

BRODIE CLUB

MINUTES OF THE 862nd MEETING

This meeting was held on Tuesday, November 20, 1990 in the Faunal Laboratory. The Chairman was Riley, Secretary was Speakman. Eleven members were present. Guests included Margaret Bodsworth, guest of Bodsworth, Margery Ritchie guest of Ritchie and Patrick Scanlon a guest of Carrick.

The minutes of the previous meeting were read by Boissonneau and were approved without correction.

ANNOUNCEMENTS

Considerable discussion took place with regard to Carrick's problem with the wildlife service. His licence to keep wildfowl has not been renewed which makes it impossible for him to continue his flying experiments with imprinted birds and makes it impossible to try and initiate migration flights with re-introduced species such as Trumpeter swans. Bones from Trumpeter swans have been found at sites near the Wye Marsh which suggests that these birds did in fact nest in this area earlier which disputes statements by the FON that the swans have never been native to Southern Ontario. Two newspaper reports of Carrick's activities were circulated in addition to numbers of photographs illustrating the flight patterns of his imprinted Canada Geese. There was general support for Carrick and members agreed to write on his behalf to try and reverse the CWS decision.

SPEAKER OF THE EVENING

Our speaker, Michael Cadman, was introduced by Fred Bodsworth, who referred to his efforts in co-ordinating and directing field work which made possible the preparation and publishing of the Atlas of the Breeding Birds of Ontario. Our speaker reviewed his experiences in preparing the Breeding Bird Atlas and then outlined proposals for publishing a similar atlas for Breeding Mammals. He began by referring to the contribution Bruce Falls has made to the rare breeding bird program and to the work of Dave Hussell on the Bird Atlas technical committee. He then outlined the grid system used to locate breeding birds on a large scale map of Ontario which was divided into ten by ten kilometer squares. The importance of regional co-ordinators was emphasized and the various categories of breeding activity were outlined. In Southern Ontario, the song sparrow, robin, and red-winged blackbird were found to be the most frequent breeding birds. An obvious important use for the Atlas is to identify future changes in distribution. Its value to wildlife managers in planning programs for rare breeding birds was explained with reference to a number of species. The importance of this information in identifying habitats which need to be preserved, modified, or purchased was emphasized.

The rare birds discussed included the Cerulean Warbler, the Black Tern, the Least Bittern, the Red Necked Grebe, the Red Shouldered Hawk, and Henslow's sparrow. Apparently only one nesting site in Ontario for the sparrow was noted this year and it was noted that at one time 50 singing males were identified in a field which was later ploughed. There are no longer any birds in this area. It was noted that sixteen hectares of forest were needed to protect the nesting area of a Red Shouldered Hawk. Similar data is becoming available for the Cooper's Hawk, which nests in pine reforestation areas in Southern Ontario and habitat requirements are being assessed in order to institute appropriate management plans for the reforested woods in order to preserve this species. A more detailed analysis was made of the migrant Shrike situation, as it used to be a common nesting bird in Southern Ontario and has declined to approximately twenty active nesting sites. The bird at present nests in very limited numbers on Manitoulin, on open limestone

pasture land north of Lake Simcoe, and north of Napanee. Only one pair has nested recently in Quebec and there are no birds nesting in New York State. The birds seem to prefer large areas of open pasture land associated with limestone outcrops. It is not known for sure whether our Shrikes over winter in the Southern United States or fly on to Mexico and very little is known about the requirements for a suitable winter habitat. The birds are still abundant on the prairies where more young birds are raised in areas of natural prairie as opposed to cultivated land.

A recent Perigrine falcon survey revealed three active nest sites with young birds in Ontario and in 1985 no active nests were found. The breeding birds were not banded and presumably were not from the local release program.

Reference was made to plans for a Conservation Data Centre. It is hoped that initially on a continental and later a global basis, important habitat sites for rare species will be recorded for purposes of protection and purchase. This plan is in place for the United States, British Columbia and hopefully more areas will be included as data become available. Information on plants, vertebrates, as well as breeding birds, will be included in evaluating a site.

The speaker then outlined the preliminary plans to develop an atlas for breeding mammals. The project has the support of the FON, the Ontario Federation of Anglers and Hunters, and the Ministry of Natural Resources, together with the Environmental Youth Core. In Phase I of the project, an attempt will be made to record historical occurrence data utilizing sources such as the Royal Ontario Museum and naturalists throughout the province. This data should provide a provisional atlas. Phase II will attempt to record the current distribution of mammals to be used as a benchmark for future comparison. Recruiting observers for this program will obviously be different from those participating in the breeding bird study. A suggested classification for grouping animals would comprise bats, big game, fur bearers, marine animals, small mammals, and others. Reference was made to the current increase of opossums in Southern Ontario, possibly related to hitch hiking on trucks from the U.S. In the ROM, of 30,000 specimens, 15,000 are bats. Walrus can be seen off the coast of Cape Henrietta together with Polar Bear and in Hudson Bay there are estimates of 3,000 Balugas.

At this point there was considerable comment on the project by various members of the Club. Savage wondered about the value of archeological sites for establishing frequency distribution in the pre-historical period. Carrick referred to a large Hawthorne tree near Uxbridge which was used for nesting by a pair of Shrikes. This tree was cut down and the birds disappeared. Bendell raised the problem of taxonomic classification and subspecies. There was also discussion about the problems of fitting data from a trap-line into a grid, or conforming with township geography. Hessel commented on species clustering for particular habitats and mentioned correlation with Carolinian and shield geography but apparent poor co-relation for different forest zones. Bendell also wondered whether feral species such as cats and dogs and released animals such as elk and buffalo would be analyzed.

At this point the speaker was thanked^{ed} by John Riley, who praised his skill and leadership in establishing these projects and he expressed the appreciation of the Club.

NOTES AND OBSERVATIONS

Riley referred to a U.S. project investigating methane gas production in the Hudson Bay lowlands that was equipped with air conditioned tents. Methane is

increasing in the atmosphere and is contributing to the green house effect.

Scanlon found a lesser black backed bull and a little gull in Niagara.

Bendell reported cormorants at Mississauga and a decrease in migration activity.

Bodsworth reported a flock of thousands of starlings at Niagara.

Cadman commented on the absence of song sparrows on a fall census near Hamilton.

Speakman reported his pileated woodpeckers returned to their Beech trees for sleeping at 4:50 p.m. and the male bird appeared to drink from a knot hole before entering the cavity in the tree. A flicker investigated the hole after the pileated had gone to bed but did not enter.

The meeting was adjourned at 10:15 p.m.