

THE BRODIE CLUB
Minutes of the 870th Meeting

The 870th meeting was held on the fifteenth day of October, 1991, in the Faunal Laboratory of the South B rdon Building of the University of Toronto, beginning at 8 P.M. Churcher was Chairman. Thirteen members were present. Two members sent regrets. There were five guests: Bernice Carrick, Frank De Matteas, and the speaker Kelly Whitlock were guests of Carrick, Maudie Reynolds was guest of Keith Reynolds, and Margery Ritchie, guest of Ritchie.

The minutes of the 869th meeting were read by Ann Falls and were approved. Carrick moved that henceforth the Club dispense with the reading of the minutes of the previous meeting provided that they have been circulated in advance. Seconded by Ann Falls. Carried unanimously.

Savage reported that the May, 1991, minutes had not been mailed out but they are presently available to be picked up.

Norm Martin reported from the F.O.N.:

- (1) A meeting of the National Heritage League on October 24th, on Conservation and Land Use, at the Hilton Hotel in Toronto;
- (2) Environment Canada, October 26-27th, Concerning the automobile and its effect on the environment;
- (3) From the Ontario Environment Network: a number of caucuses in November on the forest, waste management and land use. Also a job vacancy for an organiser for land use, an article on clearcutting in the middle of the Chapleau Game Reserve, and a seed catalogue.

Norm also reported receiving a letter from Marion Taylor, environment director of the F.O.N. This was in answer to the Club's earlier letters found in a pile after Ian Kirkham left. The letter made reference to restricted funds and a possible future meeting.

Carrick introduced the guest speaker of the evening, Kelly Whitlock. Kelly is a second year biology student at the University of Toronto, currently working with Carrick studying swans and beaver. Her interest is in ethology.

Kelly began her story at three years ago when she was a first year student at U. of T. During Reading Week, she avoided the usual diversions and took a trip to Cartagena, Colombia. Cartagena is a beautiful, restored, historic walled city where no new architecture is allowed. It is located beside high mountains and Santa Marta bay on the seacoast of Colombia. A lagoon there is a National Park.

Altogether there are 27 national parks in Colombia. After three days she took a trip in a 30-year-old boat to nearby islands; there are 27 islands with many mangrove areas and white sand beaches. She became intensely interested in an aquarium establishment on one of the islands owned by Raphael Biretta, and asked for a job. He could speak English but she had no Spanish at the time. Two months later, after completing her school year, she returned and lived two years at the aquarium, gradually picking up some Spanish.

The aquarium was not like those seen in inland North America. It was a grouping of strong wire fences along a beach bordered by docks to walk upon. Coral reefs and shaded areas are included in the layout. Baracuda, sharks, turtles, small fish of many kinds, and dolphins are resident. Dolphins can leap the fences and return if they are so inclined. Animals from Colombia are set free on the island. Eleven natives live here also. There may be as many as 300 visitors to the aquarium at a time. Kelly showed coloured slides of some of the animals, including a Cotton Top monkey, later consumed by a Boa Constrictor. Names were given to some: Sophia was a Spider monkey; Chico was a male Spider monkey who attacked Kelly once, bruising her foot and face and requiring her to have bed rest for two weeks. The natives offered to catch Chico and bring him to be hit by Kelly; they could not understand that she had no revenge motive.

Brown boobies and pelicans frequented the shark tank. Pelicans soon learned to avoid the sharks but many boobies were missing a foot. A cormorant was another "gift". It couldn't fly and had a broken beak. "Garcon" was a Wood stork prone to attack small children and it drank gallons of water a day. The sawfish is a bottom dweller which wags its beak back and forth over a school of small fish. Of 250 species of sharks, the aquarium had (1) Nurse sharks which are wide and 2 1/2 meters long and lie on the bottom taking lobsters and crabs. They would also take fish offered from a styrofoam platform; (2) the Lemon shark which was also heavy and measured 3 meters long. It will attack humans if provoked; (3) the Bull shark which goes up fresh-water rivers and can attack people at beaches. It can also be involved in a "blood frenzy." "Teka" was a Peruvian sea lion donated from another aquarium. It was legally blind. An underwater tunnel representing Caribbean areas provided habitat for many small fish.

Kelly's main duty at first was cutting fish, feeding the dolphins and swimming with them. She had a chance to take over the train-

ing of the dolphins when the trainer was away. The usual variety was Inia geoffrensis, a small dolphin. "Terci" was caught with its mother in a fisherman's net and in 1 1/2 years became the dominant one. "Steno", Steno bredanensis, the "rough-toothed" dolphin, ordinarily a deep-water dolphin, was caught in shallow water. It is very rare in captivity. It was 3 1/2 metres long, with very sharp teeth and an ugly appearance. It was covered with many scratches caused by rubbing on coral and rocks. It proved to be the most creative of all the dolphins.

Kelly described the method used to train dolphins to jump, go through hoops, etc. Prerequisites are: a hungry dolphin, a target (hoop, bar), a whistle and a bucket of fish. There are three training sessions each day. Dolphins vary; it may take two days or two months to get them to take a fish from the hand of a person on a platform. From then on progress is assured. But some individuals are untrainable.

The purpose of the Aquarium is to afford the Colombian people an opportunity to learn about dolphins and the environment. The natives are concerned mainly with self-survival. The aquarium teaches what happens to the environment when they discard all their wastes into the water. Erosion is affecting the coral reefs. North winds bring cloudy water from Cartagena where dredging goes on for local boats. The islands are gradually being swept away, thus affording less protection to Cartagena.

Dolphins display individual characters. One played a game of "keep-away" with Kelly using small objects such as a leaf. Steno became very jealous for attention. In response to questions, Kelly said teeth are not shed. Dolphins communicate by clicks and whistles, differing in species. Playback recordings have not been tried. They have no reaction to mirrors. Dolphins have a fair sense of sight but rely on sonar. They see as well out of water as in it. They emit high frequency sound from the melon on top of the head and receive it in the lower jaw.

While the practice of swimming with dolphins was popular in the 1960's, most aquariums now have a rule against this practice. Contrasted with humans, dolphins can stay under water for 5 minutes and Killer Whales for 15 minutes. The latter are very large and very social-minded and should never be kept in captivity. The dolphins' response to boats is to swim away from them. Sharks will follow a group of dolphins,

catching stragglers or attacking when responding to blood during a dolphin birth. Two "aunts" will attend at a birth. Males at the periphery of the group will attack sharks, charging into their soft undersides, occasionally killing them.

Churcher thanked the speaker and a vigorous applause followed.

Members' observations:

Bodsworth reported that Cornell University and the American Birding Association is making up a list of clubs called "Winging It."

K. Reynolds had seen a Raven at Griffith Island between Owen Sound and Tobermory. Other members had seen them at Apsley, Owen Sound, Parry Sound, Go-Home River, Markdale, and Bala. Lumsden recalled the Raven which had been seen for several years at the Lakeshore Hospital and had nested at least once.

De Matteas reported three broods of Bluebird in Grey County this year.

Ritchie reported a Mockingbird and a Hermit Thrush in the garden at Thorold preferred wild Rose hips to the berries on cultivated bushes.

The meeting adjourned at 10.08 p.m.



R. Ritchie
Recording secretary, pro tem.