

MINUTES OF THE 880th MEETING OF THE BRODIE CLUB

17th November 1992

Chairman McNicholl

Secretary Boissonneau

This meeting was held in the Faunal Lab of the South Borden Building, U. of T. on Tuesday 17 November 1992. It was called to order by the Chairman at 8.06 p.m. Thirteen Members and two guests ^{attended} the meeting; the latter were Jennifer Young (Young) and Jewell MacDonald (Bertin). After a minor amendment (which oddly had persisted since the 879th meeting), the minutes of the last meeting were approved by a motion moved by Carrick and seconded by Savage -- Carried.

Announcements

Bendell : Mentioned a forthcoming lecture at U. of T. concerning ~~fluctuations~~ in the Varying Hare populations (an update of Duncan MacLulich's work was a question that arose in many members' minds).

McNicholl : Mentioned a forthcoming meeting at which the Loon Survey and the Tern Project at the Leslie Street Spit would be discussed.

Carrick : Stated that upon visiting the R. O. M. to film the Passenger Pigeon habitat group, he was more than a little disconcerted to find that the entire exhibit had been trashed.

Martin : Discussed recent submissions from the F. O. N. to the Club.

Boissonneau : Exhibited a recent find in the basement of the Cannington Public Library - The History of Birds by E. Stanley (Lord Bishop of Norwick) published exactly 100 years ago and originally in the library of the Cannington Mechanics Institute.

Speaker of the Evening

Bruce Falls introduced the Speaker - O. Christopher Darling who is currently the Associate Curator of the Dept. of Entomology at the R. O. M. He is currently working with personnel of museums in Indonesia to collect and catalogue insects of the rain forest. The Speaker's topic was the role of Museums in investigating the extent of current reduction of biodiversity in tropical rain forest ecosystems. He stated that traditionally Museums have been the last bastions of Natural History collections and have been impervious to any change in their goals. They have tended to compete with other institutions to have the best collection in a certain field (their own special and hopefully secure niche). In these times when commercial enterprises strive to "rationalize" the numbers of useful species of flora and fauna, it is important for Museums to co-operate with Museums in the 3rd World to build global collections and to enlist specialists worldwide to cope with the person-centuries of taxonomic work.

He began his slide presentation by showing factors which are decimating rain forests -- slash and burn agriculture, logging roads, mining operations and their tailings. He showed a slide in-

dicating the importance of insect species; for example, 300,000 plant species vs. 1 - 2 million species of Hymenoptera, 4½ times more ant species than mammal species. Slides illustrated the contributions of the people of the rain forest in terms of dietary options, crafts and folk medicine. The intricacies of ecological relationships in the rain forest were illustrated by a species of Hymenoptera which pollinate dates, working inside the fruit to produce seed which propagate these trees which are a significant food source for Orangutans.

At this point, the scene changed to the main entrance of the R. O. M. and its motto "The Record of Nature through Countless Ages". The question was asked "Is not the fate of Dinosaurs and other fossil remains somewhat quixotic in relation to the flora and fauna of the tropical rain forest which is making an exit left before our very eyes?"

Returning to Indonesia, the use of malaise traps to sample insect populations of various levels of the rain forest canopy was illustrated. These samples reveal quite different ecological relationships at varying heights. Java has been blessed with periodic showers of nutrient-rich volcanic ash which has provided very productive soil which can support its large population -- 180 million people in the capital Djakarta. Borneo and Sumatra have not been so lucky, hence their poverty, shanty towns and struggles to survive.

Question Period

Falls - Asked if species of microorganisms would not exceed those of insects? This was acknowledged and it was pointed out that monitoring the changes of these organisms in areas subjected to slash and burn is an important consideration.

Bertin -- Asked if it might not take a week to study a single trap of insects? Longer; the current strategy is to separate the contents of jars into fractions which can be sent to specialists, world-wide, for identification.

Speakman -- Asked if the emphasis is on biodiversity projects, could not museums be criticized for neglecting Canadian problems? Reply: Funding is available from U. S. A. and Canada, a global perspective is important at this stage of our history and it is natural in this context to get involved when it is something you want to do.

Fowles: Mentioned that C. E. D. A funds for biodiversity research in Universities and their response is similar to that of Museums. He asked if Japan was supporting biodiversity projects. Answer: No, but perhaps a U. S.-Japan pact which is currently being negotiated may initiate Japanese funding of these projects.

The Speaker was thanked by Bendell.

Members' Notes and Observations

Carrick : Found a Snowy Owl which could barely fly. After coralling it, feeding it three Rock Doves in three days, it was attractive enough to be stolen from his premises.

de Matteis : Found a Great Blue Heron in a similar emaciated condition. It was fed three to five fishes per diem till it returned to its normal routine.

Bendell : Mentioned an immature Bald Eagle at Clarkson. He gave an update on his continuing "battle" with a Beaver to retain access to his cabin in the Gogama area.

Darling : Showed a volume of correspond^cence of Dr. Brodie which mainly concern the identifications of his Hymenoptera collection by various specialists. This material is kept at the Dept. of Entomology, R. O. M.

Speakman : Reported a Pileated Woodpecker collecting larvae in a noisy way inside a Beech tree. Describing the larvae, they were identified as Long-horned Beetles.

The Meeting was adjourned on a motion by Carrick.