

Brodie Club Meeting

The 912th meeting of the Brodie Club was held in the Howard Savage Faunal Archeo-Osteology Laboratory of the University of Toronto on Tuesday, April 16, 1996.

Chairman: David Fowle

Secretary: Jennifer Young

Attendance

There were eighteen members and four guests present. Guests were Yvonne Bendell, guest of Bendell; Mary Tasker, guest of Tasker; Vicky Draper, guest of Fowle, and Joan Boyer, guest of Boyer.

Minutes

The minutes of the previous meeting were approved as read.

Announcements

The chairman read a reply from Premier Harris, to a letter written by Carrick, as Secretary of The Brodie Club, about the implications of Bill 26.

The Speaker

Tasker introduced our speaker, Ron Scovell, who gave an illustrated talk on his birding adventures in Peru.

Scovell characterized Peru as a land of extremes, with altitudes from sea-level to 26 000 feet, comprised of coastal deserts, snow-capped Andes peaks, and the Amazon Basin. The temperature range is extreme, too, from below zero F in the high mountains to 100 F in the Amazon. Lima is constantly overcast, having had no sunshine for seven years! The extremes are economic, too, with a small very wealthy upper class, and a huge population of destitute impoverished people, existing in comfortless shack cities of mud and corrugated plastic houses.

In such a country of extremes there are inherent problems in attempting to see birds, botanize and take photographs at the same time. The difficulty is increased by the absence of a comprehensive field guide, and the profusion of bird species: 119 hummingbirds, 37 woodpeckers, 22 wrens, 27 tinamous, 139 tanagers and 237 flycatchers.

Scovell showed us some plates of illustrations made for the unpublished book of the late legendary American birder, Ted Parker. Ron was fortunate to meet Parker twice in Peru and bird with him there. Scovell claims recognition for the fact that he was the sixth person in the world to have seen the masked saltator in the wild. He showed us his drawing of the brownbanded puffbird, which he had shown to Ted Parker, proving that the bird could be added to Ted Parker's Annotated Checklist of Birds of Peru. In addition, he was able to watch for twenty minutes both male and female zig-zag herons. This bird, like many others in Peru, is very little known, since there are only a few rare specimens in museums world-wide.

The two trips covered areas including the Paracas Peninsula and Las Ballestos Islands, Cuzco, Arequipa, Lake Titicaca, Huanuco, Cerro de Pasco (at 14 000 feet) and several lake areas. Scovell drove over the mountains by Lago Junin, past the Paty Trail to Tingo Maria.

During the trips the accomodation was varied from attractive comfortable motels to more spartan accomodation. At the Explorers' Inn, where Scovell spent a week, the luxury of electricity was provided for an hour a day. The housepets were a mealy parrot, a peccary, and a flea-laden tapir that slept on Scovell's bed.

The bird species seen were as exotic as might be expected: hoatzin, swallow-tailed puffbirds, tit spinetails, bamboo ant-shrikes, and neo-tropical species, such as Peruvian Pelicans, Peruvian boobies, kelp gulls, red-legged cormorants, Inca terns, gray headed gulls, blackish oyster-catchers and Cape Petrels and oil-birds. Animal species noted were fur seals,

and sea lions along the coast, and howler monkeys and pampas cats. Colourful flower species were abundant, too, including many forms of bromeliads and orchids.

One highlight of the trips was a visit to Cuzco whence they took a train to Machu Picchu. Scovell marvelled at the construction of the large impressive Inca site, built from squared close-fitting rock hauled up from a valley twenty miles below. As well, he travelled up to Lake Titicaca despite altitude sickness, to see endemic species there. He advised us to obtain a first-class seat for the day-long ride to and from Lake Titicaca on the train known as Enfer Peru in order to avoid the singular unpleasantness of the second class car.

Scovell drove to the coast through the Sierra Blanca mountains, which provided breathtakingly beautiful views of the snowcapped peaks. He concluded his talk by stating that certain areas of Peru were his idea of Heaven. His beautiful slides illustrated the reasons for his feelings about Peru.

Questions and Answers

How many people would you take on a trip? In November Turaco will offer a trip, led by Ron, for twelve people to Caracas, with a flight over the Nazco Plains with its rock pictures decipherable only from the air. The price is yet to be determined.

What preparation is needed to go up to 20 000 feet? The tour will go only as high as Machu Picchu. They will go up by train and overnight at one of the two hotels, and arrive at Machu Picchu site early in the morning before many other tourists reach it.

How much time do you need to see Machu Picchu? Although it is possible to see the site in one day, the tour will stay there two days.

Did you see Andean condors? Yes, but Chile provides a better viewing location.

Are hummingbirds widely distributed? Yes, they have adapted to every habitat.

How many Peruvian species did you see in two trips? 680 species, which is fewer than half the known species there. Peru has more endemics than any other country.

Fowle thanked our speaker for his most interesting talk.

Notes and Observations

Carrick reported seeing a pileated woodpecker building a nest on his Scarborough property. He expects egg-laying to begin soon.

Don Young observed two northern shrikes in his backyard in North York in December, and saw several loggerhead shrikes in St. Petersburg Beach on January 15.

Norma Martin saw seven swans at Presqu'ile.

Jock McAndrews reported on seeing a turkey vulture mobbed by a black bird, smaller than a crow. Is it possible that it was a blackbird? He saw two Jackpines growing on the bog. The open-coned Jackpine had progeny and the closed-cone had no progeny. It is assumed that these two pines came from the same plantation. One had reproduced quite well and the other was waiting for a bog fire.

Reading enquired whether anyone knew how far South the hoary bat migrated in the winter? No response.

De Matteis reported seeing a great gray owl in Grey county in the daytime.

Bendell noted he had seen many great gray owls this season.

Bodsworth saw six at one time at the corner of Dufferin and Miller one Sunday afternoon. Mary Tasker saw one at Lawrence and Avenue within the month.

Fowle remembered one famous owl that landed in Bill Gunn's backyard. Word of its arrival spread and the Gunn home was besieged with unwanted and unannounced visitors.

Bendell asked if open-coned Jack pine are common. The open cone is adapted to the southern deciduous forest. Aird noted that there are some open-cone Jack pine and that it is not

uncommon for the cones at the bottom of Jack pine to open, perhaps due to the warmth from the ground below.

Bendell saw 340 species of birds in Costa Rica with Richard Knapton. He also spotted a mockingbird along the lakeshore.

Keith mentioned Harold Hitchcock who was at Western banded bats in various caves in Ohio. Two years ago a bat found hibernating in a cave in Maine a little brown bat at age 34, possibly the oldest living mammal. Don Smith at Carleton is banding bats now in Canada.

Mary Tasker saw a coyote in her garden on Christmas Day.

Carrick said we were invited to a behind the scenes tour of the Zoo for the June meeting. June 9 was suggested as a possible date.

Adjournment was at 10:00.

The next meeting will be held on **Tuesday, May 21, 1996**. Michael Boyer will speak on the Identification of Ontario Mushrooms.

THE BRODIE CLUB ANNUAL FIELD OUTING - JUNE 9, 1996

Dr. William Rapley has invited the Brodie Club to a behind the scenes tour of Research, Health and Commissary facilities at the Metro Toronto Zoo.

*Meet at Site Control Office - Finch Ave. Entrance MTZ at 11:00 AM June 9th.
Lunch in Atrium approx. 12:00 noon (bring your own - vending machines avail.)*

(Plans may change slightly with possibility of an employee strike at that time)

*For early birders there is a parking lot near the Finch bailey bridge over the Rouge River - or - visit Carrick at #6 Pickering Town Line (see map)
(Nesting Sandhill Cranes and Trumpeter Swans)*